

YOMTOV, VOL. I, # 21 - PESACH SHENI, THE "SECOND" PESACH

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

Before continuing with Sefiras Ha'omer, it is necessary to mention a date in our calendar which nowadays seems to carry with it little practical significance: Pesach Sheni - the "Second" Pesach. Pesach Sheni is on the 14th day of Iyar, and this year fell out on this past Sunday.

First, a little background: One who was ritually unclean, ta'mai, was not allowed to bring and partake of the Korban Pesach, the Paschal Offering. In Bamidbar 9:6-8, we find that a group of people approached Moshe and Aharon at the time the first offering was brought after the exodus. They, because of the fact they were ritually unclean from contact with a corpse, were not able to bring the offering. This group asked Moshe and Aharon "Why are we being prevented to bring the offering with the rest of Israel, in the proper time?" The response from Moshe was "Stand and hear what Hashem has commanded you." Then, the Torah relates the laws concerning Pesach Sheni, an opportunity for all those who missed bringing the Korban Pesach in the proper time through no fault of their own, to bring this offering, and fulfill this special mitzvah.

What makes the Korban Pesach so special that Hashem gave us a "make-up" date in the event we were not able to bring it on Pesach?

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the Pesach offering stands as a clear and strong sign that our destiny is in the hands of Hashem. When we were taken out of Egypt, Hashem performed great miracles and changed "nature" in a spectacle that was open to all for the viewing. The whole world saw that Hashem is the one who runs the world and controls our destiny. At that time, we all believed in Hashem and recognized the role He plays in our lives. The fact that we witnessed such a display at the time of our exodus and recognized how Hashem controls our destiny is a pillar of our belief in Hashem. As the Pesach offering carries with it such great significance, Hashem wanted everyone to have the opportunity to demonstrate their belief. Therefore, one who was unable to bring the offering for a reason beyond his control had the opportunity to bring the offering a month later, in the month of Iyar.

Not just anyone was able to bring a "make-up" sacrifice on Pesach Sheni. The Torah mentions that the following can bring their sacrifice on Pesach Sheni: a person who was ritually unclean due to contact with a corpse at the time of Pesach; and, a person who was in a distant place at the time of Pesach. The Ramban says that all who miss bringing the offering at Pesach have to bring it on Pesach Sheni. However, only people who were in a situation where their inability to bring the offering was beyond their control were exempt from bringing it on Pesach (and therefore are not subject to

any punishment.) The offering brought on Pesach Sheni differed in some respects from the one brought on Pesach itself. On Pesach Sheni, it was permitted to have chametz (leavened bread) in the house. However, the offering, as on Pesach, was to be eaten with Matzo and Maror. It was permitted to remove the meat of the Pesach Sheni offering from the group of those who gathered together to eat it. It was not brought together with a Korban Chagiga (a festival offering). It was like the Korban Pesach as the meat had to be broiled, no meat could be left over, and bones of the offering could not be broken.

As mentioned in the introduction, Pesach Sheni does not carry much practical significance with us as far as any performances or observances go. We do not say the Tachanun (a prayer of supplications which is normally not said on holidays) as Pesach Sheni was a day of rejoicing for those who did bring the offering on that day. Furthermore, some people have a custom of eating left-over matzo, to commemorate the offering which was eaten with matzo.