

THE SANDWICH OF THE FUTURE

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

"A reminder of the Bais HaMikdosh, like Hillel. So Hillel did at the time the Bais HaMikdosh existed. He used to fold together Matza and Maror and eat them together, to fulfill that which it says 'and eat it with matza and bitter herbs.'"

After eating Matza and Maror separately during the Seder, we have the step of Korech. For Korech, we make a sandwich of sorts from the matza and the maror, and prior to eating this sandwich, we recite the above pronouncement.

The Minchas Yitzchok notes that the verse we recite does not appear to correspond with our actions on this evening. In the pronouncement, we are recalling a practice that Hillel observed when the Bais HaMikdosh existed. This practice is based on the literal reading of a verse. One might assume that the verse quoted concerns the consumption of the Korban Pesach, the Paschal offering. However, that is not the case. That verse states "And they shall eat the meat in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it (Shemos 12:8)." The verse quoted in the pronouncement comes from the portion of the Torah that discusses Pesach Sheni.

What is Pesach Sheni? One who was ritually unclean, ta'mai, was not allowed to bring and partake of the Korban Pesach. In Bamidbar 9:6-8, we find that a group of people approached Moshe and Aharon at the time the first Korban Pesach 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. In regards to this commandment, the Torah states "The fourteenth day of the second month at evening they shall keep it, and eat it with matza and bitter herbs."

Why, when the Hagada discusses Korech, does it link Hillel's custom to a verse describing the offering brought on Pesach Sheni, as opposed to the Korban Pesach itself?

The Belzer Rebbe answers that the text we recite as part of Korech is actually not a mere pronouncement - it is more of a request, a prayer. If we are sitting at a Seder and have made it

through the liturgy, practices and customs of the evening, and arrived at Korech, it means we do not have a Bais HaMikdosh and we are still in exile. It means yet another year in which we were not able to bring our own Korbon Pesach has passed. Yet, missing bringing the Korbon Pesach in its proper time does not mean all is lost. The Torah allows for a make-up date: Pesach Sheni. At the very time we recall a practice of one of our great sages from the days of the existence of the Bais HaMikdosh, a practice we can only perform on this night as a reminder of the days of old, we recall that we can still perform the practice, as described in the Torah, this year. How can that be? If our exile ends, Moshiach comes, we have a Bais HaMikdosh - we still have the opportunity Pesach Sheni provides! It is for that reason we link the practice of Hillel to Pesach Sheni: we "pray" that we have the opportunity to eat this sandwich again, very soon, in the coming month, when we bring our "make-up" Korbon Pesach on Pesach Sheni.

The Minchas Yitzchok notes that the pronouncement begins with the statement that this "sandwich" is being consumed as a reminder of the Bais HaMikdosh. While having such a reminder is appropriate - and there are indeed other times during the Seder when we recall those days - it seems unusual that we recall a custom of Hillel specifically for this recollection. We eat the Afikoman - the matzo after the meal - as a specific reminder of the Korbon Pesach, and therefore, it would seem, the Bais HaMikdosh as well. Yet, we have Korech, and we state that it is specifically Korech that is done as remembrance of the Bais HaMikdosh. Why is that the case?

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 85b) relates that "Eliyahu used to frequent Rebbi's academy. One day , it was the New Moon, he was waiting for him, but he [Eliyahu] failed to come. Rebbi said to him [the next day]: Why did you delay? He replied: [I had to wait] until I awoke Avraham, washed his hands, and he prayed and I put him to rest again; likewise to Yitzchak and Yaakov. "But why not awake them together?" I feared that they would grow strong in prayer and bring Moshiach before his time."

The power of the merits of our forefathers, united, is awesomely strong. It is so strong that it could end our exile.

Mazta, the Shel"i writes, reminds us of Avraham. Both are linked to the concept of protection and observance of mitzvos. The Torah (Shemos 12:17) tells us that "matzos" are watched, guarded. Avraham is described as "VaYishmor mishmarti," "He protected My charge (Bereishis 26:5)." The Korbon Pesach reminds us of Yitzchok. Before blessing his sons, Yitzchok requested of Esav "go now to the flock, and fetch me from there two good kids of the goats (Bereishis 27:9)." Why did he want two goats? Rashi explains that one was for the Korbon Pesach. Maror reminds us of Yaakov. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabba 84:3) tell us that the verse in Iyov (3:26) "I had no tranquility I had no rest, nor was I quiet; yet trouble came" refers to Yaakov, who related to Pharaoh the bitterness of his life by stating that "few and evil have been the days of the years of my life (Shemos 47:9)."

Korech combines elements that are representative of our forefathers. Not only are they representative, but we join the elements together, to further represent the special power that exists when the forefathers are united. It is because of this allusion that Korech was selected to be the reminder of the Bais HaMikdosh. It is specifically this practice, one that was performed in the days of the Bais HaMikdosh and therefore reminiscent of the days which we miss. The components thereof are also an allusion to the end of exile for which we long.

Korech is not merely a reminder of days of old. It is a wish for what we desire from the days to come.