

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN AND ONTO THE FIRE

by Rabbi Dovid Green

In Exodus, Chapter 12, the Torah elaborates on the observance of Passover and the Passover Sacrifice. There are many laws regarding Passover in general, as well as how its sacrifice should be brought, and how it should be eaten. There are at least 11 laws mentioned. One should not own or eat chametz (leavened bread); one should eat matzah; one should not break the bones of the sacrifice; the sacrifice must be roasted whole on an open fire, and others. All of these are in order to remember the miracles which G-d performed on our behalf in Egypt.

The Sefer HaChinuch (a medieval work enumerating the 613 commandments of the Torah) asks the following question about the laws of Passover. Couldn't we just observe one law which would remind us of the miracles of Egypt, and that would be enough? The answer he gives really underlies much more than the laws of Passover. It applies to our lives on a daily basis. "People are influenced by their actions, and one's heart and thoughts always follow after the deeds one involves oneself in whether they are positive or negative." This means to say that our character traits are strongly influenced by the things we do. Bad people can change for the good, and good people can become evil, depending on what they regularly involve themselves in. This is a far-reaching statement for our day and age.

One of the aforementioned laws of the Passover Sacrifice is that it should be roasted whole on an open fire. One reason for this is that the sheep was the god of the Egyptians. The Jews may have chosen to cook the sacrifice in a pot of water to avoid flaunting it in the faces of the Egyptians. To this the Torah states that it should be roasted whole on an open fire. Make it obvious. Perhaps this is to teach us an important lesson at the time of our initiation as a nation of servants of G-d. Don't be embarrassed to be Jewish. Don't hide the fact. Serve G-d proudly and openly. We should let our children and coreligionists see what really matters to us.

Our actions speak louder than our words. They make an impression on us as well as those around us. The Torah teaches us that they require discretion and care. They have the potential to be an effective tool for personal growth. Let us always remember. "People are influenced by their actions."

Good Shabbos.

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