

EXEMPT, BUT ...

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BS"D

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The Rutstein family
in memory of father Mendy Rutstein
(Menachem Mendel Shmuel ben Nachman Halevi a"h)
and grandmother Bessie Rutstein
(Pesha Batya bat R' Zemach a"h)

Today's Learning:
Nach: Tehilim 41-42
Mishnah: Pe'ah 6:7-8
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Kiddushin 71

This coming Sunday is the 14th of Iyar, which is Pesach Sheni / the "Second Passover." The Torah relates in Parashat Be'ha'alotecha that, a year after the Exodus, Moshe Rabbeinu told Bnei Yisrael to prepare to bring the Korban Pesach. The Torah continues (Bemidbar 9:4-5), "There were men who were tamei / impure through a human corpse and could not make the Pesach-offering on that day; so they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day. Those men said to him [Moshe], 'We are tamei through a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time among Bnei Yisrael?'" In response, Hashem taught the laws of Pesach Sheni, a second chance to bring the Korban Pesach.

R' Gedaliah Schorr z"l (1910-1979; rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Voda'as in Brooklyn, N.Y.) asks: What was their complaint; don't our Sages teach, "Ones Rachamana patrei" / "The Merciful One exempts one who is prevented from performing a mitzvah"? He explains:

The Zohar relates that several Sages of the Mishnah were returning from performing the mitzvah of redeeming captives when they met someone who said, "I see on your faces that you did not recite

Kriat Shema today." They answered him that they were exempt from Kriat Shema because they were engaged in another mitzvah. Nevertheless, writes R' Schorr, we see from here that when a person misses out on performing a mitzvah, even justifiably, that fact makes an impression on his soul.

Similarly, continues R' Schorr, we read at the end of Megillat Esther: "For Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Achashveirosh; he was a great man among the Jews, and found favor with most of his brethren." Why "most" of his brethren? The Gemara (Megillah 16b) explains that many of Mordechai's contemporaries were displeased with him because his duties in the royal court detracted from his Torah study.

But wasn't Mordechai busy saving the Jewish People and promoting the interests of the Jewish People, and therefore exempt from Torah study? As noted, "Ones Rachamana patrei"! True, answers R' Schorr. Indeed, halachah requires a person to interrupt his Torah study to save lives. Nevertheless, the fact that Hashem placed Mordechai in a position to save lives instead of studying Torah indicates that Hashem did not completely value Mordechai's Torah study.

In this light, R' Schorr concludes, we can understand the verses regarding Pesach Sheni as follows: The individuals who were tamei and unable to participate in the Korban Pesach were in that situation because they had performed the mitzvah of tending to the dead. Some say they had buried Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu. Still, being unfit to bring the Korban Pesach, they were missing out, as in the story quoted above from the Zohar. Therefore, they searched their souls for a reason why Hashem would not want their offerings and, only when they couldn't find any reason, did they come to Moshe Rabbeinu and cry out: "Why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time?" And what was the answer? It was that because of their great yearning for mitzvot (demonstrated by their recognition that they were, in fact, missing out), Hashem wanted them to be the vehicle to teach about a new mitzvah--Pesach Sheni, through which Jews in all generations can have a second chance to come close to Hashem. (Ohr Gedalyahu)

***"When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving-offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it willingly."
(22:29)***

R' Eliezer Dovid Gruenwald z"l (1867-1928; Hungary) observes: A person is required to bring a korban todah / thanksgiving-offering if he was in danger and was saved. We read in Tehilim (107:1-2), "Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good; His kindness endures forever. Those redeemed by Hashem will say it, those whom He redeemed from the hand of distress." This verse reflects man's tendency to thank G-d after man has been saved. However, one rarely remembers to thank G-d for not placing him in danger in the first place. Thus our verse teaches, "When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving-offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it willingly." Don't wait until you are required to thank Hashem. Rather, thank Him voluntarily. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Chasdei David)

“Hashem's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations; these are My appointed festivals. For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest . . . These are the appointed festivals of Hashem, the holy convocations, which you shall designate in their appropriate time.” (23:2-4)

R' Zalman Sorotzkin z"l (1881-1966; rabbi in Lithuania and Israel) observes that the above verses refer to Shabbat as “My appointed festival,” while the holidays are called (in third person) “the appointed festivals of Hashem.” This, he writes, reflects the closer connection that G-d has to Shabbat than to the festivals. (Oznayim La'Torah)

“Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying, ‘In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation’.” (23:24)

R' Moshe Avigdor Amiel z"l (1883-1946; rabbi in Lithuania and Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and Tel Aviv; early Mizrachi leader) writes: Using one shofar, we make two types of sounds--the joyous, triumphant sound of the tekiah and the wailing cry of the shevarim-teruah. There is only one tool (the shofar), but it can make two, very different, impressions depending on whether the sound that comes out is continuous or interrupted.

This, writes R' Amiel, is the difference between one who sees the joy of life--the glory and the happiness within Creation--and one who sees only the pain in his life and in nature. They see the same events, but their perspectives differ. If one sees the Creation as a unified whole, he sees happiness, as is alluded to by our Sages' teaching that “Shalom” / “Harmony” is a Name of G-d. But, if one sees life as a series of isolated events, he sees destruction and ruin. (Ezer El Ami: Moadim p.131)

“Remove the blasphemer to the outside of the camp, and all those who heard shall lean their hands upon his head, and the entire assembly shall stone him.” (24:14)

R' Moshe Leib Shachor z"l (1894-1964; Yerushalayim) writes: The Gemara (Sanhedrin 43b) teaches that every person who is about to be executed by bet din is encouraged to repent first, and he or she is told, “Anyone who repents has a share in the World-to-Come.” Presumably, the blasphemer in our parashah repented as well, and that is why he merited having a section of the Torah--albeit, the laws of capital punishment--taught because of him. This illustrates how, when a person repents, his sins are converted to merits. (Koach Ha'teshuvah)

Shabbat Leftovers

The Gemara (Sukkah 45b, as explained by Rashi z"l) states: "If one observes the day after yom tov with food and drink, the Torah views it as if he built an altar and offered a sacrifice."

Why is it praiseworthy to make a feast on the day after yom tov? And, why is this likened to bringing a sacrifice?

R' Avigdor Nebenzahl shlita (rabbi of the Old City of Yerushalayim) explains: One of the mitzvot that was fulfilled in the Bet Hamikdash was bringing a korban chagigah / a festival offering. Because a chagigah is a korban shelamim, the law is that it may be eaten for two days. But, one might be reluctant to bring such a sacrifice when there is only one day remaining in the holiday (for example, on the last day of Pesach). In order to encourage the bringing of sacrifices even on the last day of yom tov, our Sages taught that it is meritorious to eat a festive meal on the day after yom tov. Such a meal honors the holiday by giving people a reason to bring sacrifices.

Today, too, in the absence of the Bet Hamikdash, a person will cook more in honor of yom tov knowing that he will have a use for the leftovers. Thus, eating a meal after yom tov honors the holiday even today.

R' Nebenzahl continues: This may also be a reason for the obligation to eat a melaveh malkah meal after Shabbat. If one knows that he will have a use for any leftovers after Shabbat, he will cook more in honor of Shabbat.

This also may explain an enigmatic passage in Tanach, writes R' Nebenzahl. In Shmuel I (20:5), David and Yehonatan plan to meet on the second day of the Rosh Chodesh feast. But how did they know in advance that there would be a second day of Rosh Chodesh, when there was not yet a fixed calendar and Rosh Chodesh would be only one day if the new moon was spotted when it first appeared? R' Nebenzahl explains that the two days referred to are not two days of Rosh Chodesh but rather two days of a Rosh Chodesh feast, i.e., two days of eating the korban shelamim brought in honor of Rosh Chodesh. (Yerushalayim B'moadehah: Shabbat p.65)