

# PESACH SHENI: SECOND CHANCES

*by Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene*

## *The Mitzvah:*

A Jew who, due to extenuating circumstances (outside of Jerusalem or spiritually defiled), was unable to bring the Korbon Pesach, paschal lamb on the 14th Nissan there was a second opportunity. Pesach Sheni, Second Passover was exactly one month later (14th Iyar) whereupon this offering could be brought.

What is striking is how, unlike most other commandments, a second chance was given to sacrifice the Korbon Pesach in Jerusalem. We do not find that someone without an estrog and lulav on Succos can perform this one month later. Nor is the man who missed hearing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah given another opportunity.

So what is so special about the Korbon Pesach that this warrants a second opportunity?

The Exodus experience is central to Jewish belief (see our essay on Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim). This historic event, together with its miracles, confirmed divine providence and the supernatural destiny of the chosen nation whose lives and history revolves around G-d.

This historic event marked the Jewish nation's birth. Indeed, the Exodus is depicted in terms of a newborn baby emerging from the womb to assume its individual identity (Yechezkel 16:4).

It was at that point, when the Jewish people stood on the threshold of their redemption, that they performed two commandments: bris milah, circumcision and Korbon Pesach. Non-performance of these positive precepts is punishable by kares, excision and their exclusion from the community and from G-d.

In line with their national birth, a convert to Judaism is considered like a newborn baby (in the sense of assuming a new identity), who undergoes circumcision prior to his inclusion in the Jewish people. Actually, the Korbon Pesach itself necessitated that the male participator be circumcised.

This was not an ordinary offering or just another mitzvah. Rather, the Korbon Pesach was the individual's association and whole-hearted identification as a proud member of the Jewish nation. It symbolized the initiation sacrifice - commemorated annually - which celebrates joining the ranks of the Jewish people.

This is underscored by the Talmud entertaining the possibility whether a convert to Judaism must automatically offer up a Korbon Pesach (see Exodus 12:48 for their juxtaposition). This offering is, so-

to-speak, inherently Jewish. And it is to be eaten together in a communal setting of fellow Jews.

So important is the Korban Pesach, like circumcision in the formative days of a Jewish boy's birth, this was slaughtered when the Jewish nation came into being upon their Exodus.

It is for this very reason that a second chance was made available to the individuals that were originally unable to participate because of their distance or impurity on Pesach Sheni. Those that approached Moshe posed the question: "lamah nigorah, why should we excluded?" (Numbers 9:7). In effect, they were protested how they should not be excluded or placed outside the circle of their Jewish brethren.

Pesach Sheni provides the second opportunity, one month later, to revisit their national origins. It is here that these individuals are able to stake their claim as proud and worthy members of G-d's chosen nation. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene and **Torah.org**.