

PESACH IN COMMAND

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

G-d told Moshe, "Command (tzav) Aharon and his sons regarding the law of a Burnt-Offering." (Vayikra 6:1-2)

Pesach 5761 is upon us this Motzei Shabbos. All complicated laws aside because of the fact that the fourteenth of Nissan falls on Shabbos, it represents a special opportunity to go from the holiness of Shabbos into the holiness of Pesach. It is a very fitting preparation for the national birthday of the Jewish people.

So is this week's parshah, which begins with the word "tzav."

Rashi explains that the stronger language is because of financial loss. Unlike other sacrifices, from which the kohanim used to eat, the Burnt-Offering was not eaten except by the altar itself; only the skins remained for the kohanim from which to benefit. The stronger language was to "enthuse" them to make up for any lack of inspiration they might have felt due to the lack of financial gain.

In other words, "tzav" comes against the yetzer hara. Without a yetzer hara, a person is unconcerned about personal physical benefit, and is simply grateful to have a chance to serve G-d. In fact, without a yetzer hara (or with one that has been "tamed"), the less benefit a person receives for the mitzvah, the happier a person is, because it proves one's sincerity.

This is the answer to the question that arises when one considers the two opinions in Jewish history about whether or not mitzvos will be applicable in Yemos HaMoshiach and Techiyas HaMeisim -- the Messianic Period and Resurrection of the Dead. Are not mitzvos eternal -- so how can they ever not be applicable? But, if there is no yetzer hara, then what value will mitzvos have then?

The answer is that mitzvos are, of course, eternal. And, they will always be applicable because they will always bring tikun to the Upper Worlds. But, they will not be performed THEN because they were commanded of us, but, as second nature, because, without a yetzer hara, we will clearly see the beauty and usefulness of G-d's commandments.

This, of course, is what Pesach is all about.

Pesach, specifically Seder Night, is a once-in-a-year opportunity. It is as if G-d, on that night, picks us

up and places us in His hand, and raises us up high so that we can see life more the way G-d does. In fact, the first night of Pesach is like the night of Shavuos, when G-d came down and revealed Himself to the Jewish people, with one very big difference. And that is, whereas Shavuos comes at the end of a process, Leil Seder comes in advance of it.

Shavuos and "Kabbalos HaTorah" comes after forty-nine days of Omer-Counting. It is the fiftieth day, which corresponds to the fiftieth gate of the "Fifty Gates of Understanding." Like the number eight, the number fifty represents rising above physicality, which is represented by the number seven.

In other words, the first night of Pesach is a tremendous gift. It is a taste of spiritual perfection, of closeness to G-d so intense that the yetzer hara is completely neutralized by awe of G-d. It is a night on which one can, if taken seriously, gain a taste of the final and eternal redemption, when the yetzer hara will be no more and mitzvos will be performed purely out of love for G-d and Torah.

Then, by the next morning after the Seder, G-d gently returns us back to our former realities, with the commandment to count the Omer on the following eve, in order to build for ourselves what was given to us for free the night before. After forty-nine days of Omer-Counting, on the fiftieth day and on holiday of Shavuos itself, we are supposed to have risen back up to the level of Leil Seder. However, since we have earned it this time, it is a higher experience than what we underwent then without making an effort.

All of this is alluded to by the three principle parts of the Seder, Pesach, Matzah, and Marror.

Korban Pesach represents Jewish willingness to make a break from other societies that are foreign to Torah. Matzah represents spiritual simplicity, being made only of flour and water, where water represents Torah and flour represents the process of intellectual refinement (Meiri). Marror is a reminder that, whether we see it or not, and whether we believe it or not, Divine Providence is always actively working to bring redemption to the Jewish people.

This is how we break loose of the physical world that works day and night to spiritually bind us, as the Talmud warns us: Everyday the yetzer hara renews itself to overcome a person (Kiddushin 30b). The rest of the year we need "tzav" to help us in the struggle. However, during Pesach, especially Leil Seder, we are given the understanding to do it on our own.

Shabbos Day:

He must take off his garments (and put on other garments, and carry out the ashes outside the camp into a clean place). (Vayikra 6:4)

According to Rashi, this was not a mitzvah, but a matter of proper behavior: garments worn when boiling the pot for one's master should not be worn when pouring a glass of wine for him. In other

words, removing the ashes from the altar could be messy work, even though it had to be done as part of the mitzvah to sacrifice to G-d, and therefore, it was not proper to wear the same clothing that was used for the actual sacrifices to remove the ashes.

In the previous posuk, the Torah commanded kohanim to remove ashes daily from the altar. This meant taking a silver pan to the top of the altar, and clearing away cinders on either side, and then scooping up the ashes in the center. The kohen then descended, and when he reached the pavement he turned his face to the north and went along the east side of the ramp for about fifteen feet, and then made a pile of the cinders on the pavement about twelve inches away from the ramp. This process did not remove all the ashes from the altar, and was only done from time-to-time when the need arose for it, when it became impossible to make a wood-pile.

Even in this seemingly technical procedure there is an allusion to the purpose of life, and the goal of Pesach. For, the ashes on the altar did not come from air; they were the by-product of a process, the result of a separation process.

As we have spoken about before, one of the main results of Adam's eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was the intermixing of Truth and Falsehood, which results in Good and Evil. Truth and Falsehood are absolute values, whereas Good and Evil, for the most part, are subjective (you know, "one man's good is another man's evil").

Life is about "borrer," the process of re-separating good and from evil and dispensing with the latter. It is about taking things that have good and evil mixed together -- which is just about everything in creation -- and using the good in the service of G-d and removing the evil to where it belongs. This was, ultimately, what the mitzvah of T'rumas HaDeshen -- Removing the Ashes -- was also about.

For, all that burned in the fire on the altar previously was a combination of good aspects and "bad" aspects. The parts that were consumed either by the fire or the kohanim were good, and used for the service of G-d. The bad aspects remained behind, and had to be removed and deposited in the appropriate place, but with honor -- as Rashi points out -- because this too was an important process for life.

Our bodies work the same way. They take food and separate out the "good" parts and reject the "bad" parts, and the physical process by which this is done must also be performed with dignity (kavod habrios). All of this is not so different, conceptually, from the mitzvah to separate out a goat to be given over to "Azazel" on Yom Kippur -- the "Negative Side" in creation.

This is also what matzah symbolizes as well. There are many components to bread, most of which are dispensed with when making pure matzah. Matzah is only flour and water, the latter representing Torah and the former, the end result of a refinement process (from wheat kernel to flour).

The Maharal, on the Haggadah, explains that matzah represents sublime spiritual simplicity, like that of the letter "yud." According to the Talmud, the "yud" was used by G-d to create the World-to-

Come, whereas the "heh" was used to create This World (Menachos 29b).

Why the difference? Because, the letter "heh," like all other letters of the Aleph-Bais -- other than the "yud" -- is a composition of other letters (dalet-vav, in the case of the heh), just like the physical world in which we live. However, the letter "yud" cannot be further broken down, and therefore represents the sublime simplicity and unity of the World-to-Come.

Thus, the first day of Pesach, the only one we actually have a mitzvah to eat matzah on, is a day for such sublime, spiritual simplicity. It is supposed to be a day on which we are free of "pesoles" -- spiritual waste -- at least to some degree. It is the day on which the altar of our hearts burns and purifies; the NEXT DAY when we begin to count the omer we deal with the "deshen" -- the ashes -- of that process that automatically result when we engage in birrur.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

We find that Israel themselves were very surprised about this, as Chazal say in Shir HaShirim Rabbah, Chapter 2, Posuk 8, Paragraph 2: When Moshe told them, "In this month you will be redeemed," they told him, "Moshe Rabbeinu, how can we be redeemed? All of Egypt is dirtied from our idol worship?!" He told them, "Since He desires your redemption, He does not pay attention to your idol worship, but rather, (He is like one) 'leaping over mountains' (Shir HaShirim 2:8)." This is because every redemption is the result of a revealed light of Arich Anpin. Thus, he was explaining to them that The Holy One, Blessed is He, was dealing with them with a revealed light of Arich Anpin called "Ayin, a level of providence above measure, that is, it is not dependent upon merit or demerit (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:5:4:3)

In short, when redemption finally comes for the Jewish people, it is not because we necessarily deserve to be redeemed. Quite the contrary! It seems that we were far from deserving of redemption (geulah) in Egypt, and the miracles that G-d did to free us. For, unlike the smaller miracles of everyday life, the miracles of Geulah occur for us for reasons greater that can be traced all the way up to the extremely high level of Light called "Arich Anpin."

And, last week the people of "Geulah" and the rest of the Meah Shearim community witnessed first hand what this means -- again. For reasons that are difficult to understand from a political point of view, Arab terrorists tried to kill dozens of innocent religious Israelis and do untold amounts of damage by leaving a four-bomb car-bomb parked illegally on Rechov Meah Shearim.

The last two attempts were foiled as well. The first bomb was detected by an astute individual at the time the Arab dropped the cell-phone bomb into a garbage bin, and just happened to defuse it in time. The second bomb, a much larger car bomb actually exploded, and in a place that it could have done much destruction, but didn't by the grace of G-d. The story behind this week's attempt, for those who did not read it, follows here:

Thursday, March 22, 2001/27 Adar 5761

Parking warden foils car bombing

By Etgar Lefkovits

JERUSALEM (March 22) - A car bomb in the heart of Jerusalem's Mea She'arim neighborhood was safely neutralized by police sappers late yesterday afternoon, two hours after an alert municipal parking warden alerted police to a suspicious car. The bomb, which was rigged to a cellphone, was placed inside a stolen car illegally parked on Rehov Mea She'arim. Shimon Roash, 37, a father of three, was doing his daily rounds when he got a message from his dispatcher that there was an illegally parked car in a taxi-only parking zone.

"I looked at the car, and I saw that it was parked in a strange way," Roash told The Jerusalem Post just hours after his actions averted tragedy.

Roash, who has worked for the municipality for six years, refused to be called a hero, stating instead that he was a "messenger of the Lord."

"The Lord did not just send me to the spot today, there was a certain reason behind it," he said.

The car, which Roash said was parked in an unusual, perpendicular manner, immediately aroused his suspicion.

"Look, I come from Kiryat Arba, so I am naturally the suspicious type," he said.

As Roash punched the license plate into his computer, his screen flashed that it was a stolen car.

"I understood that all my suspicions were correct, and I knew that something was very wrong," he recalled.

Roash immediately started screaming to everyone to vacate the area. Then, after he saw that everyone was safe, he ran 200 meters from the car and asked passerby Mooky Moshe to call the police.

Police, who cordoned off the area, successfully neutralized the bomb and hours later detonated it in a controlled explosion. All evening a police helicopter hovered in the air, and policemen on horseback fruitlessly urged the curious to go back to their homes.

It was the third such attack in the area in as many months, and the second bombing thwarted by an alert passer-by.

"It is frightening, but you see how the Almighty helps out if you pray and do the right things" said Solomon Fried, 21, a yeshiva student.

After completing a string of interviews at city hall last night, Roash headed back to Kiryat Arba.

No, he would not take a taxi that the municipality offered to arrange for him; he preferred the bus.

"It's bulletproof, so I'll be safer," he said.

End of article. In the window of Eisenbach's Taxis, I saw the day after the bomb had been defused, was a notice. It had been right in front of their storefront location that the bomb had been parked, and, the notice proclaimed the miracle and the need to give praise to G-d as a result.

In Netanyah, on the other hand, where car bombs have gone off twice in the last few months, the first one was ticketed by a police officer who noticed it had been parked awkwardly, but didn't think twice about it. One half-hour later, it exploded killing and damaging. A month later, another deadly bomb went completely undetected before going off and doing its deadly deed.

Now, on one hand, it is terrifying to think that, after all these years of being ignored by terrorists, bombs are now showing up in Charedi neighborhoods. On the other hand, one bomb! two bombs! THREE BOMBS unsuccessful?!

Quite a miracle? No question about it, though many choose to belittle it.

Do we deserve it? We'd like to think so, but, at least out of humility, we assume that we don't. Then, perhaps, the "miracles of Geulah" are the beginning of the "miracles of Geulah," and the revelation of the light of Arich Anpin. If so, then fasten your seat belts, for what make be coming our way will be so powerful it will take our breath away -- and hopefully any doubts we have about G-d's desire to redeem His people once and for all.

And there is no better time to consider this than at this time of year, for, as the rabbis say, the Jews were redeemed in Nissan in the past, and will be redeemed in Nissan in the future as well.

MELAVE MALKAH:

For the Conductor, on Yeduson, by Asaf, a psalm. My voice is to G-d when I cry, My voice is to G-d -- please listen to me. On the day of my distress, I sought my L-rd. My wound oozes through the night and does not cease; my soul refuses comfort. (Tehillim 77:1-3)

Speaking of exile, Rashi says that the word "Yeduson" is derived from the word "das" (dalet-tav), which means decree. Thus, every psalm that begins with this word refers to evil decrees and oppressive edicts which are imposed on the Jewish people. Assaf, on the other hand, was someone who found something to sing about even in the bleakest of situations. As well, the commentators say that "night" here refers to the long and painful exile that the Jewish people have been undergoing now for millennia. Dovid HaMelech never was comfortable with exile, even though we have over the long haul.

In the end, when it comes to surviving exile, our only true weapon is "voice," that is, prayer.

Perhaps one of the most important possukim for this week's sheet is this one:

In the sea was Your way, and Your path through the mighty waters; and Your footsteps were not known(20)

They explain this posuk to mean that, even though the miracle of sea splitting was mind-boggling, still, in the end, the waters returned back to their normal course, leaving no sign of what had just occurred there. All that had remained of the life saving miracle was the memories of those who had witnessed it, and therefore, it remained for them to keep it alive and animated.

Such is the way of miracles, at least unto Moshiach comes. They happen quickly, perhaps make a big noise, and then, in a short while, all trace of them disappears, and they become a quickly fading memory in the minds of those who witnessed them. The car bomb that almost was is not there anymore; it was taken to a forest by Ramot and safely exploded, away from the eyes of the public.

If the miracle was forever present, then we'd only get used to it, like birth itself. If the Red Sea were to split once a week, it would simply become a camping area to which people would flock to make barbecues before returning back to work on Sunday once again. Lives would, for the most part, go unchanged.

Thus, a miracle, like the first night of Pesach, is a gift. It is the "first impression" given to us so that we can understand what can be, just like Moshe Rabbeinu's bringing down of the First Tablets just before breaking them before the eyes of the Jewish people. Then we have to re-build that image for ourselves.

This is the power of the Haggadah, and, the more seriously one takes it, the more powerful it becomes. The Haggadah is a structure within which we are supposed to rebuild the miracle of Yetzias Mitzrayim. This is one of the reasons why the mitzvah of telling the story is to begin with "disgrace" and build to "praise" -- to emphasize just what a miracle the Jewish people's rise from spiritual rags to spiritual riches was.

As the prophet says, from death were we brought back to life, just like the Spring which follows after the death of Winter, in "Chodesh Aviv," the month of Nissan, whose root word means "miracle" (nun-samech). G-d may not leave "footprints" when it comes to His miracles, but that is only on the level of the obvious. If the pursuit of the Afikomen teaches us anything at all, it is to know that when one pursues evidence of G-d, there is much reward in the end.

Chag Samayach, Much Freedom, and,
Good Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston