



דרכים בשנה

פסח



רבן גמליאל היה אומר: כל שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח, לא יצא ידי חובתו, ואלו הן: פסח, מצה, ומרור

Rabban Gamliel used to say, Anyone who has not said these three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his obligation, and these are them: the Pesach sacrifice, matzah and marror.

The yom tov's is commonly referred to as the Yom Tov of Pesach. However, in davening and kiddush, we refer to it in the manner as the Torah calls it: Chag Hamatzos.

The *heiliger* Berditchever Rebbe famously explained that there is a focus here from two different angles. The Torah uses the name Chag Hamatzos because Hashem *k'viyachol* looks at what Klal Yisroel was willing to do for Him. We did not say, "How can we go into the wilderness without any food?" That we were willing to get up and leave without our bread even rising was truly praiseworthy. Hashem saw this pure emunah and commemorated it by calling the Yom Tov Chag Hamatzos, thus focusing on what was done for *Him*. Conversely, our focus is on what Hashem did for us. When calling the yom tov, "Pesach", we are praising Hashem for what he did for us, that He "passed over" the houses of the Bnai Yisroel.

This demonstration of praise going in both directions is the idea of *אני לדודי ודודי לי - I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine*; a beautiful expression of mutual admiration. These words are from Shir Hashirim, hence a reason for the minhag of reciting the Shir Hashirim on Pesach night.

It is no wonder why the awesome effects of the Yom Tov do not follow the typical sequence of coming to high lofty levels of kedusha. Typically, one must first turn away from evil, and then follow it up with doing good- סור מרע ועשה טוב. After that happens, even if our effort is minute and likened to the opening of a needle's point, Hashem takes notice and responds by widening that small opening so that even wagons and carriages could pass through (אתערותא דלתתא). However, on

Pesach, even if we are not worthy, Hashem gives us an incredible awakening from above (אתערותא דלעילא). One can grab onto this and reach levels that are otherwise unattainable. This occurrence was on that very first Pesach, and it continues to repeat itself every year on *leil haseder*. The Chasam Sofer noted that this can be seen from the opening two *simanim* of the seder. One would normally wash off the *tumah*, and only then come to *kedusha*. But on this night, even if we have not done so, first we say *kadeish*, asking Hashem to sanctify us from above, even though *urchatz* did not yet happen, thus demonstrating that Hashem is giving us an awesome opportunity.

Perhaps the reason why Hashem gives us this incredible gift, which is greater than any *afikomen* present ever given, is specifically because we first placed our *emunah* in Him by leaving emptyhanded.

In a sense, these two points mentioned above really sum up the Yom Tov. On the one hand, our willingness to give everything up and trust in HaShem's plan, coupled with the idea that HaShem will always and *is* always doing everything for us, no matter what is happening around us in the world.

To this point, we can understand what Rabban Gamliel taught us. רבן גמליאל היה אומר: כל שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח, לא יצא ידי חובתו, ואלו הן: **The Korban Pesach symbolizes** HaShem's *hashgachah*, salvation in the midst of death and destruction. It demonstrates the Aibishter's concern for His righteous kinderlach and Divine punishment of the wicked. At the same time, it also represents *mesiras nefesh* - the

willingness of the Bnai Yisroel to sacrifice their safety and security, to perform the *ratzon* of HaShem. Rabbi Gamliel felt that we must never lose sight of these two ideas, even when the **matzah** and **marror** reflect the true condition of the Jewish people.

Matzah is *lechem oni*, the bread of affliction. It represents periods of bondage, suffering and persecution. But it is also *lechem sheonin alav devrim harbeh*- "a bread over which much is said." Is there a day that goes by in which the Jews are not in the news? As much as we do to live our lives in a manner that gives honor to HaShem, we are still the objects of scorn, derision, envy and enmity. Indeed, we are like the matzah over which much is recited, and at times experiencing the bitterness of the marror. However, Rabban Gamliel reminds us to not only allow ourselves to focus on the matzah and the marror, but also the redeeming concepts of the Pesach. If we only focus on the difficulties and not on the fact that HaShem runs the world and will never forsake His kinderlach, then we have missed the boat completely, failing to grasp the totality of Bnai Yisroel's destiny. Of course we must relive the golus and discuss all the bitterness, but failure to focus on the *hashgocha*, linking all three together, means that we have not fulfilled our obligation.

In a similar vein, the Lubliner Rav, Rav Meir Shapiro zt"l, interprets the story of the Chachamim who were gathered in Bnei Brak. מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן-עזריה ורבי עקיבא ורבי טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני-ברק והיו מספרים ביציאת מצרים כל-אוחותו הלילה, עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית. These chachamim and their talmidim also lived in a time of churban. It was כל-אוחותו הלילה - the night of Roman supremacy. Nonetheless they encouraged themselves by relating yetzias Mitzraim to strengthen their belief that the night of suffering and pain would be followed by the day of deliverance and salvation. Even in galus and even at night, we declare *emes ve'emunah*..., "truth and faith," because we recognize the truth of Hashem and reaffirm our

emunah. The talmidim however, impatiently responded: -רבותינו הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית, the time has come for Hashem to help us and bring us into the light so that we can recite the morning krias shema and say *emes veyatziv*, 'true and established ... Hashem will demonstrate that he is our גואל, and that our faith in Him during the dark night has been justified, only when we merit the geulah sheleimah.

On a practical level though, what is the key to the *geula*? What can we do to finally be *zoche*?

והיה הדם לכם לאת על הבתים אשר אתם שם וראיתי את הדם ופסחתי עלכם ולא יהיה בכם נגף למשחית בהכתי בארץ מצרים- *And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Mitzrayim.* The simple *pshat* over here is that the Torah is teaching us that what saved us was the placing of the *dam* over the doorposts.

Incredibly, Rabbeinu Bachya understands this differently. The *dam* did not prevent the *makka*, nor did failing to place it cause the *makka*. Instead, the Torah is teaching that one who believed with perfect faith in Hashem, and placed his trust in Him without concern for Pharaoh; he was a righteous person who trusted Hashem and he was therefore worthy of being saved. The slaughtering of their god publicly and placing the *dam* on the doorposts, was proof how strong their emunah was. It was not the act of the *mitzvah* per-say, but rather the emunah behind the action.

For the most part, we are not being asked to give up our lives like in previous generations. But that is not what it is all about. It is the emunah behind our every action that will demonstrate once and for all our worthiness to be redeemed. May we be *zoche* to finally merit the coming of *Moshiach*, ending this bitter *golus* once and for all.

מרדכי אפפעל, Good Yom Tov,



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