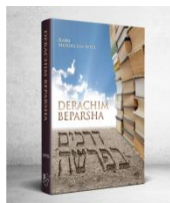


דרכים בפרשה ויקרא

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אל פתח אוהל מועד יקריב אותו לרצונו לפני ה'

He shall bring it to the entrance of the Ohel Moed, voluntarily, before Hashem. (1:3) The countdown to Pesach is almost over. For some people, there is a feeling as if they will need to drag themselves over the finish line. The stress levels are at an all time high and it can be felt in the air. For others, there is an excitement in the air that cannot be paralleled in anticipation of their most favorite Yom Tov.

Pesach is the Yom Tov where *mesorah* takes center stage; it is the Yom Tov where the world of *minhag* dominates the conversations and practices. Pesach is a Yom Tov that needs to be passed on to our children and in turn, their children, לדורות.

If the message given over to the children is one of tension, pressure, and anxiety, how do we plan to continue passing on the Yom Tov to the future?

Perhaps we can explain this idea based on our Possuk: Rashi to our possuk explains that we force a person to bring his *korban* even if he refuses. The very next word in the passuk is “*litzono*” which means “willingly.” Rashi explains that, “*Kofin oso ad she'yomar rotzeh ani*” – He is forced until he says, ‘I want’.

What exactly does this mean? How can a person be forced to do something willfully? Is this not inherently contradictory?

The accepted explanation of Rashi is that deep down, every person wishes to do the right thing, a genuine desire to fulfill the *ratzon HaShem*. Sometimes, however, a push is required to bring out the true inner being.

The Chasam Sofer suggested a different *pshat* in Rashi. He brings the example of a very busy farmer, who commits an *aveira* that requires bringing a *korban*, and may be very reluctant to do so. He has his farm to tend to, as well as family, and perhaps even communal obligations, and he is less than eager to take time off to travel to Yerushalayim and invest in an expensive animal as a *korban*. However, faced with no choice, he purchases an animal and prepares for his trip.

All through his journey, he meets people that try and discourage him, poking fun at him for placing *frumkeit*

issues before business. He himself has some doubts but carries on. Eventually, less than half-heartedly, the man arrives at the *Beis Hamikdash* with his animal.

Upon arrival, however, his attitude suddenly changes. He sees the *Kohanim* wearing the *bigdei kehunah*, engrossed in their *avodah*. He hears the beautiful *shirah* of the *Leviim*, and sees the *Sanhedrin*. Taking in all this *ruchniyus*, by now he is no longer reluctant. He feels overjoyed that he made the trip. This is how a person can be coerced to do something and yet, do it willingly.

The Chasam Sofer underscores the critical importance of placing oneself in an atmosphere of positive *hashpa'a*, peer pressure. As long as the farmer was in his hometown or on the road to *Yerushalayim*, he was discouraged from doing the right thing. But once he placed himself in the *Beis Hamikdash*, his entire perspective changed. Suddenly, doing the right thing was the natural choice. It was not even a question anymore.

It is critical for each of us to ensure that we are at all times in the right *chevra*, and in the right surroundings. Peer pressure is a very strong influence on our behavior. We must see to it that it is positive peer pressure – one which pushes us to pursue *ruchniyus*.

Taking this idea a little further, perhaps we can return to the Pesach discussion:

The *hailiger Imrei Chaim* of Vizhnitz asked his chassidim our above question regarding the messaging of our Pesach stress levels and the chances that Yom Tov will indeed endure forever. To answer, he shared a beautiful idea:

The Torah commands us, בערב תאכלו מצות - *in the evening you shall eat Matzos*. The Rebbe noted that we find a similar word in the birchas hatorah that we recite each morning. והערב נא ה' אלוֹקֵינוּ אֶת דְּבָרֵי תוֹרַתְךָ בְּפִינוּ - *Please Hashem, sweeten the words of the Torah in our mouth*. The Rebbe suggested that instead of translating the word בערב to mean, “in the evening”, we should translate it- בערב תאכלו מצות - with sweetness you shall eat maztos. The Torah is sharing the manner in which the Yom Tov will remain eternal.

In our possuk, when the man bringing his *korban* suddenly saw the beauty, his entire perspective changed. Suddenly he too yelled out “*rotzeh ani*”!

In our own homes, Pesach will present us with the very same opportunity. Will this be a yom tov where one feels like they were slaughtered as the *korban* Pesach, or will this be the year that Yom Tov is so sweet that the perspective and feeling that permeates is one in which everyone says with a smile, “*rotzeh ani*”? G

מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos,