

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

JEWISH WORLD REVIEW

Fast-food at the Seder?

By Rabbi Harvey Belovski

And now the fifth question - when do we eat? This question, a joke of course, should actually help us to focus on a vital Passover theme: the extent of our ability to delay gratification for a higher purpose.

More than just a commemoration, every festival is intended to help us recapture a major event of Jewish history and internalise its message. As the Exodus was the moment of the founding of the Jewish people, Passover is an opportunity to consider what it means to be a member of the Jewish nation. What character traits are we to inculcate and which areas of personal growth are we to spotlight at this time of year? What will we have gained from all the intense preparations, from the Seders, the vast expense and effort? If all we will be left with after Passover is exhaustion and a few extra pounds to shed, will it be worthwhile?

The ability to delay gratification is a key determinant of adult human behaviour; it distinguishes us from everything else in the world. Animals are driven by irrepressible needs; hunger, fear, the urge to reproduce. Once a need arises, its fulfilment becomes paramount; all energies are channelled into its realisation. Babies are scarcely different; when little Jimmy is hungry, tired, cold or has a dirty diaper, nothing will divert him from screaming until he gets what he wants.

In contrast, adults have a sense of higher meaning and value, which can often be strong enough to enable us to delay realising our immediate personal needs in lieu of achieving something of greater overall significance. There are dozens of examples of this phenomenon, ranging from the simple decision not to eat another piece of chocolate, to complex life-choices in which personal needs are completely marginalised in favour of national or even world improvement. This is, of course, a function of the struggle between the physical and spiritual drives; while Judaism prioritises the harmonisation of the two, there are occasions in life when the higher, spiritual yearnings must overcome and sublimate the lower, physical needs. The extent to which we are capable of doing this determines just how successful we really are as human beings.

As popular psychologist M. Scott Peck puts it.

'Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with.' (The Road Less Traveled) I think that Jewish sources would view it quite differently. While initially there may be a sense that one is scheduling the pain before the pleasure, the capacity to do so is one of the most profound human achievements, one that transforms the 'pain' into purpose and possibly a higher form of pleasure itself.

While central to meaningful human experience, the ability to delay gratification doesn't come easily. We don't naturally graduate from childhood into mature and disciplined altruists. What we gain at adulthood is the capacity to control ourselves, but development in this area is a lifetime's work. One need look only at advertising and the media to see that immediate gratification with no consideration for the consequences is very much in vogue. High-risk sports, sexual exploration and many other activities that focus solely on immediate gratification are as popular as ever. The descent into instant fun and the consequential move away from the development of quintessential human sensitivities is all too easy. And we have all experienced people consumed with physical needs of one sort or another - they are unstoppable until they have what they want. In position as major leaders, such people can quite literally destroy the world; they nearly have on a number of occasions.

The Jewish people are expected to be the world experts in the field of delaying gratification, when necessary, to achieve higher goals. All humanity was originally destined to be proficient in this area, as evidenced by the prohibition of eating from the fruit in the Garden of Eden. Seen through Kabbalistic eyes, G-d did not demand that Adam and Eve forever deny themselves the fruit, only that they wait to eat it until after the first Sabbath. Had they demonstrated their ability to postpone their desire to eat it in order to fulfil G-d's will, they could have enjoyed the fruit legitimately. Instead, they were expelled from the Garden, forever changing the course of history.

As the nation of the Torah, the Jewish people are charged with the task of restoring, by example, this capacity to the whole of humanity. This began at the Exodus, the birth of our people. Our ancestors clearly demonstrated the capacity to wait for redemption, to tolerate the backbreaking Egyptian slavery, to put their

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dearest yearnings for salvation on hold until the right moment. Some members of the tribe of Ephraim had not been able to wait and had escaped before the appointed time; the Talmud records that they sadly died in the desert. Even when the time for deliverance seemed to be at hand, the Israelites' ability to wait enslaved until G-d was ready for them was tested to the limits. No sooner had Moshe introduced himself to Pharaoh than the slavery deepened; the Jews were no longer given straw, yet were expected to maintain the same level of brick production. Just when they thought the end of the slavery was in sight, they discovered that they had to wait a little longer. When the Exodus finally occurred, the nascent Jewish people were already well-trained in the art of waiting.

Each Passover, and especially on Seder night, we are afforded a unique opportunity to relive those crucial final moments in Egypt. The lessons learned there were so central to our national and personal mission that we must revisit them every year to ensure that we are attuned to our key Jewish responsibilities.

This message is most obviously expressed in the structure of the Seder. We begin the evening in much the same way that we would commence any Sabbath or Yom Tov. Kiddush is followed by hand-washing, in preparation for the meal. But instead of eating the matzah and commencing the delicious Yom Tov feast, there is disappointment in store. Each person gets a small piece of vegetable dipped in salt-water (known as Karpas), then the matzah is broken, as if to eat it, but then hidden away and the plate containing the Seder foods is removed from the table, to be replaced with story books! We are tempted into thinking that the meal is coming (the fifth question - when do we eat?); we are taken to the point when the food is almost in our mouths and then told that we will have to read the story of our ancestors' miraculous escape from Egypt before we can actually have the meal. The Karpas makes matters worse, for it is a salty hors d'oeuvres; not only do we prepare for the meal and then take the food away before eating it, but we make the participants extra-hungry before doing so!

This is all part of a genius plan to ensure that the annual re-enactment of our redemption inculcates within us the same sense of priorities as the original

Exodus experience. We have waited all day to start the Seder, we are hungry, delicious food odours are wafting from the kitchen and all the 'let's eat now' switches have been thrown (Kiddush, hand-washing, hors d'oeuvres, breaking matzah). Pavlov would have been proud. Yet something much more important than food must happen first - recounting the story of the Exodus. Understanding our roots, the very fibre of our national being, the unfolding Divine plan for Mankind, G-d's miraculous intervention in human history and the very concept of purposeful freedom - all of these must be achieved before we may begin our meal.

On Seder night, we sacrifice our need for immediate gratification (having rather cruelly stimulated it) to the noblest ideal; transmitting the wonders of Jewish history and our unique relationship with G-d to the next generation. This should inform our sense of priority in all our endeavours, throughout the year. We have seen that developing the capacity to delay gratification is central to the Jewish understanding of real achievement, defines us as a nation and contributes to rectifying the primeval sin of the Garden of Eden. If we finish this Passover having learned, even a little, to delay our immediate needs long enough to pursue some of the majestic goals of Judaism, then it will all have been worthwhile. ©2006 Rabbi H. Belovski & jewishworldreview.com

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"The Lord will do battle for you and you shall be silent" (Exodus 14:14). The last day of the festival of Passover is dedicated to the splitting of the Reed Sea, one of the most dramatic and cataclysmic events in Biblical history. The Israelites have left Egypt and believe they are "home-free"; however, the Egyptian hordes change their mind and begin to chase after the newly formed free men. The Israelites, faced by the Egyptians behind them and the Reed Sea in front of them, panic - and in their fear they cry out to Moses, 'Are there then no graves in Egypt that you have taken us out to die in the desert?!' (Exodus 14:11). Moses attempts to comfort his people, exhorting them not to fear but rather to watch for Divine salvation "The Lord will do battle for you and you shall be silent" (Exodus 14:14).

But is this indeed the religious message of the Exodus? Does the Almighty expect us to stand quietly by in times of danger and challenge, simply waiting for the Almighty to emerge as a deus ex machina plucking us out from the fires of our enemies? Is such silence on our part consistent with Jewish History, and especially with these last six decades following the Holocaust? Where would the Jewish people be today had we not attempted to take our destiny into our own hands and fought battle after battle for the Jewish State?

Indeed, the classical Hassidic interpreters have turned the verse we've just cited on its head by providing an alternate literal interpretation: "The Lord will provide you with bread (the Hebrew *yilakhem* can mean to do battle but can also mean to provide bread from the Hebrew *lekhem*; most wars are after all fought after bread or material gain) but you must plow (the Hebrew *heresh* can either mean to be silent or to plow)." (Exodus 14:14) And although this reading of the verse would seem to be the very antithesis of its meaning in context, it is nevertheless the true meaning of this most dramatic miracle. Yes, Moses expected G-d to act and counsel the Israelites to silently await G-d's miracle. But that is not the message that G-d conveys to Moses in the very next verse of the text: "And G-d said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them move forward'" (Exodus 14:15). G-d is ready to effectuate a miracle, but not before the Israelites prove themselves by putting their lives on the line. Before G-d does anything, the Israelites must jump into the raging sea and attempt as best as possible to get away from the Egyptians. It is only after "the children of Israel have entered into the midst of the sea" - despite its inherent dangers - that the waters will miraculously part and the Israelites will find themselves "on dry land" (Exodus 14:16). Rashi even goes as far as saying in G-d's name, "This is not the time to engage in lengthy prayer when the Israelites are in such deep trouble." When the going gets tough, tough people get going; from G-d's point of view; prayer must be coupled with action. From this perspective, the Hassidim may be literally wrong but conceptually right.

I believe there is yet a second interpretation of Moses' statement to the Israelites that G-d will do battle and they remain silent. Perhaps Moses understood very well that although the ultimate victor in Israel's battles is the Almighty Himself - "The Lord is a Being of battle, the Lord is His name" (Exodus 15:3) - nevertheless, G-d does not fight alone. He battles alongside of the Israelites, but the Israelites themselves must wage the war. They were frightened to take on the seven indigenous nations inhabiting Canaan during their first forty years in the desert, so G-d did not make war either. It was only in the case of Amalek and then later in the time of Joshua that Israel fought - and then G-d fought with them and led them to victory.

However, every war is a tragedy because the fallout of every war is the cruel and untimely death of the best and brightest of our people. Yes, we won the wars against Amalek, just as we won the wars in conquest of Israel four thousand years ago; we also won our recent wars of self defense enabling us to come home after 2,000 years of exile and establish Jewish Sovereignty in Jerusalem. But despite these miraculous victories, we suffered unspeakable losses of so many of our best and brightest and bravest and

most committed.

In 1952 I was privileged to pray in the Beth Moses Hospital, which had been taken over by the Klozenberger Hassidim who had survived the European Holocaust. That particular Sabbath was the first Sabbath circumcision the Hassidim had experienced since leaving Europe. The Rebbe, who himself suffered the loss of his wife and 13 children, rose to speak 'And I see that you are rooted in your blood (*damayikh*) and I say to you, by your blood shall you live, by your blood shall you live.' This verse of the Prophet Ezekiel is intoned at every Jewish circumcision, explaining to us that the price for our eternity is the necessity that we shed blood on behalf of our G-d, our faith and our ideals. However, I would give the verse an alternate interpretation. The Hebrew word *dam* is usually translated as blood; but the root *d-m* can also mean silence, as in "*vayidom Aharon*", and Aaron was silent, when his two righteous sons died a tragic and untimely death. I believe the prophet Ezekiel was telling us that when Jews suffer, and even seem to suffer needlessly, tragically and absurdly, but still remain silent and refuse to cry out against G-d, we express with that silence the profound inner strength which justifies our eternal life. "I see that you are rooted in your silence and I say to you that because of that silence do you live." Perhaps this is what Moses was saying to the Jewish people: yes, the Lord will wage battle for you, and some very good Israelites will tragically die in battle, but you must still remain silent in terms of your relationship to G-d. It is by the faith of that silence that you will live eternally and ultimately redeem the world. ©2015 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

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Many of us are aware that there is a detailed discussion amongst the commentators to the Seder night Hagadah regarding the possibility of a fifth cup of wine as part of the Seder service. Some are of the opinion that the cup of wine that is designated as the Cup of Eliyahu serves as this fifth cup. Be that as it may, I wish to discuss another foursome that in our time may have developed into a fivesome.

We are taught in the Hagadah that there are four categories of children in the Jewish world. They are: the wise son, the wicked son, the naive and simple son and the son who knows nothing and cannot even begin to ask anything intelligently.

We are all acquainted with the wise son. He has had a thorough Jewish education and is intelligently loyal to the Torah and its values system and traditional way of life. We unfortunately are able to clearly identify the evil child amongst us-the apostate, the self-hater, the one who is addicted to anti-Jewish

ideologies and practices.

The simple son is also known to us. He has no real animus towards G-d and Torah though he certainly may be repelled by the behavior and statements of those of us who arrogantly claim to represent Him and His Torah. He only asks: "What is this all about?" It is a legitimate if somewhat depressing question. After all, after 3500 years of Jewish life and history, that son should, by now, have an inkling of what it is all about. Nevertheless there is still hope for this son-life and its events and the non-Jewish world will eventually help explain the matter to him.

And finally the son who knows nothing, not even what to ask can also be salvaged by education, warmth, direction, role models and proper mentoring. Even the evil son can be corrected and redeemed but apparently not without pain and discomfort. After all it was Stalin that basically cured the Jewish communists of their malignant Marxist disease and made them Jews once again.

But there is a fifth child that sits at the Jewish Seder table in our time. He has no qualms about marrying a non-Jew, he is probably liberally pro-Palestinian, he has never visited Israel, though he knows it to be a racist and apartheid place, he considers himself to be part of the intellectual elite, he has no real knowledge of Torah or Judaism and yet considers himself an expert on these matters.

He knows the best policy for Jews and Israel to follow and he is so convinced of his rectitude and astuteness that he is willing, nay even demanding, to use all types of force to coerce the Jewish people and its small national state to adopt his will. He is out to fix the world and is willing to sacrifice Israel, Judaism and Jews in the process. He sits on boards of Jewish organizations, he chooses rabbis and proclaims himself to be a faithful Jew. Yet he will contribute generously to general non-Jewish charities but gives only a pittance towards Jewish educational projects. He is not an evil son nor is he a wise one.

He certainly will deny that he is somehow simple or naive and he certainly claims that he knows what questions to pose. Yet he may be the most tragic of all of the sons, for though he is able to pose the questions he is unwilling to hear the answers. In the words of the prophet Isaiah "the heart of the people is overladen with fat and their ears are stopped up."

It is this hedonistic, intelligent, but very deaf son that troubles us so deeply. For we have developed no plan or method to deal with him-either to exclude him from the Jewish society completely or to somehow redeem him and bring him closer to Jewish reality and positive participation in Jewish life. It is certainly not clear to us how to accomplish this second option.

So perhaps we will have to rely on the inspiration represented by the fifth cup of wine-on the miraculous powers of the prophet Eliyahu and on his

unfailing faith in the restoration of Jews and the Jewish people generally. Pesach teaches us never to say never. It is the holiday of rebirth and constant renewal. So will it be for all of our different children all of whom we gather and embrace around our Pesach Seder table. ©2012 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The only events in Jewish history that are powerfully remembered are those which have become part of Jewish ritual. Consider the Exodus from Egypt. It is remembered precisely because of the Seder ritual, which serves as a paradigm for the effectiveness of ritual.

During the Seder, we say that in every generation there is an obligation to see oneself (lirot et atsmo) as if one is leaving Egypt. Lirot comes from the root ra-ah, to see. But ra-ah in the Torah goes well beyond ocular ability. Rather it deals with empathizing and feeling emotionally attached to that which is being thought about.

This first step of feeling the Egypt experience leads to a second stage which is the mandate to tell the story of the Exodus to one's children and grandchildren-ve-hegadeta levincha. (Exodus 13:8) The feeling of the evening becomes expressed through the spoken word by actually verbalizing what occurred.

This two step process of feeling and verbalizing the Exodus event is not unique to Passover. Every morning and night we are mandated in our prayers to recall the experience in Egypt. At the Seder, however, we take those dimensions to a third level, that of re-experiencing in the spirit of zachor et hayom hazeh ("Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt." - Exodus 13:30).

Just as the term zachor of Shabbat (Exodus 20:8) means re-enacting G-d's resting on Shabbat, so does the term zachor of Egypt mean re-enacting the Egypt experience. Hence, at the Seder, we relive those moments in the past when our mothers and fathers were slaves and were ultimately freed. We eat matzah

and bitter herbs representing servitude while, at the same time, we consume wine and recline, representing freedom.

These three steps, feeling, speaking and acting are all crucial ingredients in the way ritual observance achieves its goal-to help us intensely connect and remember the past.

It is during the time of year where ritual abounds-the springtime holiday of Pesach that one should especially note the dearth of ritual concerning perhaps the major calamity to have befallen our people-

the Holocaust. It is my belief that, despite all our efforts to keep the memory of the six million alive, the Holocaust will not be remembered because, unlike the Egypt story, it has not been ritualized.

At our Synagogue, the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, we have made modest strides in the ritualization of the Shoah. We have produced a "Haggadah for the Yom HaShoah Seder" which is used on Holocaust Memorial Day. Every Shabbat before the reading of the "Av HaRachamim," the prayer commemorating the victims of the Crusades, a congregant reads a short vignette about a European shtetl that was destroyed by the Nazis. Only when our community makes a commitment to ritualize the Shoah, will the Shoah be etched in Jewish memory forever. If we fail in this endeavor, the Shoah, I fear, will one day be relegated to a mere footnote in Jewish history. We dare not let that happen. © 2002 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Although the Torah only discusses bringing a Pesach Sheini for those who were ritually unclean or were far away from the Temple (the only place offerings can be brought) for the Korbon Pesach, the Talmud (Pesachim 93a-b) discusses the requirement to bring a Pesach Sheini even if there was a different reason why the first one wasn't brought. The terms used by the Talmud are "hizid," meaning he purposely didn't bring the offering even though he could have and knew that he should have, and "shagag," meaning even though he could have brought it, he didn't know that he should have (e.g. he forgot which day he was supposed to bring it). The Talmud quotes a three way dispute between Rebbi, Rabbi Nasan (R"N) and Rabbi Chananya ben Akavya (RChBA) regarding when someone deserves "Kareis," one of the most severe punishments (meted out by the heavenly court, not human courts), and the punishment described for not bringing the Korbon Pesach and/or Pesach Sheini (see Bamidbar 9:13). There are numerous issues that this discussion raises; I would like to focus on just one (or two) of them.

With two separate offerings being discussed (Korbon Pesach and Pesach Sheini), two causes for not bringing them (purposely not bringing it or inadvertently not bringing it), and three opinions that are to be applied to each possibility, twelve scenarios are covered. Nevertheless, since everyone agrees regarding two of the scenarios, and two agree (albeit a different two each time) on the other two scenarios, the Talmud is able to sum up what everyone holds in just over five lines of text. Still, with the rationale behind

each opinion being different, explaining all twelve (or at least trying to read someone trying to explain them) can be a bit tedious. I'll try to simplify it as best as I can, in order to explain the specific difficulty I want to address.

Rebbi is of the opinion that each offering represents its own individual "holiday," so purposely not bringing either of them (when required to) deserves the punishment of "Kareis." Therefore, if one purposely didn't bring the first, or purposely didn't bring the second (again, discussing only situations where one was required to bring each, as opposed to, say, when one is ritually unclean, so is not allowed to bring it, or when someone brought the first one so has no need to bring the second one), "Kareis" applies. (Rashi points out that since a person can only get "Kareis" once, even if a person purposely doesn't bring both, only one "Kareis" can apply.) It is only when both were inadvertently not brought that a person who didn't bring either escapes this punishment. (In this situation, all agree that there is no "Kareis.")

According to Rabbi Nasan, even though the second offering serves as compensation for not bringing the first offering, bringing it does not repair the damage done by not bringing the first one. Therefore, even if the second one not being brought was done inadvertently, the "Kareis" from purposely not bringing the first still applies. On the other hand, if he inadvertently didn't bring the first one, he cannot be given "Kareis" even if he purposely didn't bring the second one, as (according to R"N) the punishment of "Kareis" only applies to the first, not the second.

Rabbi Chananya ben Akavya understands the Pesach Sheinu as being able to fix the damage that was done the first time, with "Kareis" only coming if he purposely didn't do both; if either the first or second (or both) were missed inadvertently, there is no "Kareis."

For obvious reasons, the Talmud does not discuss what happens if someone did bring the Korbon Pesach, as once the mitzvah was fulfilled properly, there is no need to bring a Pesach Sheini – and there can be no punishment for not doing so. However, the Talmud also doesn't address what happens if someone brought the Pesach Sheini, i.e. whether doing so removes the "Kareis" that purposely not bringing the Korbon Pesach brings. True, we know that according to RChBA bringing the Pesach Sheini means there is no "Kareis," but what about according to Rebbi and R"N? Why doesn't the Talmud discuss this possibility (and its ramifications) as well?

Although this question is well worth discussing in its own right, the question that led me to this topic was what the Rambam, who follows Rebbi's opinion when he codified the law, says about such a case. In Sefer HaMitzvos (Positive Commandment #57) he writes "it is also true according to Rebbi that if he purposely didn't bring the first one [even though] he brought the second he deserves [Kareis]," while in

Hilchos Korbon Pesach (5:2) he writes "if he purposely didn't bring the first, he brings the second, and if he did not bring the second, even inadvertently, behold he deserves Kareis," with the (strong) implication being that he only gets "Kareis" for purposely not bringing the first if he doesn't bring the second (whether his not bringing the second is done purposely or inadvertently). How can what the Rambam wrote in Sefer HaMitzvos be reconciled with what he wrote in Mishneh Torah/Yad HaChazaka? Does a person who brings the Pesach Sheini still deserve "Kareis" for purposely not bring the Korbon Pesach or not?

Some (including the Rambam, 's son, Avraham) simply push the question aside by saying that the Rambam's opinion changed between the time he wrote his Sefer HaMitzvos and when he wrote the Yad HaChazaka. However, the possibility that there is more than one possible answer to the question of what happens if someone brought the Pesach Sheini after purposely not bringing the Korbon Pesach makes the question of why the Talmud didn't discuss such a scenario that much stronger. It is alsomuch more difficult to classify the two offerings as separate and distinct "holidays" if bringing the second can fully compensate for not bringing the first. (Although they are connected in the sense that bringing the first prevents an obligation to bring the second from applying, that is not the same as bringing he second fixing the damage done by not bringing the first.

Rashi (Pesachim 93a, d"h Tashlumin d'Rishon) says explicitly that, according to R"N, one gets "Kareis" for purposely not bringing the Korbon Pesach even if he brings the Pesach Sheini. Later (93b, d"h l'Rebbi), Rashi tells us that the reason, according to Rebbi and R"N, one still deserves "Kareis" if he purposely didn't do the first even if his not doing the second was only inadvertent is because the second does not "fix" what the first one "broke." If the second doesn't "fix" what the first one "broke," and one of the things "broken" by purposely not bringing the first one is deserving "Kareis," then even if one brought the second one, what was already "broken" remains "broken," i.e. he still deserves "Kareis." (If anything, that inadvertently not doing the second one doesn't "fix" purposely not doing the first one is learned from the assumed fact that he deserves "Kareis" even if he brings the second one!) In other words, by telling us that inadvertently not bringing the second does not remove the "Kareis" brought on by purposely not bringing the first, the Talmud is also telling us that according to Rebbi, who considers each of the two offerings as separate "holidays," and R"N, who also does not consider the second to be able to "fix" the first, the same is true even if they actually brought the second one. And since we know that according to RChBA one does not deserve "Kareis" unless he purposely didn't bring both, there is no need to discuss what happens if one purposely doesn't bring

the first but brings the second.

The Rambam (Hilchos Pesach 1:2) tells us that anyone who purposely does not bring the Korbon Pesach deserves "Kareis," without providing any qualifications. If it were true that anyone who brings the Pesach Sheini does not deserve "Kareis," the Rambam should have mentioned this here, when telling us that not bringing the Korbon Pesach carries the punishment of "Kareis." The question we are left with is why the Ramban implied (in 5:2) that if one brings the Pesach Sheini he doesn't get "Kareis."

The Yad HaChazaka was written in order to make it easier for people to know what the conclusions of the Talmudic discussions were without having to learn through the entire Talmudic discussion. He took a lot of heat for this, but it is clear that his intent was not for those who are learned, or who could become learned, to disregard the Talmud and just rely on his conclusions. Rather, he expected those who could delve deeper into the Talmudic discussions to do just that (even if they used his work as a reference to see what his conclusions were). His main audience, though, was the layman, who wasn't going to (or wasn't able to) learn the entire topic and figure out what the Talmud's conclusions were on his own.

For this audience, writing explicitly that there is "Kareis" for purposely not bringing the Korbon Pesach even if the Pesach Sheini was brought might dissuade them from bringing a Pesach Sheini (under those circumstances), as they might think there is no reason to bring the Pesach Sheini if they deserve "Kareis" even if they do. Instead, the Rambam focused on the fact that purposely not bringing a Pesach Sheini when required to deserves "Kareis" in its own right, so that they would realize the seriousness of not bringing it when required to. Just as the Talmud relied on our ability to figure out that according to Rebbi (and R"N) "Kareis" is deserved for purposely not bring the Korbon Pesach regardless of what happens with the Pesach Sheini, the Rambam relied on those who can delve deeper into his words figuring this out as well, especially after almost spelling it out at the beginning of Hilchos Pesach.

[As far as the implication in Sefer HaMitzvos that only according to Rebbi does one who purposely did not bring a Korbon Pesach deserves "Kareis" even if he brings a Pesach Sheini, the word "compensation" used does not mean the same thing as it does when the Talmud in Pesachim uses it in contrast with "fixing," but the "compensation" discussed (Chagiga 9a, Hilchos Chagiga 1:4) in regards to bringing a Chagiga that should have been brought on the first day of Yom Tov on one of the next sis days instead. That "compensation" is not considered a separate mitzvah (when enumeration the 613); Pesach Sheini is.]

Are his words (in 5:2) misleading? Yes, and perhaps purposely so. But he followed the Talmud's

lead, and felt he didn't need to state explicitly (especially if doing so could be detrimental) that one who purposely didn't bring the Korbon Pesach deserves "Kareis" even if he brings the Pesach Sheini. In Sefer HaMitzvos, on the other hand, which was designed for the more learned (as evidenced by the complex "Sh'rashim" he lays out to explain how he chose which mitzvos qualify, complexities he refers to often when listing the mitzvos, including this one), he was explicit about it. And he countered (preempted?) his misleading implication in 5:2 by stating, without any qualifications, that anyone who purposely does not bring the Korbon Pesach when they are required to deserves "Kareis." Anyone. Even if they bring the Pesach Sheini a month later. © 2015 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YAAKOV NEUBERGER

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The turning point in the diaspora of Mitzrayim, the first crack in the hester panim -- the hiddenness of Hashem and the distance from Him that we felt -- came in response to the prayers that consumed our hearts at that time: "vayehi bayomim horabim hoheim vayomos melech mitzrayim vayayanchu Bnai Yisroel min hoAvodah vayizaku vata'al shavasom el hoElokim min hoAvodah. Vayishma Eolkim es na'akasm vayizkor Elokim es briso es Avraham es Yitzchak v'es Yaakov. Vayar Elokim es Bnai Yisroel vayedah Elokim - [After the Egyptian king died] the Jews groaned due to the labor, they yelled and their screams rose up to Hashem from their labor. Hashem heard their shrieks and He recalled His covenant with Avrohom with Yitzchok and with Yaakov."

Indeed, as we have pointed out in this space in the past, it is unclear from the text whether we were in fact shouting out to Hashem altogether. Ohr Hachayim points this out and interprets that whereas our shrieks were pure expressions of our torment and despondency, Hashem received them and responded to them as if we were indeed davening. Accentuating this ambiguity is that Hashem hears "na'akasm" even as the Jews offered up "shav'asam" and "za'akasm". Thus Hashem records for us that long before He revealed to us his absolute and responsive mastery over all matters, He was for us a "shomeah tefillah".

The Rov zt"l, who left this world on Pesach, and who often discussed the absurdity of the individual bringing his personal requirements to the attention of the A-mighty, suggested that this phrase catches the attribute of Hashem that encourages what would otherwise defy all logic. In other words, being a listener is a defining characteristic of Hashem, much as Rachum v'Chanun and other descriptions that Hashem has provided for us. This is how the Rov explained a seeming incongruity in our Shmone Esrei. It makes ample sense to request wisdom from the one who provides wisdom to all and to request cures from the

one who heals. Does it make sense, in the next to last brocho of request, i.e. the brocho of Shomeah Tefillah, to ask for anything other than empathy from a "great listener"?

Thus the Rov explained that Hashem, as a Shomeah Tefillah, invites us to request even that which would seem to be insignificant from Hashem's perspective. This attribute allows us to daven from our perspective, to ask what is meaningful to us even though we could not ask for it would we consider Hashem's perspective.

The significance of this part of our relationship with Hashem is underscored by a Rashi on the Asseres Hadibros. It is in the very first commandment that Rashi (Shemos 20:2) teaches us to grapple with its formulation prohibiting the service of "other gods". Rashi argues that it cannot be read literally without giving a measure of credibility to some aspect of divinity of a pagan system, and that would be offensive to the Ribono Shel Olam. At first Rashi explains that "others" (presumably unworthy humans) appointed these idols as gods for themselves. The second interpretation explains the falseness and deceptiveness of these gods, as they are "others" to those who serve them, i.e. they do not answer when they appeal to them and act as if they don't recognize the supplicant at all.

Therefore it is clear that the placement of this comment at the head of the Decalogue, as monotheism is being described, instructs us to appreciate that Hashem's responsiveness to us is not only a license for one particular brocho and request, but distinguishes our core beliefs in a most meaningful manner. It follows, quite counterintuitively, that it is because He presented himself as the ultimate Shomeah Tefillah that almost every prayer is meaningful, and that allows otherwise insignificant concerns to connect us to our Creator.

Hashem introduced us to his trait of Shomeah Tefillah as He opened to us the phases of His revelation and the steps of our redemption. Interestingly, He described Himself as listening to our na'okos -- groans -- rather than our tefilos. Moreover, according to Rabbi Yochanon (Medrash Rabbah, beginning of Parshas Va'eschanan) it is in this moment that Hashem begins to describe to us the many and varied dimensions of prayer, for it is from the previously cited pesukim that we learn that "ze'oko", "sha'avo" and "na'oko" are types of prayer. Each of the ten formulae of prayer listed by Rabbi Yochanan (ibid) presumably reveal new facets of prayer. Both Malbim and Rav Hirsch, through different parallel studies, explain na'oko as a despairing prayer, one final gasping shot, if you will. Rav Hirsch continues to observe that the text teaches that Hashem accepted prayers that were not yet mouthed and responded to dangers with an urgency that we had not yet felt.

Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l, in his classic work Shearim Betifla, explains that we present bakoshos --

requests -- in our prayers, but behind every request is a na'oko. For example, in our Shmone Esrei we list our bakashos for wisdom, health, parnosso, the ingathering of our people and our return to Yerushalyaim and we do not readily give expression to the na'ako.

We may simply ask for parnosso and that comprises our bakosho. Yet the underlying na'ako is the fear of foreclosure, the anxiety of having to borrow again, the embarrassment of meeting one's creditors, the fear that the next phone call is one of them, etc. Our bakashos may ask to be blessed with family, while the unstated na'ako is the month by month disappointment, the tug every time one sees a friend's baby carriage, hears of a sholom zochor, or is part of a conversation about carpools. Our bakosho asks for a complete recovery and a life free of a nagging ailment, while the latent na'ako is to never have to see the young suffer and to be full of faith and free of questions and doubts.

In Mitzrayim we cried out from suffering that defied words, and that was our bakosho and ze'oko. Nevertheless, Hashem saw that anguish and heard as well the cry of a people whose lives had become seemingly meaningless, whose glorious legacy had been driven down to misery and emptiness. Whereas we, for the most part, were focused on surviving the day and could hardly feel pained by lost opportunities, Hashem saw the hollowness of an unfulfilled destiny and the crushing disappointment of the vacant dreams of his beloved Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

Thus not only do we learn the fullness and uniqueness of Hashem's middah of Shomeah Tefillah from His response to Bnai Yisroel, but we also can try to enrich our own davening (whether we are the subject of the tefillah or others are) by focusing on the na'ako latent within every bakosho. © 2015 Rabbi Y. Neuberger & The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

Here's a new definition that certainly sheds light on an older than old subject. Why is Pesach called "Pesach"? The Sefas Emes quoting a generic source cites that Pesach is actually a contraction of two words: "Peh"- mouth and "Sach"-speaks. How does that enhance our Seder or observance of Pesach? He explains that through the exodus from Egypt our mouths were opened and we were able to sing to and praise HASHEM out loud, as by the splitting of the sea. Prior to that we were not only enslaved to Pharaoh's forces bodily but we were blocked and unable to express our true spiritual nature. Only later, through the leaving of Egypt did we discover our authentic voices. Our mouths, so to speak, were in Exile! How can a mouth be in exile?

In the spirit the verse, "In order that you should remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life" I will recall days in High School, in public school

when there were those occasional events they called, "dances"! I have to admit I didn't understand the screaming "hard rock" music and my feet did not feel much like dancing. I remember not feeling entirely comfortable doing what everyone else was doing but under duress, the pressure of social coercion I did try. The memory of the feeling of incongruity, that I was missing something and there was perhaps something wrong with me remains with me till today.

Years later at a Jewish event, in Yeshiva, after overcoming the initial aversion to holding men's hands I found out, much to my surprise, just how natural and genuinely fun it is to dance in circles, to music that matched the temperament of my soul. It was certainly more akin to how my feet felt comfortable expressing themselves. No, I have not become a professional dancer since nor do I have any plans to do so but I do feel better about myself looking back at the old days understanding it was a good thing or at least it wasn't a bad thing that I didn't "get it", what that music was all about. It just wasn't me! This is now is me!

The same principle applies to patterns of speech as well. We just may find ourselves hemmed in and feeling woefully confined by the acceptable limits of the society around us. We are publicly apologetic and privately ashamed to mention anything "too Jewish" or to speak of any matter that places the status of the Jewish People on any differing plain higher or lower. We may begin to realize that we are so afraid to offend and we should be that we fail to inspire even ourselves.

There's an old Chinese proverb I saw in a poetry book that says, "Read a 100 poems and write like a 100 poets. Read a 1000 poems and write like yourself!" How true! It's hard for the poet "to find his voice", but there is something to be said for finding the voice that best approximates your own to help you until you find the key to your own heart and the master key to others.

Along comes Pesach and the Seder and with the experience of the Haggada we are lead (A Naggid is a leader) by words to the point where, with the help of four cups of wine, we are singing and crying with hearts full of endless joy as little children sitting on the lap of our Father. It's quite a profound change from that sober and measured awkwardness that immediately preceded the Seder before we found our voices and our mouths were liberated once again as never before.

Understanding that Pesach is "Peh"-mouth "Sach"-speaks teaches us this is the real us!
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