



Torah Thoughts from the YIGC Community

Pesach Sheni – Making Up A Lost Opportunity

Daniel Kahn with his son, Yehoshua

In Parshat Beha'alotcha, we read about the second time the Jewish nation observed the Pesach holiday with the special animal sacrifice called the *Korban Pesach* (Bamidbar 9). During this Pesach, there was a small group of individuals who were unable to participate in the holiday sacrifice because they were ritually impure. They asked Moshe what they could do about their situation. Moshe asked Hashem and was informed about a special opportunity that would be available for people in such circumstances, whereby they could fulfill the mitzvah the following month. This opportunity is called Pesach Sheni.

Why is this mitzvah different from all other mitzvot? If one misses the mitzvah of taking the four species on Sukkot, or it was raining all night and one was unable to dwell in the sukkah as Biblically commanded, there is no opportunity to make up for those lost mitzvot. In fact, Rabbi Eliezer in the Mishna (Sukkah 2:6) argues there *should* be a make-up for someone who missed sitting in the sukkah the first night, but his view is rejected because "that which is twisted cannot be fixed, and that which is missing cannot be counted" (Kohelet 1:15). Why is Korban Pesach an exception to this principle?

Moreover, Rambam points out that the Torah establishes mitzvot in absolute terms, "one law for you and for the stranger... an eternal law..." (Bamidbar 15:15). Mitzvot are set up based on the ordinary, most likely circumstances; Torah law cannot be based on unusual or extraordinary cases, but must be immutable and eternal in force across all generations. (*Guide for the Perplexed* part 3 chapter 34) Why, then, does Hashem establish a mitzvah allowing individuals a second chance at a mitzvah missed because of unusual circumstances?

We might find one answer to our question in the Gemara (Sukkah 25b). There, Chazal, perhaps bothered by our question, explain the reason these individuals were impure was that they were performing an important mitzvah: either carrying Yosef's bones to Canaan, or burying a person who was found dead on the way. So it would be a disincentive if they were then punished, so to speak, by losing out on the Pesach offering because they were involved in the performance of a mitzvah.

Another answer may stem from the fact that Korban Pesach is one of only two positive mitzvot in the Torah which carry the severe punishment of *karet* (being cut off from the Jewish people) if neglected. (All other mitzvot with this punishment are negative prohibitions.) The second mitzvah, *brit milah* (circumcision), can be performed at any time if the opportunity to do so was not available when the child reached eight days old. Interestingly, there is a connection between these two mitzvot: a man is not allowed to participate in the Korban Pesach unless he has undergone circumcision (Shemot 2:48). Both of these mitzvot represent the individual's covenant with Hashem, and the centrality of that covenant is what warrants the make-up opportunity for each of these two mitzvot. (See Rabbi Yitzchak Kroll, *Clilei HaChodesh Nissan 5778, for more on the centrality of the Korban Pesach.*)

Another question that arises when reviewing this parsha revolves around the fact that Moshe clearly did not know about the law of Pesach Sheni. On one hand, we see the greatness of Moshe in that he was able to turn to Hashem, ask Him what to do in the situation, and receive an immediate answer - but why did Hashem not share this with Moshe on Mount Sinai? The Midrash explains that Hashem wanted to honor the people involved for showing their love of Hashem and His mitzvot, or alternatively, that Moshe was not yet fully made aware of all the parameters of the law (Semachot 8).

The vast majority of Biblical mitzvot contain very specific parameters in terms of how and when they are to be performed. In a case of hardship, where someone is unable to execute a mitzvah due to extenuating circumstances, he is exempted based on the concept of *oneis*. Yet, the Torah does make an exception for someone who has a sincere desire for spiritual elevation through the mitzvah of Korban Pesach, since this is a foundation of our religion. The Torah illustrates how committed one group of Jews was to this fundamental mitzvah: they were not satisfied with their situation of *oneis*, and their devotion was rewarded with the information that they would indeed be able to make up the missed opportunity.

Happy Pesach Sheni!

Shabbos and Yom Tov: Contrasting the Musafim

Rabbi Moshe Berger

The Musaf liturgy of Shabbos is primarily a petition for the restoration of the Sacrificial Service in the Bais Hamikdash. That restoration, the prayer asserts, will enable us to fulfill our specific sacrificial obligations, including the Shabbos Musaf sacrifice.

The Shabbos liturgy makes no explicit reference, however, to the tragedy of our exile.

Nor does it petition for the rebuilding of the Temple. In merely five words – שתעלינו בשמחה לארצינו ותטעינו בגבולינו [...] may you bring us up with joy to our land and plant us within our (rightful) boundaries], it requests that Hashem return us to our land, not as an end in itself nor even as a significant stage in the ge'ulah [redemption] process, but simply as a necessary precondition for our being able once again to fulfill our sacrificial obligations.

The Yom Tov Musaf, in contrast, elaborates extensively and passionately on the tragic, painful reality of exile:

Because of our sins we were exiled from our homeland, and distanced from being on our land. Therefore we are unable to ascend and appear and prostrate ourselves before You, and to fulfill our duties in Your chosen House - the great and holy House that was called by Your name, because of the hand that was stretched out against Your Sanctuary...Gather our dispersed from among the nations, and assemble our scattered from the ends of the earth. Bring us with song to Zion Your city, and with everlasting joy to Jerusalem Your sanctuary. There we will offer You our obligatory sacrifices...

We can explain the difference between these *musafim* in light of the different central, foundational symbols related to Shabbos and Yom Tov, respectively, which metaphorically represent how we are able to relate to Hashem. In his Yartzeit Shiur entitled *Kibbud v'Oneg Shabbos*, Rabbi Soloveitchik points out that the defining symbol of the Yomim Tovim is the Mitzvah of Pilgrimage - עליה לרגל; on Shabbos, that symbol is the Mishkan [the Tabernacle].

The Mitzvah of Pilgrimage choreographs that aspect of the Man-God experience where, in order relate to Hashem and to perceive His Presence, Man must exert himself and engage in a quest for Him. The Torah obligation to literally leave one's home symbolizes the reality that, at times, the Divine Presence will not arrive at my doorstep. One must leave home base to search for Him. The Yom Tov Musaf liturgy, therefore, reflects this fundamental human need to search for the Almighty, and bemoans our present inability to fulfill that mitzvah on a literal level.

Ramban elaborates on this aspect of the Man-God relationship in his comment to Deuteronomy 12:5, which reads:

...at the place that Hashem your God will choose from among all your tribes to place His Name, shall you seek out His Presence and come there.

Ramban writes:

The meaning of "You shall seek out His Presence," is that you should go to Him from distant lands and ask [the people you meet along the way] "Which is the road to the House of Hashem?" And you shall say each man to his fellow, "Come: Let us ascend the mountain of Hashem, to the Temple of the God of Yaakov."

The Shabbos-Mishkan model, in contrast, represents that aspect of the Man-God relationship where God seeks out Man, arriving in the human domain - even without being invited:

God's Glory filled the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34).

Tractate Shabbos 119a presents the following examples of Tannaim anticipating the arrival of the "Shabbos Bride" with joy, though without having extended an active invitation.

Every Friday late afternoon, Rabbi Chanina would wrap himself [in special garments] and say, "Come, let us go out to meet the Shabbos King!" Rabbi Yannai would change his clothes and declare "Come. O' Bride, Come O Bride!"

The human condition is such that both elements must exist in our relationship with Hashem. There are times when a human being, or a collective, perceives what the Song of Songs describes as the Beloved's unexpected "knock on the door":

Hark! My beloved is knocking! "Open up for me, my love, my dove, my perfection. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night." (Song of Songs 5:2)

And there are times when we must passionately and tirelessly search:

At nights, on my bed I looked for the one my soul loves; I looked for him but did not find him.

"I will rise now and go about the city, through its markets and streets; I will search for the one my heart loves."

So I searched for him but did not find him.

The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city: "Have you seen the one my soul loves?" (Song of Songs 3:1-3)

Allegorically, these two selections reflect, respectively, the Musafim of Shabbos and of Yom Tov. Our relationship with Hashem, as well as our relationships with one another, require mutual, proactive searching for one another - as well as mutual willingness to graciously and joyously "open the door" whenever our beloved/Beloved knocks.

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