



עֵשֶׂה חֹדֶשׁ

Clilei HaChodesh

Nissan 5779

Torah Thoughts from the YIGC Community

Springing Forth

Alexandra Fleksher

Nissan seems to have special significance after a long, dreary and cold Cleveland winter. Spotting the green tips of daffodils emerging from the dry soil has become a favorite March activity for our younger children. Even I share the excitement, taking hope in the sign of renewal that those daffodils bring. Our yard appears completely dead, but those perennials remind us that there is always the possibility of rebirth, and that growth can occur even when all seems lost.

It's no coincidence that Pesach occurs in the spring. The cycle of the natural world parallels the spiritual calendar in Judaism. The *Michtav MeEliyahu* introduced the idea that certain times of the year are predisposed for various types of growth, that time can be viewed as a cyclical structure mirroring the "spiritual seasons" inherent in the year. In fact, the word "*zeman*," time, comes from the word "*zamein*," prepared. It is as if Hashem prepares certain conditions for growth during various times of the year. Purim is prepared in advance as a time of joy. Pesach is intended to be a time of renewal. Tisha B'av is predisposed to be a time of mourning. The *chagim*, rooted in the word "*chug*," circle, enable us to revisit the points on the spiritual cycle of time each year. Another word for holiday, "*moed*," meeting point, hints to the same concept.

Natan Slifkin explains how the seasons reflect this reality in the natural world:

The various spiritual energies in effect at different times of the year are *directly manifest* in the natural cycle of the world at that time. The seasons of weather and their effect on the world are a perfect reflection of the spiritual seasons. Plants, animals, and human beings all lead their lives in accordance with this pattern. The spiritual power of renewal that occurs in Nissan is physically manifest in the renewal of nature that occurs in spring. The spiritual time of hardship that takes place in Tamuz is reflected in the oppressive summer weather. (*Seasons of Life: The Reflection of the Jewish Year in the Natural World*, 34; based on Maharal, *Gevuros Hashem* 51)

When the weather warms in Nissan, the buds begin to appear on the dry, bony branches, and the grass begins to thicken, I can't help but think that Hashem is gifting us this new season to prepare us for Pesach. Because we can better understand the lofty concept of rejuvenation and rebirth, of the transformation of our people into a nation overnight, when we can see this pattern happen with our very own eyes in our backyards.

Nissan indeed is the month of redemption, the month in which the Exodus from Egypt occurred and the month in which the coming of *Moshiach* will occur. The term "*tzmeicha*," or sprouting, is used for the process of redemption. Nissan provides the perfect conditions for rebirth and renewal. Just like the seed of the daffodil that is germinating underground during the harsh winter, waiting for spring to erupt through the soil, so too the Jewish people, battered through a long exile, will sprout forth in redemption with the coming of *Moshiach*.

Pesach is *zeman cheiruseinu*, a time of our freedom. When we were redeemed from Egypt, we were free from the physical and spiritual confines of Egyptian slavery. The shackles preventing us from serving G-d were removed and we were free to worship our Creator as we pleased. So too, in spring, nature frees itself from the shackles of the oppressive winter. The daffodil can emerge, the grass can sprout forth, the flowers can bloom, and animals can reenter the world from hibernation. The natural world is free from confinement and can blossom.

This feeling of spiritual and physical freedom during the spring is beautifully captured in Shir HaShirim:

The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart...My Beloved spoke and said to me, "Rise up, My beloved, My beautiful one, and go forth. For behold, the winter is over; the rains are past and gone. The shoots appear on the ground, the time of song as arrived, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts out her green figs, and the vines in blossom give their scent. Arise, My beloved, My beautiful one, and go forth (2:8-13).

The exuberance of a young gazelle, and the sprouting of nature, represent the ultimate expression of "free love": the ability of the Jewish soul to serve its Creator freely and out of love.

This Nissan, as we witness spring in all its glory, let us take a moment to marvel at the blessings of nature and its signs that Hashem has given us to help us propel our own spiritual growth. The changes in nature during the spring season, which seem to take place in a blink of an eye, speak to the very essence of the holiday of Pesach. We left Egypt in a hurry, our bread had no time to rise, and we were transformed from a slave nation into the chosen people overnight. Similarly, may our growth in Torah and *mitzvos* spring forth with alacrity and zeal, even if our winters were dark and dormant.

Defining Korban

Yehuda Salamon

As we begin Sefer Vayikra, which discusses *korbanos* at length, a question comes to mind with strong relevance to the upcoming holiday of Pesach. The *korbanos* described have many things in common, and yet many differences. What is the commonality, and possibly the minimal

requirement, that constitutes a *korban* at its most basic and fundamental level?

There are four basic steps in the preparation of a *korban*, during any of which, thoughts alone (possibly spoken ideas) can invalidate the whole

korban. The four steps are, in succession: *shechitah* (slaughtering), *kabalah* (receiving the blood), *holachah* (transporting the blood), and *zerikah* (sprinkling/squeezing/ throwing the blood). Interestingly, these preparatory acts have nothing to do with what most people would think of as the major or central steps in the korban, such as eating its meat or throwing its limbs onto the fire. Yet, these four acts determine whether a person who seemingly innocently eats the korban (even in its proper time) is culpable and incurs the very heavy consequence of *kareis*. In fact, even if one does not eat the meat or throw limbs on the *mizbe'ach*, one has nevertheless satisfied his or her obligation.

What all this suggests is that proper fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of offering a *korban* depends on the *avodos* of the BLOOD. In particular, the procurement of the blood and its application to the *mizbe'ach* is essential.

One might ask, then: What about *menachos*, which have no blood? The simplest *answer*, mentioned in the Gemara and explained by Rashi, is that the preparatory steps of the *korban mincha* actually parallel those of the animal *korban*; the burning of the *kometz* on the *mizbe'ach* parallels the *zerikah* of the blood of an animal *korban*.

Was the Pesach Mitzrayim a *korban*?

Based on the above definition of a valid "*korban*," one will be hard pressed to provide a definitive answer. Let's go through the *mitzvah* as it was performed in Mitzrayim. They take the lamb on the tenth day of Nissan and tie it to a bed; on the fourteenth, they slaughter it, spread its blood on their doorposts, and roast it whole. As much as one would like to think of this as an *avodah*, which it might still be, there is no *mizbe'ach*!!! When you think of the most defining moment in Jewish history, other than Matan Torah, that literally demonstrated the Jews to be a nation unto G-d, this first *mitzvah* should be the one. Should it not demonstrate full commitment and devotion, which in the future houses of G-d had to be performed on an altar? Indeed, the *korbanos* brought at the foot of Har Sinai were brought on a *mizbe'ach* (Shemos 24:4-5).

But the *pesach* in Mitzrayim? Yes, it was slaughtered and eaten, and blood was involved, but how does any of this qualify to be labeled as a *korban*? There was no *mizbe'ach*!

There are three possible approaches:

1) There is a midrash (Targum Yonasan to Shemos 19:4) that says Bnei Yisrael were miraculously transported to Eretz Yisrael to bring the *korban*. This would lend a modicum of *korban*-ity, the *makom ha-mikdash*, but it would not attend to the definition of a *korban* itself. (The commentary in the Mikraot Gedolos to this Targum Yonasan does mention a *mizbe'ach*

as well.) This midrash would apparently be dealing simultaneously with two problems: how a sacrifice, especially the first communal one, could be offered outside of Eretz Yisrael, especially in the repugnant atmosphere of Mitzrayim; and how this "*korban*" qualified as a *korban*. (Cf. Rashash Pesachim 36b, *d"h Gemara*, where he makes a similar point by citing this Targum in the context of another question.)

2) Alternatively, the Torah Sheleimah (Parshas Bo, notes 164-166) cites several related sources. There is a *machlokes* in the Yerushalmi (Pesachim 9:5), also in the Mechilta Parshas Bo 35, as to whether Bnei Yisrael had 3 *mizbichos* or 4, viewing the doorway and posts as altars in their own right. (The Gemara in Pesachim 96b brings the opinion of 3.) The Netziv (on the Mechilta) says the three components of the doorway correspond to the four corners of the *mizbe'ach*, upon which *zerikah* was performed. It seems the Netziv views the parallel between the doorway and the *mizbe'ach* as very literal. The Mechilta (of Rashb"i) discusses the fact that blood from each individual *pesach*, even in the same house, had to be sprinkled on the doorway – which would support the idea that each *pesach* was a *korban* requiring its own *zerikos/haza'os*. (Contrast to the Mirkeves Ha-Mishnah on Mechilta ch. 6, who says the three parts of the doorway did not correspond directly to the corners of the *mizbe'ach* because in Mitzrayim the order mattered, while order did not matter when sprinkling blood on the corners of the *mizbe'ach*. Rather, he suggests the above texts meant the doorway represented separate *mizbichos*, with laws that are different from the *mizbe'ach* in the *mikdash*.)

3) Maybe **Pesach Mitzrayim wasn't a *korban***. The pesukim do not use the term "*korban pesach*" with regard to the *pesach* of Mitzrayim, but only in reference to the future *pesach*, the "*pesach doros*." Perhaps the *pesach* in Mitzrayim did not meet the criteria to be categorized formally as a *korban*. The Chasam Sofer (YD 235) makes this point, as does Rabbi Yosef Levinson. The Chasam Sofer's argument is that neither blood nor any meat/*emurim* were offered. He explains that the texts describing the doorway as being *mizbichos* are not meant literally. R' Meshulam Dovid, in the *Haggadah mi'Beis Ha'levi*, page 48, makes the argument that even the blood placed on the doorway could not have been applied as a formal *zerikah*, since the Tosefta separates the two concepts of the doorway and blood application in distinguishing between the *pesach doros* and *pesach Mitzrayim*. The Gemara in Menachos 82a supports this point, noting that fats and blood were not applied in the case of *pesach Mitzrayim*. These sources would suggest that the *pesach* Mitzrayim was not, in fact, a *korban*.

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