

"Draw out and take your lambs according to your families and slaughter the (Korban) Pesach." (12:21)

The *Midrash* records a distinctive question asked by *R. Elazar*. He inquires concerning the necessity for the requirement of the *Korban Pesach* prior to *Am Yisrael's* leaving Egypt. Surely there must have been other *mitzvos* which would have merited *Am Yisrael's* redemption. Indeed, *Chazal* single out four specific *mitzvos* for which *Am Yisrael* merited deliverance. They were morally clean; they spoke no *lashon hora*; they possessed Jewish pride, retaining their Hebrew names; and they maintained the culture, not changing their national language.

Why then was the *Korban Pesach* an essential prerequisite for their *geu'lah*, redemption? *Chazal* respond that they were steeped in *avodah zarah*, idol worship, and Egyptian ideology. It was therefore imperative for them to "draw themselves" away from Egyptian philosophy. As *Horav Moshe Swift z.t.l.* notes, ethical standards, which are independent of religious precepts, and human principles, which are devoid of G-d consciousness, can not endure. While the "Egyptian" Jew bears no distinctiveness, the Jewish Jew does!

Judaism is not a culture; it is a religion which must be part of the fiber of the Jew. This reality must be imbued into every Jew. The Jew cannot be divorced from his Judaism. The secret of Jewish survival has been our undaunting persistence and unwavering obstinance against outside influences which are inspired by the realities of contemporary culture. As long as the *Torah* is our guide, our path toward success is ensured.