

Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels. (11:2)

Klal Yisrael left Egypt with enormous material wealth. Hashem promised Avraham *Avinu* that his descendants would be subjugated to difficult toil and slavery. When they would be finally liberated, however, they would leave as kings, triumphant in their victory over tyranny and laden with material bounty. On *Pesach* night, we celebrate the Egyptian exodus by remembering that night of triumph. During the *Seder*, we recall the slavery, celebrate the liberation and praise the Almighty, Who orchestrated the entire experience. The *Korban Pesach*, Pascal-offering, was offered together with the *Korban Chagigah*, Festival-offering. We no longer have the *Bais Hamikdash* as a place for offering *Korbanos*. We, therefore, have a *zeichar*, remembrance, for the *korbanos* – placed on the *Seder* plate. A piece of roasted meat and a roasted egg are parts of the ritual of remembrance. Was leaving Egypt with a surfeit of material wealth any less of a celebration? If so, why is there no ritual of recollection, no reminiscence dedicated to this seemingly mundane, but no less significant, realization of Hashem's promise?

In his *Ben Ish Chayil*, **Horav Yosef Chaim, zl, m'Bagdad**, explains this by relating an incident that took place in his community. The episode occurred one *Erev Pesach*, featuring a young married man – a Torah scholar who had earned an enviable reputation prior to his marriage – and his father-in-law. Apparently, prior to the wedding, the young man had been assured of a dowry to the tune of three hundred gold coins. The issue was not whether this was a considerable amount of money or not; the issue was the fulfillment of a promise.

The young man prepared for the festival, purchasing the goods and food necessary to celebrate the festival properly. Being a young couple, they needed dishes, utensils and much more to set up their *Pesach* kitchen. They purchased everything on credit. The young groom had a fine reputation, and credit was rendered by every merchant with the due date for payment *Erev Pesach*. After all, that was when his father-in-law had promised to pay him the remainder of his dowry.

The time had come, and the young man was waiting for the “package” from his father-in-law to arrive. Sure enough, by late morning, a messenger arrived from his father-in-law with an envelope – no bag of money, no check, no promissory note – just a note wishing him a *Gut Yom Tov*, all the best, with blessings for wealth, honor and satisfaction. It was a nice note, but one cannot pay bills with a note. We can imagine that the young man's incredulity soon became a slow burn which was becoming “warmer” with each passing moment. He had been royally exploited.

Not one to waste time, the young man proceeded to his father-in-law's home and presented himself with a strong complaint. “I was waiting for something more than your good wishes for wealth and welfare,” he began. The father-in-law was no slouch, and he quickly replied, “I thought I was taking a Torah scholar for my daughter. Your complaining indicates that you have no clue as to the ‘value’ of my message.” The son-in-law retorted, “Apparently, I am unable to perceive your

intentions. Perhaps you might enlighten me.” “I decided to follow the pattern evinced by our daily *tefillah*,” the father-in-law began. “We say, ‘*Ribon HaOlamim*, You have commanded us to offer the *Korban Tamid* daily in order that it atone for us. Now [that we are unable to do so since we no longer have the *Bais Hamikdash*] let the words that emanate from our lips be as significant and acceptable before You as if we [actually] offered the *Korban Tamid*.’ I did the same. Since I do not have the necessary funds to pay you, I instead sent you my blessings and best wishes. May they take the place of the gold and silver I was to give you.”

Clearly this father-in-law was not setting the tone for a great relationship. The son-in-law was not naïve. He understood that his father-in-law was either himself very callow or quite disingenuous. In any event, it behooved him to respond and clear the air once and for all. “Tonight, we will celebrate the festival of *Pesach*,” the son-in-law said. “On the *Seder* table, there will be remembrances of the *Korban Pesach* and *Korban Chagigah*. I wonder why there is no commemoration of the gold and silver which our ancestors removed from Egypt. The answer is simple. We only employ testimonials, and recite, ‘*Yehi ratzon* (May it be the will of Hashem, as we do in the *Ribon Ha’Olamim*)’, if it is with regard to those activities which concern our relationship with Hashem, since we can no longer offer the *korbanos* of Hashem, because the *Bais HaMikdash* no longer exists. Concerning those *mitzvos* that man must personally do, such as donning *Tefillin*, one may not replace the *mitzvah* by studying the *parshah* of *Tefillin*. If it is a *mitzvah* that is incumbent upon man, he has no excuse not to carry it out. We must pay our debts. We neither have a *Korban Pesach*, nor do we have a *Korban Chagigah*, but we do have material abundance. We may not recuse ourselves with a note expressing our good wishes for wealth. Nothing short of cold cash is accepted.”