

## They shall take for themselves – each man – a lamb for a father's house. (12:3)

The Egyptians suffered through nine *makos*, plagues, but apparently dug in and refused to budge. The Jewish People were not leaving Egypt. It was now time for the *coupe de grace*, the finishing blow that would “convince” Pharaoh that Hashem was in control, and He was taking the Jews from them. The tenth plague, smiting the first born, was told to Moshe *Rabbeinu* during his first encounter with Hashem at the Burning Bush. Yet, Hashem required a prologue before preceding to the final act of *makos bechoros*. The people were commanded to take a lamb for each family, slaughter and roast it. The blood was to be smeared on the doorposts and lintels of their homes. They were to consume the meat in haste. It was only after this that the curtain would fall on Egypt.

The Torah intimates the reason for this prologue: Hashem would see the blood smeared on the doors and would pass over their homes. They would live; the Egyptians would perish. *Rashi* explains the reason for requiring them to smear the blood on the outside of their homes. “I (Hashem) will focus My attention to see that you are busying yourselves with My commandment, and, because of this, I will skip over you and inflict the plague on the Egyptians.” This indicates that it was critical for something to protect the Jews from the collateral damage of the upcoming tenth plague. The blood on the doorposts served this purpose. The obvious question which comes to mind (*Tzlach* commentary to *Berachos* 9A) is, if the purpose was to demonstrate the Jewish people's involvement in a *mitzvah*, it should have sufficed with the *shechitah*, slaughtering, of the *Korban Pesach*, the *Pesach* offering. Why was it critical that they also consume the meat before the Destroyer moves in on Egypt?

*Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, explains that, when Moshe *Rabbeinu* conveyed the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach Mitzrayim*, he added that this was not a temporary act exclusive to the Egyptian exodus, but a ritual to be annually celebrated in a family setting. When the children (in the future) will ask, “What is the work that you are doing?” we are to respond that it commemorates the time when Hashem passed over the Jewish homes, when He poured out His wrath on the Egyptians. This offering perpetuates Hashem's mercy on us. Thus, the *Korban Pesach* has become an annual thanksgiving offering which demonstrates our abiding gratitude to Hashem.

This is all good and well, but should gratitude not be the antecedent following the salvation? We should, therefore, have eaten the *korban* after Hashem smote the Egyptian firstborn, while He spared us. This, together with the rationale for family participation and time-sensitive consumption before *chatzos*, midnight, raises the enigma surrounding the *korban*.

*Rav Heyman* explains that the answer to these questions goes back in time, exactly 232 years, prior to *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, when Yosef was sold by his brothers. This was the incursion which directly led to our people's descent into the morally bankrupt country of Egypt. Thus, the sin had to be repaired, the moral outrage of brother selling brother into slavery had to be ameliorated, or

the nation would not leave Egypt. A spiritual stain on their national persona had to be wiped clean, a debt which had to be laid to rest. The sin of *mechiras Yosef* breached the synergy of Yaakov *Avinu's* family. It tore asunder the harmony that should prevail in a home. Being that it occurred in the family that laid the foundation of *Klal Yisrael*, it was vital that it be corrected before the nation could leave Egypt.

We now understand the need for eating the *korban Pesach* in a family setting. *Bnei Yisrael* had to heal the rupture in the family unit which the brothers had created. They smeared blood on the doorposts and lintel to remediate the earlier act of dipping Yosef's tunic in the goat's blood. The Destroyer penetrates an area in which *pirud*, discord, schism, exists. It is what he thrives on until the moment that he is able to convey Heavenly punishment. This is what would have been the scenario, had we not first slaughtered, smeared the blood and eaten the meat in a congenial, family atmosphere. Once we proved ourselves worthy of being liberated – we were.

We begin the *seder* commemorating the Egyptian exodus with a resounding, declaration

*Kol dichfin yeisei v'yeichol*, "Whoever wants is welcome to join in and share in our meal." It is the night in which we encourage families to invite guests, especially those who do not have their own families with whom to celebrate. It is only by thinking of the fellow who is alone that we will succeed in infusing *Pesach* with its proper objective. What does one do if he does not see eye to eye with his fellow? We are not all the same. Some people have personalities that just rub us the wrong way. I guess we just have to work on it and find some common ground.

The problem escalates when the fellow is antagonistic to *frumkeit*. This means that he does not hide the fact that he does not practice. This makes it very difficult for the host to maintain his patience, not allowing his ire to seethe over, so that he says something inappropriate which would undermine the entire purpose of having a guest for *Pesach*. Veritably, this issue is not exclusive to *Pesach*. How do we deal with someone who, by his daily demeanor, flaunts his disdain for Orthodoxy?

The answer is complicated, because we can see varied perspectives on this issue: a.) Should one bother addressing such a person?; b.) What is the most effective way to reach such a person? An incredible story occurred concerning the *Bobover Rebbe, zl*, which conveys a perspective which we should emulate. [I will add that it takes a person whose love for all *Yidden* is so intense and all-encompassing to think and act like he did.] When Bobov was first established on these shores, its center of activity was on New York's Upper West Side. It was comprised of a small group of Holocaust survivors, broken in body and spirit. The *Rebbe* was father, big brother, friend and mentor. He held together these shards of what were once proud European Jews. The *Rebbe* gave them hope; he gave them love; he never questioned them; he only encouraged them with a warm smile. For some, that smile spelled the difference between life and death, between religious practice and spiritual extinction.

One of the *shul's* members was a Polish Jew who, after surviving the war, followed the *Rebbe* to the West Side. He joined in all of the services and activities, rarely leaving the *Rebbe's* side. As he did with all his *chassidim*, the *Rebbe* drew him close and cared for him. One Friday night, the man did not show up. The *Rebbe* sent his son (and successor) *Horav Naftali, zl*, to look for him. On his way to the man's apartment, *Rav Naftali* cut through Central Park to save time. Suddenly, *Rav Naftali* saw the man sitting on a park bench doing the unthinkable – smoking a cigarette on *Shabbos*. *Rav Naftali* made an immediate about-face and ran to tell his father that this man had duped them. He neither was, nor intended to become an observant Jew.

The *Rebbe* listened to his son and replied, "He was not smoking; it was the Nazis who were smoking!" The subject was now closed. *Rav Natali* looked at his father incredulously, not believing what he had just heard. The *Rebbe* was implying that what his son had seen was an aberration attributed to the harmful influence that resulted from the tragedy of the Holocaust. We must look beyond the superficial. Everyone carries some form of baggage that explains how they have arrived where they are. It could be a dysfunctional family, a harmful school or social environment; no one turns his back on *Yiddishkeit* in a vacuum. He always has a mitigating reason.

1. S. Fast forward thirty years, and *Rav Naftali* was accompanying his father to a wedding. When they walked in, they were greeted by a scene that melted their hearts. The man who had been standing on shaky spiritual ground three decades earlier was now the patriarch of a beautiful *chassidic* family. The *Rebbe* looked at *Rav Naftali* who could not believe what he was seeing and said, "I told you; it was the Nazis who were smoking." Everyone has his own self-imposed package that holds him back from achieving the Torah goals to which, beneath the surface, he aspires. Impediments and obstacles block his way. Once he finds his way around, or he permits someone to lead him through the maze, he will reach the finish line.