

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

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This is the law of the Korban Pesach... you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house; nor shall you break any bone in it (12:43-46).

The middle section of the Parasha tells of the final plague: MAKAT B'CHOROT, the killing of the first-borns. This, the final of the ten plagues, is the only one where B'nei Yisrael had to make elaborate preparations, which was to become Pesach Mitzrayim, Pesach in Egypt. At the same time, the Torah faces the eternal future in detailing the commemoration and enacting of those events every year: Pesach L'Dorot, the Pesach to be observed for all time. No chametz. Obligatory partaking of the Korban Pesach, matzot, and maror. And (in the final part of the Parasha), the recounting and discussing in full the events of those times and their meanings, implications, and values.

B'nei Yisrael left Egypt in a hurry (D'varim 16:3). That was Pesach Mitzrayim. In contrast, the Torah tells us that it is forbidden to break a bone in the Korban Pesach: the Rashbam explaining that breaking bones in preparing and consuming meat comes from being in too much of a hurry. That is not the way to eat the

Korban Pesach. Indeed, the Chinuch explains that this prohibition addresses the Derech Eretz at the very core of Torah practice. It does that by emphasizing that it is ill-mannered and quite unbecoming for Am Yisrael to enact Yetziat Mitzrayim by eating in a hurry, by behaving as if starving and in poverty. As he puts it, "it is not fitting for those who are... a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation... to pull out the bones roughly and break them like dogs." On the contrary, the Chinuch explains, the acts we do in commemorating Pesach, like all other acts, impress their values on our souls and thus the mitzvot have to be observed in a way that is in complete harmony with their kedusha.

In explaining the correct and befitting way to eat the Korban Pesach, the Chinuch broadens this principle, putting forward the idea that those of our people who are far from our holy traditions benefit from joining in mitzva observance even when not carried out with Torah-approved motives. For, he observes, actions come first and the heart sooner or later follows. That can include putting on tefillin, partaking in the Pesach seder, and HADLAKAT NEIROT on Chanuka, in a fitting way.

Logically, it should be the other way round: reasoning first and mitzvot observance afterwards, but that does not seem to be the way that the soul

responds. So if, for an example, you want to teach kashrut to the uninformed and uninitiated Jewish teenager, open by showing how the home happily and correctly observes kashrut, rather than by intellectually attempting to persuade. Explains the Chinuch: what we do, we are. It is our work as educators and a observant Jews to ensure that we do it in the right way, in the way compatible with Torah principles. That is a vital key to spiritual growth, to growth in Torah.

