

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

TZAV - PESACH 5783

In light of the recent upheavals in Israel where opposition to judicial reforms has unfortunately generated much discord and strife threatening the very welfare of the State, the d'var Torah of a great scholar, Rabbi Joshua Hoffman zt"l, is quite relevant. I present it with my own edits and additions. The frequent quoting from the Torah of Rav Soloveitchik is most appropriate as on this Chol HaMoed Pesach, we commemorate the Rav's 30th yahrzeit.

Rambam records (Hilchot T'fila 13:2) that Chazal made a special enactment for Parshat Tzav to be read, in non-leap years, on the Shabbat before Pesach. Among the many explanations for the connection between Parshat Tzav and Pesach, Rav Hoffman offers this one: The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 9:4) asks why, in regard to the Korban Shelamim (Peace Offering), the Torah writes in our Parsha (7:11), "This is the law of the Sh'lamim offering that one will offer to Gd." Why is it that particularly in regard to the Sh'lamim offering, the Torah tells us that it will bring us close to Gd? We may add to this question: Aren't all offerings in the Mishkan meant to bring us closer

to Him, as the word 'korban,' coming from 'kareiv' - to come close - implies? The Midrash answers that the Korban Sh'lamim is especially dear to the Almighty because it does not come to atone for any kind of sin or other shortcoming, but, rather, is simply brought out of love for Gd and a desire to draw closer to Him. Therefore, HaShem loves it more than the other sacrifices and consequently comes especially close to the one who offers it. It is this factor of love of Gd and Gd's love for us that lies at the core of the connection between Parshat Tzav and Pesach.

Rashi, in Parshat Vayikra (3:1), explains why the Korban Sh'lamim is given its name. He says that everyone enjoys a share in this offering: Gd 'receives' the portion brought to the Altar, the kohanim receive their portion, and the one who brings the offering also collects a portion. Thus, this offering brings peace to all. The Talmud tells us (Megila 16b) that it was the conflict between Yosef and his brothers that generated the eventual descent of Yaakov's family to Egypt and the enslavement there. Even though Gd told Avraham at the Covenant Between the Pieces (B'reishit 15:7-14) that his seed would be a stranger in a foreign land and would be enslaved for four hundred years, in the end, they were only in Egypt for 210 years (Rashi, B'reishit 15:13). Rav Soloveitchik argues that if

Gd could make a reckoning to reduce 400 years to 210 years, He could have also made a calculation by which the 22 years that Yaakov spent away from home could be considered as being equivalent to 400 years. The only reason He did not do so was because of the conflict between Yosef and his brothers. The brothers, said Rav, did not appreciate the ideal spelled out in T'hilim (133:1) of "Behold how good and how pleasant is the dwelling of brothers in unity." It would take the experience of exile and enslavement in Egypt to bring the nation together. When brothers can cooperate and work together for the common goal of bringing the message of Avraham - the belief in a monotheistic Gd who preaches the great moral code - to the world, then they are ready to go forward and form the nation that will represent Gd in the world.

Actually, the chapter in T'hilim which speaks of brothers dwelling together goes on to speak of the anointment of Aharon as the Kohein Gadol and, according to the commentators (Radak, ad loc), speaks of the relationship between Moshe and Aharon. Even though Moshe, as the primary leader in the Exodus drama, had assumed, by Divine designation, Aharon's previous leadership position in Egypt, and even though Aharon, in becoming the Kohein Gadol, had taken over a position that was

originally meant for Moshe, the two brothers cooperated completely and showed only love and admiration each for the other. In this way, they repaired the breach between brothers which was the root cause of the exile and enslavement in Egypt and set an exceptional example of brotherhood and amity for the entire nation. This love between brothers reflected, on a wider scale, a love for Gd and the nation He was in the process of creating, a nation which would serve as His representative in this world, bringing the message of belief in the one Gd to everyone.

Pesach represents a time of special love between God and His People, which is why there is a custom, at the end of the Seder, to read Shir HaShirim, the Song of Songs, which, according to many midrashim, is an allegory for the love between Gd and His People. Perhaps, then, this is why Tzav, which teaches us of the Korban Sh'lammim as an expression of Gd's love for us and our love for Gd, is read on the Shabbat before Pesach, the EIT DODIM, (the time of love), that festival which reflects the deep affection between HaShem and Am Yisrael.

An additional noteworthy of mention is the halachic fact that the Korban Pesach - which, during the Temple era, figured prominently and most centrally during the Seder - is a sub

category of Sh'lamim. One of the unique features of the Korban Pesach was that it was observed and consumed in a communal setting. (Mishna, Zevachim 5:8) As the Torah puts it: "... a lamb or kid for the household." And if the household was too small, families joined together for the Seder repast (Sh'mot 12:3-4). In fact, according to one sage (Pesachim 91a), an individual cannot offer the Pascal lamb; only a group may do so. Here's how the Rav expressed this unusual aspect of the Pesach sacrifice: "The concept of chavura, community, is completely non-existent regarding other offerings... The Pesach differs from all other sacrifices because it is a symbol of CHEIRUT, freedom... [and] freedom expresses itself in the realm of bayit, of community, of being together... [The holiday of] Pesach has been singled out to express the precept of tzedaka, of chesed, of sharing. This chesed is based on the feeling of Jewish solidarity, which is rooted in the events of the Egyptian servitude and Exodus." (Festival of Freedom, pp. 43-44)

Indeed, one might say that the Korban Pesach takes - to a wonderfully moral extreme - the extraordinarily fundamental message that inheres in the Sh'lamim offering. The important theme of peace, sh'lamim, now - via the Korban Pesach - extends to teach a lesson

both in brotherly affection and harmony and in national camaraderie and teamwork. Had that atmosphere of communal cohesion been absent at the dawn of our peoplehood, we would have remained forever splintered and would have tragically forfeited our freedom and redemption.

It is this powerful and vital message that ought to be the primary lodestar for our leaders in Israel as they, along with all of us, celebrate the coming holiday of Pesach, the time of our CHEIRUT and GEULA. 🙌