

Basking in Blood's Bounty

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

In the *Hagadah*, we recite a verse in Yechezkel. "Through your blood(s) shall you live!" And I said to you: "Through your blood(s) shall you live!" Our Sages ask why it's repeated twice. In addition, we say these verses as part of the circumcision ceremony. What is the connection?

Bnei Yisroel did not merit Hashem's redeeming them from *Mitzrayim*. Therefore, Hashem gave them two *mitzvot*, circumcision and the Pesach sacrifice, so they would earn it. Rav Asher Weiss notes that the first blood refers to the suffering of *Bnei Yisroel* at the hands of the nations. The second is the symbol of our noble mission and dedication represented by the *korban Pesach* and *bris milah*. With this, they incorporate the two major themes of the Seder, "They embittered our lives," and the second, "Let all who are hungry come and eat..." To be saved from our challenges, we must focus on the joy Hashem gives us. Sadness creates distance. When you thank Hashem in gladness, you break down barriers and can then more easily make requests of Him.

The mission of the generation that was redeemed was best concretized with the building of the *Mishkan*. The *Mishkan* had one major support beam which went through all the upright beams on three sides. Rav Weiss explains that this beam came from the tree under which Avraham offered hospitality to the wayfarers. This view supports the theme of *Bnei Yisroel* as a nation of *chesed*. Others say that this beam came from the staff of

Yaakov Avinu when he fled Esau, symbolizing exile. It represents the blood of our self sacrifice in clinging to Hashem that sustains us throughout the generations of our bitter wanderings, adds Rabbi Pruzansky. However, most of the commentators explain that the passage refers to the impure state of *Bnei Yisroel* in Egypt. You will live through the merit of the blood of *milah* and *Korban Pesach*. The *Beis Halevi* cites Tehillim 105 that links *Bnei Yisroel's* growing population to the Egyptians' hatred of the Jews. Why would a loving God cause the other nations to hate His people? *Bnei Yisroel* knew they would be enslaved for 400 years. They reasoned that if they could become less distinct, the Egyptians would not oppress them as much. Therefore, they followed up the brit with a plastic surgery that would seem to obfuscate it. Unfortunately, if we try to assimilate, the nations hate us even more. Certainly Egypt's antagonism toward the Jews was meant to keep *Bnei Yisroel* separate to facilitate their redemption. It is through these *mitzvot*, circumcision and *Korban Pesach* whose blood was smeared on our doorposts, that we merited being redeemed from Egypt.

Observing these two *mitzvot* demonstrated our connection to Hashem and created that opening writes the *Sefas Emes*, that Hashem could then "pry open," wide and redeem us. Since *Bnei Yisroel* needed supernatural intervention to be redeemed, their act also needed to defy nature. *Bnei Yisroel* defied the Egyptians by openly tying their lamb/god to their bedposts and painting their doorposts with its blood. These *mitzvot* were the acts

that actualized *Bnei Yisroel's* love for Hashem from ephemeral thought to concrete action.

The body reconnected to Hashem through the *bris milah*, and the soul was reconnected through the *korban Pesach*. Therefore we have the plural *bedomayich/by your bloods*, one for each of these connections, and repeat *bedomayich chayi* to indicate both an individual and a communal connection.

Korban Pesach was a way of reestablishing our bond to Hashem, for we were symbolically eating at the King's table. *Brit milah* is the gift of our physical individual connection to our Creator while *korban Pesach* established our communal connection, writes Rabbi Mintzberg. We elevate our physical desires, represented by the *brit* and strengthen our faith to come closer to Hashem emotionally and intellectually through the *korban Pesach*.

On the night of Pesach we have to live in our blood, in our emotional soul, we have to feel Hashem's love and respond with our own. We must resolve to live to sanctify Hashem's name. As Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer notes, "*Bedomayich chayi*," is a command for the future, not a history of our past.

Eliyahu Hanavi regularly appears at a *brit* and at the *sefer*. Eliyahu Hanavi rose to heaven while still alive. He lives in both realms simultaneously, this world and the future world. If you live in this world and observe these *mitzvot*, you will be infusing this world with the aura of the World to Come.

Traveling the Journey of Life Accompanied by the Book of Tehillim Part 19

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In Tehillim, Chapter 15, verse 4, *David Hamelech* says, "In whose eyes a contemptible person is repulsive but who honors those who fear Hashem. The one who honors those who fear Hashem corresponds to the commandment, "Honor your father and mother..." while the one who looks at himself in a humble way corresponds to the commandment, "Do not kill." What is the connection?

The obligation to honor parents is written in

Parshat Yitro and Vaetchanan. In Yitro it says, "Honor your father and mother so that your days will be lengthened on the land Hashem gives you." We see that there's a reward and that it's a way to remain in the land of Israel and that there's a connection between exile and not honoring parents. There's also an emphasis on the fact that Hashem is giving us the land. In Vaetchanan the commandment is repeated with the additions, "... As Hashem commanded you...so that it will be good for you."

Sefer Hachinuch explains the rationale behind the mitzva. It's a form of gratitude. Being ungrateful is a bad *midda* both in the eyes of Hashem and other people. *Bechor Shor* adds, your parents brought you into this world and raised you. They are with you all along and remain a focal point in their life. But this is not the whole explanation. The Ten Commandments were divided in two tablets. The first listed commandments between man and Hashem and the second, commandments

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Page 1

between man and man. If we look at *kibud av* as a matter of gratitude it would belong with the commandments between man and man. But in fact, it appears at the end of the first tablet. In addition, the name of Hashem doesn't appear at all on the second tablet while it appears with each of the first five commandments. We see that *kibud av* contains a connection between man and Hashem. It is also the only commandment that mentions a reward. Why is *kibud av* singled out?

Rav Hirsh explains, all religions besides

Judaism began with one man who introduced an idea or claimed to have had a revelation. There were no witnesses. There are two ways to recognize Hashem. The first is by looking at creation. A design indicates a designer. Obviously if the Creator created something so wondrous there had to be a reason and this brings us to search for the reason. But this is not what our commitment to Judaism is based on. The second way to find Hashem is by looking at historical events. The Exodus of Egypt and the receiving of the *Torah* is the foundation of our commitment to Judaism and it's based on the fact that there were 2 million

witnesses who stood at *Har Sinai*. We know this because it was passed down to us through the generations. Hashem charged parents with the mission to transmit to their children the experience of *Matan Torah*. Being that this is the case, honoring parents is a fundamental basis of Judaism. If we trust and honor our parents, we enable the *mesorah* from one generation to the next to be passed down. *Kibud av* is not just about having a good relationship with our parents but about transmitting the fundamental bedrock of Judaism.

Pesach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

The word *Pesach* means two things; Hashem skipped over our houses and *peh sach*- the mouth that speaks. When the world was first created it was empty, chaotic, and dark. This indicated that there will be future exiles. *Galut Mitzrayim* is the mother of all exiles. *Mitzrayim* is related to the word *tzar* - narrow. Hashem is indescribably broad and inclusive. Narrowness indicates ego and desire and not recognizing Hashem even in our own world. It's seeing everything as existing independently of Him. Egypt was the place of narrowness. The *oref*, neck connects the head to the body. The neck contains the food and wind pipes which mirrors our ego and physical desires. Pharaoh shares the same letters as *oref*. When everything revolves around physical desires it becomes a narrow place. If you want to know who you are, listen to what you say. Speech stems from the mind which uses the body to express what it thinks. The Egyptian exile was one of constrained speech, where the self-statement everyone made had only to do with desire and ego.

The sub-root of *galut* is *gal* -revealed. The *Maharal* says revelation and redemption is knowing who you are, being what you can be, and returning to your source. Exile is everything that cuts us off from that. It however

serves as a bridge to geulah by teaching us what we don't want to be.

A survey was done in the DP camps and survivors were asked, "If you weren't Jewish what would you choose to be?" They answered, "Anything but German." If we don't succeed in discovering ourselves and articulating it, Hashem will put us through a situation where we are shown what we don't want to be as the first step to self-discovery.

Hashem told Avraham at *brit ben habesarim*, "*Yodeah tedah...*" Three things will happen to your descendants as a prerequisite to redemption: they will be strangers, they will be enslaved, and they will suffer. Jews will never feel at home in exile. The first step to redemption is admitting that exile is not our home. Being enslaved means giving up your right to control your time. Time is the only thing that is completely your own. When a person realizes that they are spending their whole lives working for someone and they have no time to build themselves, they want freedom. The Jews didn't want to be enslaved any longer. Suffering makes a person realize he has no control. At that point he surrenders and turns to Hashem. The purpose of exile is to make it possible for us to go on to the next step which

is redemption.

The plagues were the beginning of the redemption. *Hateva*-nature is the same numerical value as *Elokim*. Nature both conceals and reveals Hashem. It reveals Him through its intricacy and consistency and by saying, we are not controlled by the rules but rather by our source. The ten plagues paralleled the ten statements of creation and showed the world that there is a Creator who maintains full control and can break the rules at will. What keeps us in exile is our desires and ego which prevent us from expressing our spiritual selves. The formula for taking ourselves out of exile is asking two questions, "What's really happening?" Describe it to yourself accurately and this will redeem you from your ego. And then ask yourself, "What should I do?"

The last point to keep in mind is that Hashem is not only the Creator but is involved in the life of every Jew, even you. That means your picture of reality isn't real if it excludes Hashem. It's like being blind in a world where everyone else can see. The *Torah* revealed a plan and told us exactly where our choices can take us. If we seek Hashem, He will help us find Him.