

This week's parsha is Vayikra, and last week we read Parshas Hachodesh.

Parshas Hachodesh is very interesting because the gemara says 30 days before a Yom Tov we study halachos that prepare us for that Yom Tov. But reading Parshas Hachodesh does not really prepare us very well for Pesach! It is all about the Korban Pesach, which we don't bring today! There are a few pesukim about getting rid of chometz and eating matzah. But that's it. So why in the world are we reading this whole parsha?

The answer is as follows.

Pesach has many detailed halachos, but Pesach is also about many foundational ideas.

We read about korbonos this week in Parshas Vayikra. The parsha begins with the posuk saying: 'אדם כי יקריב מכם'. Right from the beginning, the Torah is framing the concept of korbonos as giving *from yourself* to Hashem.

There are many ways you can orient yourself in the world. One way to approach the world, is with you in the center – your desires, your goals, your accomplishments. Another way to approach the world is that you are a guest here in Hashem's realm. Hashem is a very gracious host and is willing to give you many things to use and enjoy, but ultimately, everything you have is His. So the question becomes how much are you willing to recognize that everything belongs to Hashem and nothing is yours?

You can give tzedakah with two different attitudes: I am giving my own hard-earned money to some worthy cause that I choose, or I am dispensing funds that Hashem gave me to the causes He wants to support.

The first korbon in Chumash, which is really the second korbon in human history, is the one brought by Kayin and Hevel. What was Kayin's problem? Kayin was a farmer and he offered Hashem some of his crops – but not his finest. Hevel followed Kayin's example, but he offered *himself* with his korbon – which is why he offered the choicest of his sheep. Kayin's failure was in thinking the crops belonged to him and he is giving away something he really deserves to keep for himself. That is why he doesn't give Hashem the best. Kayin thinks he deserves the best.

But Hashem accepts Hevel's korbon and not Kayin's. Because Hevel recognized he has nothing of his own. Kayin's problem is his ego. Hashem tells Kayin you can control your yetzer if you make the effort.

We do an interesting thing on Seder night. We read the Haggadah as a way to fulfill the mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. But the text is very peculiar. We read the parsha of Bikkurim – a few short pesukim – but with all the drashos of Chazal derived from it. Why not just read chapters from Sefer Shemos describing the yetzias Mitzrayim directly from the Torah?

The answer is that bringing Bikkurim is the best way to set the proper frame of mind for Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. First of all, you are acknowledging that you own nothing and everything you have came from Hashem. Second of all, you trace your crops and the land you are cultivating, all the way back to the beginning of Jewish history. You are standing here in the Beis Hamikdash as the end-point of a long process of Hashem's hashgocho directing the history of our nation. You start with 'Arami oveid Ovi.' You start with the Ovos and continue

all the way till the present. You are viewing yourself not as an isolated individual living his own life, but as a recent step in a long chain of the Jewish people.

On the Seder night, I have to view myself as leaving Egypt, along with Klal Yisroel who were there. Not just something that happened to our ancestors long ago. It happened to me because I am part of the same nation that left Egypt. We thank Hashem that we are a part of Jewish history and my children will be the next step in Jewish history and my grandchildren will be the next step.

There is a fascinating gemara in Horiyos about a korbon tzibbur. It says when we bring a korbon for the tzibbur, we are bringing it for all of Klal Yisroel for all generations. We are all part of one continuous tzibbur. At the end of Parshas Shoftim it says we are atoning for all Klal Yisroel – from those who left Egypt onward. We are one corporate unit. We are a direct extension from Avrohom Ovinu down to today.

That is the attitude we need to develop on Pesach. In the Haggadah we say we are part of yetzias Mitzrayim. It was the first time in Jewish history that Jews ate a korbon shlomim, because a Korbon Pesach is a form of shlomim. Only Jews can offer a korbon shlomim. Non-Jews can only offer an olah. Why? Shlomim has kedushoh but it is also eaten.

The world doesn't belong to me. It all belongs to Hashem. But He allows me to use this world for His purposes. We make brochos before we enjoy something, to declare that the only right we have to enjoy something is to first recognize that Hashem is giving it to us. But non-Jews don't know how to do this – how to incorporate physical pleasure into avodas Hashem. Taryag mitzvos are designed to train a Jew to bring ruchniyus into all the mundane, physical aspects of his life. Only a Jew can bring a korbon and eat it and elevate it as part of avodas Hashem. So the Jews ate a korbon shlomim on Pesach for the first time.

Parshas Hachodesh begins with the mitzvah of beis din declaring the beginning of the month. Klal Yisroel used to be mekadesh the month through witnesses. 1700 years ago, they made a calendar with such precision that it still operates today, without need for correction to align the solar with the lunar calendar in a 19-year cycle. It was either halocho le'Moshe mi'Sinai, or made by Chazal with an unbelievable understanding of the natural world. All other calendars of the ancient world needed corrections as time went on.

Who makes Rosh Chodesh happen this Thursday? Who made Rosh Chodesh for 2,000 years? Klal Yisroel. We decide when Rosh Chodesh is, because we are mekadesh the zman. Even after Hillel Hazaken made the calendar, the Rambam says all of Klal Yisroel as a joint effort make Rosh Chodesh every month. We say in the tefillah of Yom Tov that Hashem is first mekadesh Yisroel, and then in turn, Klal Yisroel is mekadesh the zman.

There is a very deep idea we discussed already – kedushoh can be expressed in three different dimensions. Objects can be kodosh, places can be kodosh, and time can be kodosh.

What makes the Beis Hamikdash kodosh? Dovid Hamelech was mekadesh that location of Har HaBayis before it was built. Har Sinai became kodosh and therefore no-one and no animal was able to walk on it. Hashem made it kodosh with His Shechinoh. But after the shofar blew and there was siluk haShechinoh, there is no more kedushoh on Har Sinai. The place is now irrelevant to us as from Jews. We don't know where it is and we don't care. Chazal never made an attempt to

tell us where it is.

But Dovid and Ezra were mekadesh Yerusholayim and that kedushoh remains. And Klal Yisroel continuously are mekadesh the zman every month.

The Korbon Pesach is a combination of all these aspects. We make an animal kodosh, bring it to a mokom kodosh to slaughter, and eat it at a kodosh time. The declaration of Bikkurim we say in the Haggadah expresses the fact that Hashem gave us all of this. Hashem gave us Eretz Yisroel, and the ability to define every aspect of our existence in a way that serves Hashem: Clothing has mitzvos, food has mitzvos, business has mitzvos. Every aspect of life is imbued with ruchniyus and connection to Hashem. We use the world in the way Hashem tells us to use it.

Klal Yisroel took the avodo zoro of the Egyptians and slaughtered it and put its blood on their doorposts to make a clear statement: We are no longer part of Egyptian society. We discussed this last time. But then they ate the meat that was kodosh, in a time that they were mekadesh, as part of their avodas Hashem. This is the first thing Klal Yisroel did as Hashem's nation.

There is matzah. It is very interesting because it symbolizes so many things. In the beginning of the Haggadah we mention that we ate matzah as part of the shibbud. But at the end of maggid, we ate matzah as freed slaves who just became Hashem's people. We are now elevated and redeemed. The difference isn't what we eat but how we eat it. As slaves, you just wolf the food down to get energy into your body as quickly as possible in order to continue working for your master. Now we eat it as bnei chorin – with details and shiurim and

halachos surrounding it as part of a mitzvah and avodas Hashem.

This Shabbos, we talk about korbonos in general in Parshas Vayikra, and we read about the Korbon Pesach in Parshas Hachodesh. We hope we can bring an actual korbon this year to eat at the seder. But if not, we need to learn and understand through the Korbon Pesach and kiddush hachodesh how to prepare for the Yom Tov of Pesach in a fundamental way. We became Hashem's nation and we are the ones who are mekadesh zman. This is what it means to be Jewish – being mekadesh zman and objects and places.

Shabbos is a beautiful day – you can forget about the world and all the worries that occupy us during the week. But some Jews are mechallel the kedushas hazman by just getting drunk and wasting the whole day. We are supposed to use the menuchoh to withdraw from the world, to enter a realm of kedushoh. We make kiddush at the beginning of the day to be mekadesh Shabbos.

Some people have a distorted view of Yiddishkeit and think they should prepare for Pesach by getting a sheep ready to slaughter on Har Habayis. We leave it to Hashem to bring the geuloh and bring back korbonos. That isn't our job.

Our preparation for Pesach is to understand who we are as Jews – who are mekadesh objects, places and time. If you are passing through Egypt on the way back to your families, you can observe the place and the people we left in order to become Jews, and you should deeply appreciate the difference. We eat matzah entirely differently than a slave. We do everything differently because Hashem gave us everything we have as a means of avodas Hashem.