

צפון – Hidden¹

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יחץ is a highlight of the Seder for children. We break the middle matza into two parts, with the smaller part used for the mitzvah of אכילת מצה, while the larger part is hidden and later eaten at צפון as the Afikoman. Customarily, children hide this matza and, after the Seudah, the father bargains with the children until they return it. This highlight of the Seder is devised to keep the children awake.

We would like to suggest a deeper meaning to צפון, hidden.

We eat a *kezayis* of the hidden matza for the Afikoman as a זכר to the קרבן פסח, which also was eaten after the main meal. Chazal explain that there is a fundamental difference between the Korban Pesach and all other korbanos. The primary purpose of all other korbanos was to bring about a kapara, which is completed by the הזאת הדם, placing the blood on the mizbe'ach. The eating of the korban was not מעכב; even if the korban was not eaten, the main purpose of the korban – the kapara – still was fulfilled.

In contrast, the purpose of the Korban Pesach is eating the korban. If the Korban Pesach was not eaten, the purpose of the korban was not fulfilled. This invites the question – מה נשתנה? Why is the Korban Pesach different from all other korbanos?

The commentaries quote the Zohar, which explains that the subjugation of Yisrael by the Mitzrim, was very intense because the Bnei Yisrael ate Egyptian bread; had they not done so, the שעבוד would have been much lighter. This requires an explanation. They lived in Mitzrayim, so what else could they have eaten other than Egyptian bread? The commentaries explain the Zohar as follows: When Yaakov Avinu went to Lavan's house, he asked Hashem to give him bread to eat and clothes to wear, וַיִּתֵּן-לִי לֶחֶם לֵאמֹר, וְיָבִיט לְלִבְשִׁי (בראשית כ"ח). The Alshich explains that Yaakov Avinu was not worried about not having sustenance. Yaakov's concern was that in Eretz Yisrael, in his father's home, his sustenance came directly from the Hand of הקב"ה, whereas in חוץ לארץ, his sustenance would come via the שר (the administering prince Above) of the country in which he would reside. Yaakov Avinu was afraid that in that situation he might not be strong enough to withstand the influences of Lavan's home. He therefore begged הקב"ה that even in חוץ לארץ his parnassa should come directly from הקב"ה. This would give him the spiritual independence to withstand the נסיונות of Lavan's home to such an extent that he would be able him to say upon leaving Lavan's house that he did not deviate one iota from what he had been commanded.

Rav Dessler, זצ"ל, used to explain to us that the concept of the שר of a nation means the spiritual characteristic through which הקב"ה channels His hashpa'a to that particular nation. But each of these characteristics, by definition, is circumscribed and limited. For example there are nations whose sustenance is based on agriculture, others on industrial might, and so on. However, Klal Yisrael's characteristic is its nearness to הקב"ה. As a result, His blessings to Klal Yisrael are direct, rather than through a שר, and therefore are unlimited. In Galus, each individual has a choice whether to remain independent by cleaving to הקב"ה or to surrender to the influences of the country in which he resides, thereby becoming limited, as is the שר of that country. This is the meaning of the Zohar that if Bnei Yisrael had retained their spiritual independence, their sustenance, their bread, would have come directly from הקב"ה and the Egyptian influence would have been corresponding weaker. However, they became

1. This article originally was printed in the Mitteilungen, Pesach 5762.

assimilated to the fundamental Egyptian way of life in spite of the fact that they retained the external trapping of Jewish language, garment and name. Their sustenance therefore came to them via the שר of Mitzrayim, thus bringing about the strong spiritual influence of the Mitzrim on the Bnei Yisrael.

Chazal (ברכות ד:) tell us that anyone who recites אשרי thrice daily will merit עולם הבא. The Gemara explains that this is because אשרי is written in alphabetical order and contains the Pasuk פותח את ידך ומשביע לכל חי רצון, You open Your Hand and feed every living soul. But why did our Chazal omit the preceding pasuk of וַעֲיִן כָּל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁבְּרוּ וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת־אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ, a pasuk which contains ten words and is the source of our minhag to put our ten fingers on the bread when the beracha of Hamotzi? Why then did Chazal tell us that the importance of Ashrei is the pasuk of פותח את ידך rather than וַעֲיִן כָּל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁבְּרוּ? The answer can be found in the Midrash which asks, “How can opening the Hands of הקב"ה bring parnassa? Parnassa depends on rain and in order to give us rain הקב"ה closes His hand and squeezes the clouds for water, rather than opening His hand. How then can parnassa come by הקב"ה opening His hands and letting the clouds scatter?” The Midrash answers that the ways of הקב"ה are different than those of human beings. While human beings are limited, הקב"ה gives in an unlimited way. This is the significance of the pasuk פותח את ידך; when we adhere to Hashem’s Torah and Mitzvos and are mispallel to הקב"ה, then הקב"ה will help us even in a spectacular unexpected way – a prime example being the מן in the Midbar. This privilege depends on which path in life Klal Yisrael chooses. The two pesukim represent two different situations. וַעֲיִן כָּל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁבְּרוּ tells us that Hashem gives sustenance to all beings but only in a natural way. In contrast, פותח את ידך includes the unlikely and unexpected.

With this, we can understand the meaning of the Korban Pesach. The sheep was the god of the Egyptians and we have the mitzvah to take just that sheep and eat it. This symbolizes that from now on our sustenance is not dependent on the שר of the Egyptians; from now on we are spiritually and physically independent – an independent nation whose sustenance will come directly from the hand of הקב"ה. This is the uniqueness of eating the Korban Pesach, in contrast to other korbanos, and that is what we remember when we eat the kezayis matza, the Afikoman, at the end of the Seudah. However, this depends on our firm belief that Hashem responds to our Tefillos, if said with the right ruach.

Chazal (ברכות כד:) tell us that anyone who raises his voice in prayer is מקטני אמנה, not a great believer. The Maharal explains this to mean that the correct Emunah only can exist if it is hidden deep down. It must be hidden from everyone, because if it surfaces so that others can hear it, it loses its depth and becomes superficial. Similarly, the message of the Korban Pesach is hidden, hence the term צפון. This is the deeper meaning of the minhag to hide the Afikoman.

May we merit the day (מיכה ו:טו) פִּימִי צִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲרָאֵנוּ נִפְלְאוֹת (מיכה ו:טו).