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A Pesach Sheni Jew

There were men who were ritually unclean [because of contact with] a dead person, and therefore could not make the Korban Pesach on that day. So they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day. Those men said to him, "We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person; [but] why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of Hashem in its appointed time, with all the children of Israel? (Bamidbar 9:6-7).

As Am Yisrael travels through the desert, they are commanded to observe the laws of Pesach and to offer the appropriate sacrifice on the anniversary of the day in which we were redeemed from Egypt. People who were tamei (unclean) and thus forbidden from participating in the Korban Pesach, pleaded with Moshe that it was unfair that they could not partake in the Pesach experience. They did not want to be left out. "Why should we lose?" Moshe then informs them of the laws of Pesach Sheni.

Pesach Sheni is a "make-up" mitzva, one of the only mitzvot we have which provides us with a second chance to fulfill a mitzva whose proper time has elapsed.

What exactly is the message of Pesach

Sheni? Why specifically in this instance is this opportunity provided? Many of the baalei mussar, as quoted in Sefer Otzrot HaTorah, suggest the following idea.

The Gemara in Brachot (35b) articulates: The earlier generations were not like the later generations. The earlier generations would carry in their fruit through their front doors so they would be biblically obligated to be mafrish teruma and maaser. According to the halacha, one is only obligated to give terumot and maasrot if the produce enters the storage house in the normal way, through the front door. If produce is left out of the field, or if it is taken in through the window or roof, it is not biblically obligated to have a hafrasha. This was the righteous behavior of the earlier generations. They always made sure to act in a way that would enable them to maximize their fulfillment of mitzvot. Nowadays (i.e. the later generations), explains the Gemara, we bring the produce through the roof, and we do everything we can so that we are exempt from having to give teruma and maaser.

What is the message of that Gemara? What did they do wrong? The later generation did not violate any prohibition. They just calculated a way to avoid having an obligation to give teruma. Is that so bad? I am acting, based on a reliable halachic exemption. What's the problem?

This Gemara is teaching us a barometer of how to measure one's Ahavat Hashem. It is not about whether we perform mitzvot, but it is about whether we are excited in the performance of mitzvot. Do we strive to create situations that trigger the ability to perform a mitzva, or do we do endeavor to avoid any obligation to perform a mitzva?

The later generations were very careful to perform obligatory mitzvot, and they gave trumot and maasrot when it was absolutely required, but they tried to avoid a situation that would necessitate having to give teruma. That was the problem. Those who love G-d do not look for ways to avoid responsibilities. Rather they seek out ways to take upon themselves more responsibility and additional acts of chesed and mitzvot.

That is the message of Pesach Sheni. These individuals could have said, "Oh, we are tamei, okay, we can't do it this year, next year we will offer the Korban Pesach." No. They said, "Moshe, find us a way. We don't want to be left out. We want to be able to perform this mitzva. We have tremendous gratitude to Hashem for taking us out of Egypt - you have to find a way to enable us to partake in this mitzva."

We need to ask ourselves - am I Pesach Sheni Jew? Am I constantly trying to figure out ways to obligate

myself, to take upon myself new responsibilities, to be an active member of my community, or to be part of a chesed project? Whatever it is, we need to be Pesach Sheni Jews.

The Otzros HaTorah relays a story about a certain talmid chacham who learned in Yeshivat Radin. This talmid told what happened to him one Thursday night.

As in many Yeshivot, Thursday night was known as mishmar night, where students would learn late. This student left the beit medrash very late at night to return to his lodging. It was a cold night with snow and ice on the road. As he rushed home, he noticed the Chafetz Chayim roaming the streets. The Chafetz Chayim upon spotting the talmid, told him to get to sleep quickly, as the hour was late and he would soon have to rise for schachrit. The talmid returned to the place where he was staying, which happened to be the home of the Chafetz Chayim's sister.

In the morning, the talmid conveyed what had transpired the prior night and asked what her brother the Chafetz Chayim, was doing roaming the streets in the middle of the night?

The Chafetz Chayim's sister explained - "He has been out for three nights already, at all hours of the night, trying to spot the moon so that he can recite the blessing on the new moon (kiddush levana)."

That is a Pesach Sheini Jew. Even

though the moon was not visible after maariv, he constantly searched to see if it became visible so he could perform the mitzva. May we be able to bring out the 'Pesach Sheni Jew' within each of us and actively pursue the fulfillment of all of the mitzvot.