**PARASHAT HASHAVUA**

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**This parasha series is dedicated**

**Le-zekher Nishmat HaRabanit Chana**

**bat HaRav Yehuda Zelig zt"l.**

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PARASHAT BO

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**Please say tehillim for**

**YHE alumnus Amit Schwartz, Amit Yehuda ben Malka,**

**Taube Yehudit bat Tema Gasya**

**Ve-Yishlach lahem meheira refuah sheleimah min ha-shamayim be-tokh she'ar cholei Yisrael.**

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**The Pesach Sacrifice and the Story of the Exodus**

**By Rav Yehuda Rock**

In two different places, the Torah commands Bnei Yisrael to offer the Pesach sacrifices, and the two sources appear to contradict each other. The first source is *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*, in our *parasha* (*Shemot* 12:1-20); the other is at the end of *Parashat* *Re'eh* (*Devarim* 16:1-8). The Pesach sacrifice is also mentioned elsewhere in the Torah: later on in our *parasha* we read, "Draw and take for yourselves" (12:21-28), which complements *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*; in the section that begins, "Sanctify for Me" (*Shemot* 13) the sacrifice is hinted at (in the words "this service"); in the discussion of the pilgrim festivals in the *parashot* of *Mishpatim* and *Ki Tisa* (with two laws that appear in both places – the prohibition of eating the sacrifice together with leaven, and the prohibition of leaving the sacrificial meat until the next morning); in the lists of festivals and their respective additional offerings in the *parashot* of *Emor* and *Pinchas*, and in the context of Pesach Sheni in *Parashat* *Beha'alotekha*. But only in our *parasha* and in *Re'eh* do we find a command concerning the actual sacrifice, and only in these two sources is there a description of the sacrifice itself.

As noted, there are a number of contradictions between these two sources. Let us set out the laws of the Pesach sacrifice as recorded in *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*, and then we shall look at *Parashat Re'eh*.

Our chapter explicitly commands the observance of the Pesach in Egypt, which thereafter became the model for the observance of *Pesach le-dorot* - Pesach for all future generations. *Pesach le-dorot* is distinct from the Pesach described in our chapter in that the former became a sacrifice. In other words, instead of performing the ritual in the house, using hyssop branches to paint blood on the doorposts and lintel, it is performed in the Temple, with the blood and fats being placed upon the altar, as in the case of all other animal sacrifices. The other details of the Pesach that are described here are to be followed for all generations. They include the following:

a. The sacrifice is to be a (male) sheep or goat in its first year.

b. The meat is eaten "roast with fire, its head with its legs and with its entrails," not raw or boiled.

In contrast, in *Parashat Re'eh*, we find a completely different set of laws, contradicting those set out in *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh* and different from the halakha for all future generations:

a. "You shall offer a Pesach [sacrifice] unto the Lord your God of the flock and of the herd." The plain meaning of the verse would seem to indicate that the Pesach sacrifice can be offered at any time of the day! Furthermore, while *Chazal* explain, "'Of the flock' – for the Pesach sacrifice; 'And of the herd' – for the Chagiga offering" (*Sifri piska* 129 and elsewhere), and Ramban attempts to trace this explanation back to the literal meaning of the text by dividing the verse into two expressions, as though the text said, "You shall offer the Pesach unto the Lord your God (in accordance with the familiar laws of Pesach); and of the flock and of the herd (for the Chagiga)," nevertheless the literal meaning of the verse is unquestionably that the Pesach sacrifice is taken from the herd and from the flock. Finally, there is no specification that the animal must be male or have any particular age.

b. "And you shall cook it and eat it" – the plain meaning here would seem to indicate that the Pesach sacrifice may cooked in water – contradicting the explicit negative command in *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*: "You shall not eat of it raw, nor cooked with water." Here, too, *Chazal* try to resolve the difficulty (*Mekhilta Bo parasha* 6): "The word 'cook' means 'roast,' as it says here, 'You shall cook it and eat it,' and it says, 'They cooked the Pesach sacrifice with fire, according to the law…' (II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 35:13). On this basis R. Yoshiya used to say: One who makes a vow to abstain from cooked food is forbidden to eat anything that is roasted." In other words, *Chazal* deduced from the seeming contradiction between *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh* and *Parashat Re'eh*, and from the verse in *Divrei Ha-yamim* where we learn that "they cooked" the Pesach sacrifice "with fire" as required by law, that the expression "cooking" includes roasting. However, even if we accept that the verse in *Divrei Ha-yamim* indeed reflects accepted usage, rather than the result of interpretation similar to that found in the *Mekhilta*, the appearance in *Parashat Re'eh* of the word "cook" with no qualification, and without the clarification "with fire," is problematic, especially in light of the fact that the word "cook" is used in *Parashat Ha-chodesh* exclusively in the context of a forbidden manner of preparation, while the required method of preparation of the Pesach sacrifice is defined there as "roast with fire," with no appearance of the word "cooked." Hence, it would seem that the literal meaning of the verse in *Parashat Re'eh* does in fact refer to cooking in water.

The discrepancies between these two sources with regard to the details of the laws would appear to reflect a fundamental difference in the existential nature of the Pesach sacrifice in each case. Let us try to understand the nature of the Pesach as expressed in each source, and then try to understand the halakha.

#### Ha-chodesh

As noted, the Pesach of *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh* is characterized by being taken specifically from the flock, and being eaten exclusively in roasted form. *Chazal* explain the reason for the Pesach being a sheep (or goat); *Chazal* explain as follows (*Shemot* *Rabba* 16,3):

"'Draw and take for yourselves sheep' – as it is written, 'All who worship idols shall be shamed.' When the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moshe to slaughter the Pesach sacrifice, Moshe said: Master of the world – how can I do this thing? How can You not know that sheep are the gods of the Egyptians? As it is written, 'Shall we then offer up the god [literally, 'the abomination'] of the Egyptians before their eyes, without having them stone us?!' (*Shemot* 8:22). The Holy One said to him: By your life, Israel will not leave here until they have slaughtered the gods of the Egyptians before their eyes, that I may make known to them that their gods are worth nothing….

According to other commentators, the literal meaning of the expression, "The abomination of the Egyptians," indicates that sheep were not the gods of the Egyptians, but rather that Egyptian culture was repelled by sheep and the consumption of their meat – obviously for religious reasons. Whatever the case may be, the slaughtering of sheep for the Pesach sacrifice represented an active demonstration of rejecting Egyptian culture and religion.

According to the above, we can understand why the Pesach had to be roasted with fire. For cooking in water, meat is cut up into pieces, such that the form of the animal is no longer recognizable. Only when it is roasted on the fire does the animal remain whole, such that it is still recognizable. The commandment of the Pesach sacrifice, then, is to slaughter the Egyptian culture, as it were, for the sake of Divine service, and to serve at the table not as mutton (sheep’s meat) but rather the sheep itself, whole and recognizable. Thus, the performance of the Pesach becomes a conscious and holistic expression of rejection of Egyptian culture in order to enter into God's covenant.

And for all future generations, the Pesach of Egypt is reenacted every year. In this reenactment an Israelite affirms each time anew his commitment to the covenant with God over foreign value systems, and accepts upon himself anew the yoke of the Kingdom of heaven.

##### *Re'eh*

As noted, the Pesach sacrifice as described in *Parashat* *Re'eh* can be "from the flock or from the herd," but not a bird; it may also be either male or female, and of any age. There is no requirement of roasting; the meat of the Pesach sacrifice may be cooked. Similarly to the Pesach of *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*, the meat is eaten by the owners, and only until the morning.

Of the four basic categories of sacrifices – the burnt offering, peace offering, the various sin offerings and the guilt offering – the only one that has no clear requirements as to whether it is male or female is the peace offering (*Vayikra* 3:1). The peace offering likewise has no limitation on the age of the animal, and it may be from the flock or from the herd – but not a bird. The language of the text describing the Pesach sacrifice in *Parashat* *Re'eh* – "You shall offer" (*ve-zavachta*) – is likewise reminiscent of the peace offering, which – unlike other sacrifices – is consistently referred to as a "*zevach*" (offering).

In *Parashat* *Tzav* (7:11-18) the Torah sets forth two types of peace offerings: vow offerings, and offerings of thanksgiving. The main difference, in terms of the laws applicable to them, is that vow offerings may be eaten over a period of two days and a night, whereas the thanksgiving offering must be eaten either on the day of the sacrifice or later on during the night. In this regard the Pesach sacrifice of *Parashat* *Re'eh* is remarkably similar to the thanksgiving sacrifice, since in the context of the former we are told, "Nor shall any of the meat, which you shall offer up on the first day in the evening, remain until morning." From here we learn the essential nature of the Pesach sacrifice in *Parashat* *Re'eh*: the Pesach of *Parashat* *Re'eh* is a national offering of thanksgiving for the Exodus from Egypt.

This message fits in well with the themes of the other pilgrim festivals as set out in *Parashat* *Re'eh*, with expressions of celebration and joy: on the festival of Shavuot, the harvest is celebrated "as the Lord your God has blessed you"; the festival of Sukkot with the ingathering of produce is celebrated "for the Lord your God has blessed you." On all three pilgrim festivals one is to rejoice and thank God – on Pesach, for redemption from Egypt; on Shavuot and Sukkot, for God's blessing in the agricultural produce.

###### Two Aspects of Pesach

The two *parashot* that present the commandment of the Pesach sacrifice reflect its two different aspects: the aspect of a sacrifice that affirms the covenant, expressing the negation of foreign cultures and the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of heaven, and the aspect of a sacrifice of praise and thanks to God.

The halakhic characteristics of the Pesach sacrifice, in the Oral Law, are established on the basis of *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*: a male sheep of the first year that is eaten only roasted. This comes as no surprise, since *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh* is the stricter of the two sources in terms of halakhic requirements. A view of both *parashot* as binding logically leads to the conclusion that practically, the sacrifice must assume the character of *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*.

However, it would seem that halakha is also influenced to some extent by the Pesach of *Parashat* *Re'eh*. We quoted above the exegesis of *Chazal* involving the obligation of the Chagiga offering: "'From the flocks' – for the Pesach sacrifice; 'And from the herds' – for the Chagiga sacrifice." Chagiga is referred to in halakha as "the Chagiga (literally, "festive offering") of the fourteenth." This Chagiga has a most peculiar status – especially as viewed by the Rambam.

The Mishna in *Pesachim* (69b) teaches: "When is the Chagiga brought together with it [the Pesach]? When it is brought on a regular day, in purity, being modest in quantity. But when it is brought on Shabbat, in large quantity, and in a state of impurity, then the Chagiga offering is not brought together with it." In other words, the bringing of the Chagiga is dependent upon three factors: the 14th of Nissan must fall on a weekday, the sacrifice must be brought in purity, and the Pesach sacrifice itself must be small, such that the group of people who own it should not be satisfied after eating it. But if the 14th of Nissan falls on Shabbat, or comes at a time of ritual impurity (on the basis of the law that "ritual impurity is set aside if it involves the whole community"), or if the Pesach sacrifice suffices for all to eat of it and be completely satiated, then no Chagiga offering is brought.

This conditional status of the Chagiga is unusual: where else do we find the obligation of bringing a sacrifice being dependent on such factors? It is for this reason that Rav Ashi concludes, in the Gemara (70a), "This must mean that the Chagiga of the fourteenth [of Nissan] is not obligatory." Tosfot explain: "'It is not obligatory' – meaning, there is no obligation from the Torah to bring it." As the continuation of the Tosfot goes on to explain, the conclusion presented above was the subject of some controversy among the Tannaim; the Mishna adopts the opinion that no obligation to bring the Chagiga may be derived from the biblical verse; the requirement is rabbinical in origin, and apparently the verse is teaching something else.

But the Rambam (Laws of the Pesach Sacrifice, 10:12-13) arrives at the requirement of the "Chagiga of the fourteenth" on the basis of the verse, but he nevertheless rules in accordance with the Mishna: "When the Pesach is offered in the first month, we sacrifice thanksgiving offerings together with it on the 14th… and this is what is known as the 'Chagiga of the 14th'; concerning this it is written in the Torah, 'You shall offer a Pesach unto the Lord your God, of the flocks and of the herds.' When is this Chagiga brought together with it? When it falls on a weekday, and in purity, and in a small quantity. But if the 14th falls on Shabbat, or when the nation is in a state of impurity, or if the Pesach sacrifices are large in volume, then a Chagiga offering is not brought together with it; the Pesach alone is offered. The Chagiga of the 14th is voluntary and not obligatory."

To explain the Rambam we may suggest that the terms "voluntary" and "obligatory" here mean absolute and supreme obligation, requiring an independent sacrifice – like other sacrifices (see *Chagiga* 8a concerning a sacrifice brought from unsanctified animals), and that this definition of "obligation" is the basis for the sacrifice overriding both Shabbat and the communal state of ritual impurity. The Chagiga of the 14th is not an "obligation" requiring an independent sacrifice, but it is a commandment – a commandment of praise and thanksgiving to God through offerings brought from the flocks or from the herds. However, this commandment may be fulfilled through the Pesach itself: if that sacrifice is sufficient to represent a full meal of sacrificial food, a worthy banquet of praise. Only when the Pesach is small in volume does this commandment require that it be "supplemented" with additional offerings – from the herds (since if there were any extra sheep, they would be offered as Pesach sacrifices and divided amongst the groups). This supplement, owing to its lack of any defined identity as an independent sacrifice, falls under the category of a vow offering.

This commandment, then, not requiring a defined, independent offering, is the result of the discrepancy between the two aspects of the Pesach. In fact, we have here two laws concerning the Pesach: one law as to a limited, defined sacrifice that is brought from the males of the flocks, and a second law as to a magnanimous banquet of sacrificial food – an offering of thanks to God. From the perspective of the identity of the Pesach sacrifice itself, the first law takes precedence; the second law does not establish the identity of the sacrifice, but remains a commandment pertaining to the person. *Chazal* refer to this commandment as "the Chagiga of the 14th" (we shall not elaborate here on the reason for this title).

###### The Story of the Exodus from Egypt

The mitzva of recounting the story of the Exodus is, in terms of its substance, a commandment to give verbal expression to the existential expression of the Pesach sacrifice. This concept arises from the context of the verses that represent the source for the law of recounting; these describe the story of the Exodus as an explanation for the Pesach sacrifice (*Shemot* 12:26-27; 13:6-8):

"And it shall be when your children say to you: What is this service to you? Then you shall say: It is a Pesach offering to God, for He passed over the houses of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt when He struck Egypt, saving our houses… and you shall perform this service in this month… and you shall tell your son that that day, saying: Because of this God did for me, when I left Egypt…."

Ramban notes the close connection between the commandment to recount the Exodus story and the Pesach sacrifice. In his gloss to *Sefer* *Ha-Mitzvot* (note 15 on positive commandments), he explains the reason for counting the blessing recited over the Torah as a commandment that is separate from the reading from the Torah: "It is not proper that it be counted as the same commandment together with the reading, just as the recitation over the first fruits [brought to the Temple] is counted as a commandment that is independent of the actual bringing of the first fruits, and the story of the Exodus is independent of the eating of the Pesach sacrifice." Clearly, to Ramban's view, the relationship between the story of the Exodus and the Pesach sacrifice resembles the relationship between the recitation over the first fruits and the bringing of them, and between the blessing over the Torah and the reading of it. [Ramban expresses the same idea in *Milchamot Hashem Berakhot* 2b, and in his *Chiddushim* on *Pesachim* 117a, end of *s.v. ve-od*].

This relationship between the Pesach sacrifice and the story of the Haggada is also anchored in several laws: the law that the "telling" must follow the format of questions and answers (even for a person who is sitting alone); the opinion of Rabban Gamliel that mention must be made of Pesach, matza and maror; etc.

Hence, it is not at all surprising that we find the two aspects of the Pesach sacrifice – the acceptance of the yoke of heaven, and praise and thanksgiving – reflected in the laws of the Haggada, too. The Mishna in *Pesachim* (116a) establishes as the first element of the answer to the question, "Why is this night different…": "We begin with disgrace and end with praise." The Amoraim are divided as to the specific content of the disgrace and the praise: "What 'disgrace' is referred to? Rav taught: 'At first our forefathers were worshippers of idols.' Shemuel taught: 'We were slaves.'" Rabbeinu Chananel notes: "Nowadays we do like both of them." Rambam codifies this as law, and we follow this custom today. The section that begins, "At first our forefathers were worshippers of idols, and now God has brought us close to His service," highlights the Exodus as the definitive event of God taking Israel to be His nation; as such, the retelling of the story is a reenactment of the experience of entering into the covenant with God at the time of the Exodus. This is a verbal expression of the Pesach of *Parashat* *Ha-chodesh*. The section that begins, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord our God took us out of there with a strong arm," highlights the Exodus as an event that radically changed the status of *Am Yisrael* from being slaves to being free people, and emphasizes that the event was accompanied by great miracles. Unquestionably, the theme of this section is praise and thanks to God for what He did for Israel at the time of the Exodus.

Thus, the two sections that represent central elements of the Haggada reflect the two aspects of fulfilling the Pesach, as arising from the two sources.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

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