YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva**

**parashat bo**

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In memory of Albert W. and Evelyn G. Bloom, who creatively fulfilled the mitzva of "והגדת לבנך" with each of their children:
Shanen Bloom Werber, Dov Bloom, Elana Bloom, and Michael Bloom z"l

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**“You Shall Say: It is the Pesach Sacrifice to Hashem”**

**Sicha of HarAV Baruch Gigi**

Adapted by Amichai Oster

Translated by David Strauss

And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever. And it shall come to pass when you come to the land which *Hashem* will give you as He has promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say to you: What do you mean by this service? that you shall say: It is the Pesach sacrifice to *Hashem*, for He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. And the children of Israel went and did so; as *Hashem* had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so did they. (*Shemot* 12:24-28)

These verses connect the commands issued in the *parasha* concerning the Pesach observed in Egypt to the long-term imperatives that relate to a completely different period – the Pesach observed in later generations. It is notable that we encounter in our *parasha* three of the four sons who are described in the Pesach *Haggada*.[[1]](#footnote-1) In addition to the "wicked son" mentioned in the passage cited above, we find also the "simple son" and "the son who does not know how to ask":

And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying: What is this? that you shall say to him: By strength of hand *Hashem* brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. (*Shemot* 13:14)

And you shall tell your son in that day, saying: It is because of that which *Hashem* did for me when I came forth out of Egypt. (*Shemot* 13:8)

It is very important to note that these are the moments of the birth and creation of the people of Israel. The entire future existence of the Jewish People is based on the blood covenant of: "And you shall say: It is the Pesach sacrifice to *Hashem*." In order to establish this sense of covenant, every year we must not only tell the story of the exodus from Egypt, but also feel and experience it.

 Regarding the answer given to the wicked son, R. Shimson Raphael Hirsch writes:

Undisturbed by the derisive protests of a generation in which the spirit and meaning of the religious practices have been lost in the ossifying effects of materialism, you are to proclaim, let who will hear it, that it is still the sacrifice of *Hashem*'s passover, that it is still a meal that leads out of death to life, that for Israel, life and freedom still depend on the same conditions that first brought them to Israel, so that this service, this repeated symbolic entry into the service of God, is a procedure of the highest value and the most pregnant with results for all times.[[2]](#footnote-2)

According to R. Hirsch, there is no need to get overly upset about a wicked son who in some future generation will ask: "What do you mean by this service?" The Torah teaches us that the answer to such a question is to point out to him the eternal covenant that has existed from the moment of the birth of the Jewish People. The argument of this answer is that the Pesach offering does not belong only to the distant past, but rather is relevant to every generation, since it symbolizes the eternal covenant between God and His people.

Rabban Gamliel used to say: Whoever does not discuss the following three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his duty, namely: the *Pesach* [offering], *matza* (unleavened bread), and *maror* (bitter herbs).

In every generation, a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt, as it is stated: "You shall tell your child on that day: It is because of this that *Hashem* did for me when I left Egypt." (*Mishna* *Pesachim* 10:5)

We are accustomed to understanding the obligation of "*Pesach*-*Matza*-*Maror*" as a verbal obligation, an integral part of the story of the *Haggada.* The Ramban, however, understood the obligation differently:

And similarly we learned: “Whoever does not discuss the following three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his duty.” But this does not mean that he has to eat again *Pesach*, *matza*, and *maror* [if he fails to discuss them properly]. (*Milchamot Hashem*, *Berakhot* 2b)

In context, the Ramban is trying to prove that the words "he has not fulfilled his duty" do not always mean that one must do the mitzvaagain because he has not fulfilled it. Rather, they mean that one has not fulfilled his obligation in the proper manner. In the framework of this discussion, he deals also with failure to discuss "*Pesach*, *matza*,and *maror*." If one fails to mention these three things, the Ramban writes, it is not necessary to do the *mitzvot* again. The Ramban does not write that one need not **say** these three things if he failed to do so properly the first time. This is because the obligation of "*Pesach*, *matza*, and *maror*" is not connected to the mitzva of relating the story of the exodus, but rather to the overall experience, which includes both eating and explaining.

This may explain why the Pesach offering is mentioned first, before *matza* and *maror*; it is the main thing eaten, and therefore the main experience that we must have in every generation.

There was [only] as much as an olive of the Pesach offering [to eat], yet the *Hallel* split the roofs! (*Pesachim* 85b)

The *gemara* here briefly describes the great joy at the time of the eating of the Pesachoffering. Try to imagine that great joy: The entire nation of Israel has arrived in Jerusalem. The eating of the Pesachoffering must be accompanied by the recitation of *Hallel*, so during the eating of the Pesachoffering, all kinds of songs of praise to God could be heard from every direction. Indeed, a very exciting and joyous occasion, which we hope will return in the near future.

We might have expected that after the destruction of the Temple, the atmosphere of this night would have become very sad! How is it that the night of the *seder* has remained the most significant night of the year?

The answer is that following the destruction, the center of gravity of the Pesach experience shifted from eating the Pesachoffering to reliving the experience of the exodus from Egypt and the renewal of the covenant between God and His people. This important matter is relevant in every generation, even after the destruction. The covenant is eternal, and it is the most important point on the night of the *seder*.

[This *sicha* was delivered at *seuda shelishit* on Shabbat *Parashat Bo* 5777 (2017).]

1. The "wise son" appears in *Parashat Va'etchanan*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R. Hirsch, commentary on *Shemot* 12:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)