



PARSHAS VAYIKRA NISSAN

SHALOSH SEUDOS TORAH
5772

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Days of Chesed (Loving-Kindness) have Arrived

Introduction

The parsha opens with the word ויקרא; Hashem called Moshe before proceeding to relate the mitzvos of Korbanos (sacrifices). One can call someone for the purpose of preparing him in advance. This is the meaning of the expression - קרואי מועד - calling for an appointment.

However, Rashi explains that the 'calling' of this verse is an expression of fondness. The angels, too, convey their mutual affection by calling out to each other before proceeding to exalt Hashem with the praises - 'Holy, Holy, Holy etc.'

The reading of Parshas Vayikra coincides with Parshas HaChodesh. The week before or the day of the first of Nissan we read the passage which begins with the word 'HaChodesh.' In this section, Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu regarding the mitzvah of taking a sheep for the Korban Pesach.

This mitzvah was not to be fulfilled until four days before the chag (holiday), on the tenth of Nissan. Why did Hashem relate this mitzvah to Moshe on the first of Nissan, ten days in advance?

Days of Chesed

We are now entering the days of Nissan and the long-awaited chag of Pesach is coming close. At this time of the year, Hashem conducts the affairs of the world through the prism of Chesed.

There are many legitimate manners in which to serve Hashem. Some of these individual ways may contradict others. Rabbi Shimon said about his manner of serving Hashem: We serve Hashem (not with the trembling of the Prophet Chabakuk but) with love¹.

The same is true of the months of the year. Within each month, Hashem runs His affairs with a different divine attribute. In the month of Nissan, Hashem rules with Chesed, and the love between Hashem and the Jewish people flowers.

Each of the seven divine attributes with which Hashem runs the world has its corresponding color. We wear a white 'kittel' (garment) to the Seder on Pesach night because it is white that is the color of chesed, the attribute which reigns in Nissan and is especially strong on Pesach.

A Month of Complete Chesed

The heavenly attribute that reigns each month is hinted to in the 'Tziruf HaChodesh' of that month.

The four-letter name of Hashem ק, ו, ק, ו¹, can be arranged in twelve possible ways for each of the twelve months. Each arrangement is hinted to in the first or last letters of consecutive words in a verse of Tanach.

The 'Tziruf HaChodesh' of Nissan is hinted to in the verse, "ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ"², 'The heavens are happy; the earth exults.'

¹ The ק is instead of the ה of the name of Hashem. This is in order to avoid writing this supremely holy name of G-d.

If the letters of the name of Hashem are arranged straightforwardly, it is a sign of chesed. If they are the first letters of the word, it is also an indication of chesed. The name of Hashem in the 'Tziruf HaChodesh' of Nissan is both arranged straightforwardly and is hinted to in the first letters of the words. The month of Nissan is one of total Chesed.

A Pleasant Season

What happens in Chodesh Nissan is also hinted to in the words which contain its 'Tziruf.'
ישמחו השמים - during this time of the year there is happiness in heaven; the harp-strings of loving-kindness vibrate, and their pleasant sound fills the atmosphere. The mutual affection between Hashem and the Jewish people is aroused.

Therefore, ותגל הארץ, the earth reveals this pleasantness in the charming season of spring. The word ותגל is related to the word מתגלה, reveals. The earth reveals what is taking place in heaven; because in heaven there is rejoicing, physical climate on earth becomes pleasant and there is delight and satisfaction.

The weather turns balmy; buds emerge from the till-now seemingly lifeless branches. Flowers in hues of white, pink and purple bedeck the once sad and downtrodden trees. True - it will be in the summer that the trees will bear their fruit - but it is now, in Nissan, that the blossoms that are so pleasant and pleasing to the eye appear. There is an abundance of goodness and kindness overflowing upon us.

The Mutual Affection Between Hashem and the Jewish People Blossoms Now

Through Hashem's awakening of His boundless love for His people, Jews are now aroused in love of Hashem. Those who are engaged in the service of Hashem all year around, feel their hearts open up in great yearning and desire for Hashem. Those of us less spiritually aware are also being aroused in love and longing for Hashem, but our spiritual stirrings are hidden deep in our hearts and we are not consciously aware of them.

A Time of Techiyas HaMeisim – The Reviving of the Lifeless

On the first day of Pesach we replace the phrase, "Who makes the wind blow and the rain fall," with the phrase, "Who makes the dew descend."

In the future, Hashem will revive the lifeless with a 'Dew of Revival.' In the phrase, "Who makes the dew descend," we also refer to this 'Dew of Revival.'

During the month of Nissan, the world becomes alive. The landscape was covered in the white burial-shrouds of snow all winter long. The unknowing would have assumed that the tree had died when the last dry, brown, crumbling leaf fell to the ground.

Suddenly, with the coming of Nissan, nature awakens from its death slumber. A Dew of Revival descends; brilliant pink, purple, yellow, blue and red tulips peek up from beneath their brown blankets, and vegetation begins to sprout once again.

Nature cries out to man: We are coming alive! It is your task to join us! An evil person is termed dead even in his lifetime. You need not remain lifeless! You, too, can awaken under the effects of the Dew of Revival! Renew yourself in the service of Hashem!

A Time of Redemption

Nissan is when the Jewish people were redeemed from slavery.

We are all enslaved by our anxieties, addictions and cravings. Now is the time to shake off these burdens. Then we will be able to recite the blessing, 'Who has not created me a slave,' wholeheartedly!' We can release ourselves from oppression to liberation; from darkness to great light.

The Mishna states that in every generation each individual is obligated to see himself as if he was redeemed from Egypt³. The Torah would not command us to 'make-believe.' If we are required to see ourselves as being redeemed, that means that we *are* being redeemed.

Every Pesach each individual is redeemed in at least one aspect of his personality. The word מִצְרִים, also means מְצָרִים – constrictions. On Pesach we are redeemed from our own personal spiritual limitations and can achieve our spiritual potential.

It is through the fulfillment of the mitzvos of the Seder Night, reciting the Haggadah, and extolling the praises of Hashem in the Hallel prayers that we achieve a new, personal exodus from our מִצְרִים.

Pesach – An Experience of Great Pleasure

Jewish souls eagerly await the Seder Night when will we merit fulfilling the precious mitzvos of Matza, Maror, the Four Cups of Wine, and reciting the Haggadah and Hallel.

Pesach is a time of intense love and closeness between Hashem and the Jewish people. On Pesach we read Shir HaShirim – the sefer (book) written by King Shlomo describing the mutual adoration between Hashem and the Jewish people.

Pesach is the Yom Tov (holiday) of Avraham Avinu whom Hashem termed – "אברהם – אוהבי" – Avraham My beloved. The love and intimacy between Hashem and the Jewish people reaches a crescendo on this chag. Tzaddikim were overwhelmed by their pining for their Creator and were infatuated and lovesick for their Maker.

Talking about an Anticipated Pleasant Experience

People who are eagerly anticipating an exciting event derive pleasure from the mere discussion of their upcoming happiness. For example: a person traveling to Eretz Yisrael will revel and delight in discussing his plans and expectations. Before a wedding, family members discuss the details and envision their joy upon the upcoming marriage of their loved one.

Because Pesach is a Yom Tov of such great delight, we are told to begin reviewing its halachos (laws) from the first of Nissan, when the month of chesed begins. Pesach is such a delightful Yom Tov; we derive pleasure and happiness from discussing it in advance.

Hashem, too, derives tremendous pleasure from Pesach. He can barely await the great joy of the love of the nuptials between Himself and the Jewish people.

Therefore, Hashem gave Moshe Rabbeinu the mitzvah of preparing the offering of Pesach ten days in advance. Hashem has such longing for the Yom Tov of love and pleasure that He talks about it in advance. Hashem derives pleasure from just discussing the details of the upcoming delightful event of Pesach.

Similarly, our sages instituted that we read the passage of HaChodesh two weeks before the Yom Tov of Pesach. Every other Yom Tov, we read about the offerings of the holiday on the day itself. With Pesach we cannot wait! We derive tremendous pleasure from discussing the details of Pesach.

Hashem's love for every Jew comes to the fore on Pesach. The love of Hashem to every Jew is so great that even if someone in a moment of exalted spiritual ecstasy would perceive the

vast love Hashem has for him, he would be underestimating a million times. Hashem's love for every Jew is unfathomable!

The entire chag of Pesach is one long expression of the daily prayer of "אהבת עולם" – everlasting love.

This Year is Special

This year there is a special arrangement of the calendar. The first of Nissan was on Shabbos and therefore the first night of Pesach will also occur on Shabbos.

On every Yom Tov additional sacrifices are offered in the Bais HaMikdash. Of these, there is always a Korban Chatas, a sacrifice atoning for sin. However, on Shabbos we do not bring a Korban Chatas. The Ramban explains that this is because Shabbos is a day of love. King Shlomo taught, "על כל פשעים תכסה אהבה"⁴, Love covers up for all sin. In a mutually-loving relationship, the partners focus on each others' positive points and ignore each others' failings.

On Shabbos, a day of love, we bring no Korban Chatas because on this day sin is ignored in the face of the outpouring love of Hashem.

Hashem Eagerly Anticipated Giving Moshe the Mitzvos of Korbanos

Hashem derived much pleasure from giving Moshe Rabbeinu the Torah. Therefore, He did not just relate the mitzvos to Moshe; He prefaced the giving of the mitzvah with a call to Moshe, much like a person who is awaiting a pleasurable event discusses it in advance.

This is similar to the passage of HaChodesh, which Hashem gave Moshe ten days in advance. **ויקרא** and **החדש** are gematria (have the same numerical value as) each other (they both equal 317). These two express the same idea – the joy and pleasure Hashem has in His relationship with the Jewish people that He revels in discussing and anticipating it in advance.

Talking About Mashiach

The Jewish people eagerly await Mashiach. Therefore, we talk about his arrival and derive pleasure from our conversation.

The Zohar states that Mashiach will come on the fourteenth of Nissan and we have to longingly await him. Perhaps this Nissan will be the one upon which the Midrash⁵ states 'In Nissan they shall be redeemed'?

The Rebbe of Lechovitch said that Emunah – faith and belief – is strengthened when we talk about it. He saw this hinted to in Yirmiyahu⁶; "אֲבֵדָה הָאֱמוּנָה וְנִכְרְתָה מִפִּיהֶם", 'the Emunah was lost; it was cut off from their mouths. When we stop talking about Emunah, we risk losing it.

Is it imperative that we regularly discuss the expected arrival of Mashiach.

Mashiach Will Come Suddenly

Mashiach can come any day. The Baal Shem Tov taught: The day upon which Mashiach will arrive will be a day akin to any other. The business-man will be wheeling and dealing; the tailor will be cutting his material; the woodchopper will wield his ax; the farmer will sow his seeds; the housewife will be washing laundry (the computer technician will be programming computers, the stockbroker will be watching the markets,) – suddenly a call will be heard: "HE'S HERE! MASHIACH HAS ARRIVED!"

Mashiach's arrival will be sudden. Malachi⁷ prophesized: **"וּפְתָאֵם יָבוֹא אֶל הַיְכָלוֹ הָאֲדוֹן אֲשֶׁר"** "אתם מבקשים ומלאך הברית אשר אתם חפצים", 'Suddenly He will come to His Sanctuary, the Master whom you seek and the angel of the covenant that you yearn for.'

The Bais Yosef (the author of the Shulchan Aruch) authored a sefer called 'Maggid Meisharim.' Within it he related exchanges he had with an angel who was sent from heaven to teach him Torah. This angel told him the meaning of a verse in Yeshaya⁸ "רֵאשׁוֹן לְצִיּוֹן הִנֵּה הַנֵּם" "וְלִירוּשָׁלַם מְבַשֵּׂר אֶתְּנֶן" 'the first to Tzion, behold he is here! And to Yerushalayim a herald I will give.'

The angel explained that before a king arrives in a city, there are groups of infantry that herald his coming. When he is a mile from the city, one group arrives announcing, "The king is arriving shortly!" As the king draws closer, another delegation arrives proclaiming the imminent arrival of the king. When the king is right outside the city, another group appears with the message 'Behold, the king is here.'

However, when the **רֵאשׁוֹן לְצִיּוֹן**, the first messenger to announce the redemption of Tzion will arrive, **הִנֵּה הַנֵּם**, Mashiach will immediately come. There will only be one messenger who will proclaim the news. Immediately after this messenger arrives and announces that Mashiach is on his way, Mashiach will arrive.

There are Two Mashiachs

However, our sages have predicted certain dates upon when Mashiach will arrive. We just stated that Mashiach will appear on the fourteenth of Nissan. How does this coincide with the fact that Mashiach can arrive anytime?

The answer is that there are two Mashiachs. One is a descendant of King David, and one is a descendant of Yosef HaTzaddik. The Mashiach of Yosef will arrive suddenly. He will prepare the world for the Mashiach of David who will arrive on a designated day.

It is the Mashiach of Yosef that we wait for daily.

Eagerly Waiting for Mashiach

The Heichal Habracha⁹ states that every Jew is supposed to eagerly look out and long for Mashiach. One should expect Mashiach to appear at any moment. The Rambam states that we are not supposed to think, 'Mashiach will eventually arrive.' We are supposed to await the salvation of Hashem eagerly and expect Mashiach to arrive imminently.

The Yismach Moshe went to sleep every night with his walking stick ready at his bedside, so that if Mashiach would arrive in middle of the night, he would be promptly ready to go forth and greet him. He instructed his attendant to awaken him immediately upon Mashiach's arrival.

Connecting Ourselves to the Great Days of Pesach

We all want to tune in to the holy, delightful frequencies of the Yom Tov of Pesach. Tzaddikim advised studying the laws and Aggadic (inspirational ideas and stories) teachings of the Yom Tov.

Before commencing the Maariv Shemoneh Esrei prayer of any Yom Tov, we recite the verse, "וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת מַעֲדֵי ה' אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"¹⁰, 'Moshe related the holidays of Hashem to the Jewish people.' Moshe Rabbeinu expounded upon the spiritual content of each Yom Tov. He instituted that the Jewish people should engage in the topics of each Yom Tov when it arrives¹¹ in order to be able to fully participate in it.

The parsha that ushers in the month of Nissan is Vayikra. Vayikra discusses the **קרבנות**, sacrifices. **קרבן** is from the root of **מקרב**, to draw near. Through bringing a Korban, a Jew would draw close to Hashem. Heralding the month when Hashem is especially intimate with the Jewish people is the parsha discussing the Korbanos, which draw us near.

The Preciousness of the Korban Mincha

The Midrash¹² interprets the words of King David¹³, 'The voice of Hashem is with force,' to mean that - the voice of Hashem comes to each person according to his ability and endurance.

There are three types of Korban Oleh (ascent offering). The first is a bull or calf, which the affluent would bring. The second is a bird which those of limited financial means would offer. The third is a measure of flour which the destitute would sacrifice on the altar.

Only the third Korban was termed 'Mincha' – an important gift – by the Torah. The sacrifice of the poor is very precious to Hashem because it requires so much effort on his part. The rich man chooses his choicest bull from his flock, but he still has a lavish steak for dinner that night. The poor man has to rip off a piece of his meager loaf in order to bring a Korban to Hashem. Therefore, despite its meagerness, the Korban of the penniless person is most precious to Hashem.

Hashem Demands of Us Only What We are Capable of Doing

The same is true regarding spiritual aptitude. Our generation is very impoverished when it comes to our ability to serve Hashem with our hearts and minds. However, it is only the offering of the impoverished that Hashem terms a 'Mincha.'

We knock at the heavenly gates like a poor beggar with a meager offering to present for the mighty King. However, important ministers notwithstanding, our service of Hashem is in very high demand in heaven.

The Importance of the Mincha Prayer

The afternoon prayer is referred to as 'Mincha.' It is, indeed, the most impoverished of the three daily prayers. The morning prayer, Shacharis, is like a well-built bull. It includes the reciting of Korbanos, Pesukei D'Zimra, the blessings of Shema, Shemoneh Esrei and a grand finale of various prayers afterwards.

Maariv is much less affluent; it consists only of the blessings of Shema and Shemoneh Esrei. Mincha is by far the most destitute of the prayers. It consists of only a bit of Korbanos, the one chapter of Ashrei and Shemoneh Esrei.

However, it is the most precious prayer in the eyes of Hashem because it is the most difficult one to pray. A person, harried by his daily tasks, rips himself away from the hub of activity and focuses on his Creator. This is indeed a prayer that is a 'Mincha' to Hashem.

The Reading of the Twelve Nesiim

On each of the first twelve days of Nissan we read a paragraph from the Torah which discusses the sacrifice of one of the twelve Nesiim - the leaders of the Jewish tribes. The twelve Nesiim inaugurated the Mishkan, which was erected on the first of Nissan.

Yishmael, too, has twelve Nesiim that are listed at the end of Parshas Chayei Sarah. The twelve Nesiim of the Jewish people are diametrically opposed to the twelve Nesiim of Yishmael. Through the reading of the sacrifices of the twelve Nesiim, the Nesiim of Yishmael are destroyed¹⁴.

The exile of Yishmael is our final stop in our long sojourn in exile. When Yishmael will be destroyed, the Jewish people will be redeemed.

Our troubles today stem from the nations of Islam. We should place special emphasis on the reading of the Nesiim and pray that we be redeemed.

May it be the will of Hashem that we merit fulfilling the mitzvos of Pesach with spiritual ecstasy and joy and we be redeemed,

מעבדות לחרות משעבוד לגאולה מאפלה לאור גדול ונודה לפניו שיר חדש על
גאולתנו ועל פדות נפשנו.

From slavery to freedom, from subjugation to salvation, from darkness to a great light and then we will thank Him with a new song for our redemption and the salvation of our souls.

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- ¹ אדרא רבא נשא ח"ג קכ"ח ע"א
 - ² תהלים צו:יא
 - ³ פסחים י:ה
 - ⁴ משלי ו:יב
 - ⁵ תנחומא בא פרק ט'
 - ⁶ ז:כח
 - ⁷ ג:א
 - ⁸ מא:כז
 - ⁹ בראשית דף ל"ז
 - ¹⁰ ויקרא כג:מד
 - ¹¹ מגילה ד:א
 - ¹² שמות ל"ד סימן א'
 - ¹³ תהלים כט:ד
 - ¹⁴ תרגום יונתן סוף פרשת נשא