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The One Desert Korban Pesach

Nearly a year after the Jewish people left Egypt, Hashem again commanded them to offer a *korban Pesach* (*Bamidbar* 9:1). Rashi, citing Chazal, notes that this was the only time throughout their forty years of travel in the desert that the *korban Pesach* was offered.

1. Why was the *korban Pesach* not offered in the subsequent years in the desert?
2. Why was it offered during the first year?
3. And why was the reason for offering the *korban* that first year not applicable during the other years in the desert?

One possibility is, as some Rishonim explain, that the Divine commandment to offer the *korban Pesach* that first year was a one-time exception (*horaas shaah*, in Tosafos's words).

However, this answers the second question (and maybe the third too), but does not answer the first question.

THE DESERT YEARS

One possible reason why the *korban Pesach* was not offered during the other years in the desert is based on the Gemara's statement (*Yevamos* 71a) that one who has an uncircumcised son or slave is not permitted to offer a *korban Pesach*. Since circumcision was not performed while the Jewish people



were traveling in the desert, they were not allowed to bring the *korban Pesach*.

The *Zera Avraham* (6:22) offers another reason. He points out that when – a year earlier, while the Jewish people were still in Egypt – Hashem instructed Moshe regarding the laws of *korban Pesach*, He introduced this topic with the commandment of *kiddush hachodesh* (sanctifying the new month; *Shemos* 12:1).

From the juxtaposition of these seemingly unrelated mitzvos, the *Zera Avraham* concludes that the sanctification of the new month is a prerequisite for offering the *korban Pesach*.

There are two ways to sanctify the new month: Either *beis din* interviews witnesses who testify to seeing a new moon, or *beis din* makes the

ר' אברהם לופטניר

R' Avraham Luftiver (1870* – 23 Nisan, Isru Chag, 1918) was the son of R' Liebel an outstanding and wealthy individual who supported his son financially enabling him to sit and learn. R' Avraham married Osnas, the only child of Rav Meir Simchah of Dvinsk (1843–1926) author of the *Ohr Sameach* and *Meshech Chochmah*. Rav Meir Simchah's letters to R' Avraham make it clear how highly he regarded his son-in-law's Torah. R' Avraham and his wife predeceased her parents.

R' Avraham is buried next to the Chemdas Shlomo in Warsaw. In 1920, Rav Nosson Spiegelglass H"yd (one of the great geonim of prewar Poland) published the sefer *Zera Avraham* which contains R' Avraham's correspondence with Rav Menachem Zamba H"yd. Rav Nosson writes, "R' Avraham was well known for his Torah brilliance, but his true stature as a hidden tzaddik is unknown, because in his humility he did not allow his great attributes to be known. Although wealthy, he never deviated from his concentration on Torah study. He suffered greatly, yet was always seen with a smile and greeted everyone warmly."

astronomical calculations of when the new moon should reappear.

The Zera Avraham proves that a *korban Pesach* may be offered only when the new month was sanctified through witnesses.

Now, how was the new month sanctified by the Jewish people during their forty years in the desert? The *Zera Avraham* cites Rabbeinu Chananel (quoted in *Rabbeinu Bachya Shemos* 12:1), who notes that the Jewish people in the desert were surrounded by

the Clouds of Glory, and were therefore unable to see the sun or the moon, so it was impossible for anyone to testify to the reappearance of the new moon, making it impossible for anyone to testify to the reappearance of the new moon. Accordingly, they relied on astronomical calculations to determine when the days and the months ended. Since the new month could not be sanctified through the testimony of witnesses, the Jewish people were unable to offer the *korban Pesach* throughout their years in the desert.

The Shoel Umeishiv's Historical Hakdamah

In this week's parashah we learn about how the Leviim were separated from the rest of *klal Yisrael* to be consecrated for the service of the Mishkan. "Take the Levites from among the Bnei Yisrael and purify them," (*Bamidbar* 8:5)

Reb Yosef Shaul Ha'Levi Natensohn, in the *hakdamah* to his momentous work *Shoel Umeishiv*, writes with great humility that in truth he's not worthy of writing a sefer and being among the ones to answer questions. He acknowledges that he might even be mistaken in his rulings and might thereby cause others to err as well. But even so, perhaps "in order to merit and have my words learned to help me merit a long life and certainly to continue to live on after passing on to the next world," he is publishing his responses.

However, there is a very interesting observation that he states, "hit him like a bolt of lightning," which gave him the confidence to be willing to print his sefer. He quotes a Gemara (*Yoma* 26a) in the name of Rava, who said that he hasn't found a Torah scholar who is also a *halachic* ruler except those either from the *shevet* of Levi or Yisaschar.

The Shoel Umeishiv points out how most of the commentaries printed on the Shulchan Aruch were either by Kohanim or Leviim. The Sema and the Shach were Kohanim. The Taz, the Magen Avraham, and the Shelah were Leviim. Closer to our times, we have the Ketzos, who was a Kohen, and the Noda B'Yehuda and the Haflah, who were Leviim. He writes that he understands that his worthiness is nowhere close to those whom he just cited, however, "I am a descendant of the Leviim. May it be in that merit that my words should be accepted in the Beis Hamedrash."

טואל ומטיב

The Shoel Umeishiv, Rav Yosef Shaul Halevi Nathanson (1808–27 Adar I, 1875), was born to a wealthy family in Brezhan, Galicia. His father was a tremendous *talmid chacham*, although not an official Rav. His great-uncle was the wealthy and learned R' Yudel Nathanson. His grandfather was also a prominent leader in Brody. He also learned with his maternal grandfather, R' Dov Berish Heilperin, in Berzhan.

At 17 he married into the wealthy Ettinga family from Lemberg, where the young couple lived. The financial support he received from his wife's family enabled him to sit and learn. Even after his father-in-law died (shortly after his arrival in Lemberg), his mother-in-law continued to support him until his wife took over.

His father-in-law, Rav Yitzchak Ahron Ettinga (1827–1891), was the son-in-law of R' Mordechai Orenstein, the Rav of Lemberg (Lvov), who was succeeded by his son R' Yaakov, the Yeshuos Yaakov.

The Shoel Umeishiv learned with his brother-in-law R' Mordechai Ettinga (1804–1863). Together they began a prolific career writing and corresponding with the giants of the generation, such as R' Akiva Eiger, R' Yaakov Lisa known as the Nesivos, R' Mordechai Banet, and the Chasam Sofer. Together, the brothers-in-law published five sefarim, including the Magen Giborim (1839), an important source of the Mishnah Berurah. Joint authorship of a sefer is rare.

On the 13th of Tishrei, 5617 (1857), he was appointed Rav in Lvov, a position that had been left empty since the passing of the Yeshuos Yaakov, his wife's uncle.

On 26th Sivan of the same year, his Rebbetzin passed away. A year later, on 12 Adar, he married the Rebbetzin Shifra Buna, and with her money he lived independently without taking a wage from the community. Eventually the Shoel Umeishiv became the Rav of Lemberg (1857), a position that had been left empty since the passing of the Yeshuos Yaakov (his wife's uncle).

The Shoel Umeishiv is one of the most important and well known *poskim* of his time, and the author of over 3000 *teshuvahs* on all subjects, besides other works of Torah and Aggadah.

The Great Litvish gaon, the Adres, in his incredible autobiography, describes how he was planning on visiting the Shoel Umeishiv during his travels, but his plans fell through and he was never *zocheh* (*Seder Eliyahu*, p. 46).

At some point the Shoel Umeishiv opened up a yeshiva with an emphasis on training rabbonim to *pasken*. He also gave Semicha to future rabbonim.

He is also known as the Sar Hamaskim since he authored hundreds of Haskamos (letters of approbation) for many sefarim, which include notes on the sefer to demonstrate that he actually read the work.