

Parsha Encounters

24 Sivan 5765/July 1, 2005

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Parshas Korach - Rabbi Avi Friedman

A Powerful Reality

The Posuk states, "Vayichar Moshe Me'od Va'yomer El Hashem Al Taifen El Minchosom - And Moshe got very angry and he said to Hashem do not pay attention to their offering." (16:15) Rashi comments that, according to the simple *p'shat*, this means Moshe Rabbeinu davened to Hashem not to "accept" the *k'tores* (incense) that Korach and his followers would offer. From this Rashi, the Alter from Kelm (see Darkei Mussar) derives a tremendous insight regarding tefillah. Korach and his followers were "*kofel*" (denied) in the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu and *Torah Min Hashomayim*. We would assume that *k'tores* from people of such nature would have no chance of being accepted, especially since a positive outcome would only strengthen their "*kefirah*". Nevertheless, we see that Moshe Rabbeinu was concerned and found it necessary to offer a special tefillah to Hashem not to accept their *k'tores*.

From here we can gain a new outlook on the power of tefillah, which is in place of *korbonos*. One may mistakenly think that in order for a tefillah to be answered there must be very specific circumstances and only the "elite" who have a "direct line" with Hashem are heard. This is not so. Tefillah is a "reality" that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created in this world for every single Jew to make use of. Whenever we daven properly, with all our heart, Hashem Yisborach accepts our tefillos. At the same time, we must recognize that the answer we expect may not be best for us, and the outcome of the tefillah will depend on what is ultimately good for the individual or Klal Yisroel as a whole, which only Hashem can know. (See She'arim B'tefillah p. 144-146) However, no sincere tefillah goes unnoticed, and even a tefillah (*k'tores*) from Korach and his followers must be reckoned with. Accordingly, we can imagine the "powerful reality" of an appropriate tefillah that is offered for the

sake of the Torah and honor of Hashem.

This fundamental principle is mentioned explicitly in *Targum Unkelos* in *Parshas Va'eschanan* (4,7). The -Posuk says "*Ki Mi Goy Gadol Asher Lo Elokim Krovim Ailov Kashem Elokenu B'chol Koreinu Eilov.*" The *Targum* renders this Posuk, "Is there a great nation that has Hashem close to them to accept their tefillah at a time of trouble, like Hashem our G-d every time we daven before him?"

Let us conclude with a story that illustrates the above message. A widow who had recently lost her husband approached HaRav Aryeh Levin Zt"l from Yerushalayim with a question that was irking her. She said she had no complaints against Hashem, and realized that everything He does is for the best. "But one thing bothers me" she said. "What happened to all the tears I poured out over my Tehillim, davening to Hashem for my husband's recovery?" HaRav Aryeh Levine responded, "your tefillos have not gone for naught. You should know that Hashem Yisborach has a flask in which he stores every single tear (see Tehillim 56), and when there is reason to bring a bad decree against klal yisrael, Hashem takes one of your tears and annuls the decree." May Hashem Yisborach help every one of us utilize the tremendous opportunities of tefillah, and thereby bring the *Be'as Go'el Tzedek B'mhaira V'yamainu*.

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Halacha Encounters

Pidyon HaBen

Rabbi Zvi Feiner

It is interesting to note that the details of the mitzvah of *Pidyon HaBen*, redeeming one's *bechor* from a *kohen*, appears not in Parshas Bo (where the *bechorim* were elevated to a special status), nor in Parshas Beha'aloscha (where the *bechorim* were "officially" replaced by the *kohanim*), but rather in this week's parsha - only after Korach's challenge to the *kehunah*.

The Torah commands us "...*Padoh Sifdeh es bechor haadom...*" (Bamidbar: 18, 15) "You shall surely redeem the firstborn of man..." This obligates the father of a halachic *bechor* to "redeem" him from the *kohen* by giving the *kohen* money "in exchange" for the *bechor*.

The appropriate time for this to take place is clearly delineated in the Torah: "*U'feduyav mi'ben chodesh tifdeh...*" From one month shall you redeem..." (Ibid.16)

Hence the *mitzvah d'oraysah* of *pidyon haben* is to take place immediately after the *bechor* is thirty days old, ensuring that one month (loosely calculated as 29½ days) has passed. (Shulchan Aruch ; Y.D. 305,1) While the preferred time of day for the *pidyon* (earlier or later) is subject to various minhagim, the poskim agree that it should be done on the thirty-first day.

If one did not redeem his *bechor* by the end of the thirty-first day, the mitzvah can still be fulfilled thereafter, though, according to many poskim the father transgresses a *mitzvas aseh d'oraysa*. (M.A., 568:10)

However, if the thirty-first day falls on Shabbos or Yom Tov, it is not preferable to perform the *pidyon haben* then. (Shulchan Aruch: Y.D. 305, 11 O.C. 339, 4) This holds true even on *Yom Tov Sheini Shel Galus*. (Mishna Berurah, 339, 27) (Teshuvos Chasam Sofer: Chelek 6, Siman 7) Nonetheless, if the *pidyon haben* was performed on Shabbos or Yom Tov, whether intentionally or inadvertently, the *bechor* is indeed redeemed and no further *pidyon* is required, (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. Ibid 339,4) while according to many poskim the father and the *kohen* are fined for being callous in their observance of Shabbos. (Teshuvos Shvus Yaakov, 2,107) (Beis Lechem Yehudah (Y.D.) 305,5)

The reason most commonly cited for suspending the *pidyon haben* until after Shabbos or Yom Tov is because such a redemption /exchange resembles a business

transaction. (Teshuvos Rivash (156); T'rumas Hadeshen (26a)) This holds true regardless of whether one uses actual currency or any other object (M.A. 339, 28). Others compare redeeming a *bechor* to redeeming *kodshim* which is not done on Shabbos and Yom Tov. (Cited in Sefer Pidyon HaBen K'holchoso)

Consequently, if the 31st day falls out on Shabbos or Yom Tov, the *pidyon haben* is "pushed off" until the following day. However, there is a dispute amongst the poskim as to whether it is preferable to perform the mitzvah as soon as possible after Shabbos or Yom Tov (e.g. Saturday night) or whether one should wait until the following morning.

Ordinarily, though it is permitted to perform a *pidyon haben* at night, the accepted minhag [among b'nei Ashkenaz] is to have it done during the day. There are a number of reasons cited for this: (1) To make sure that the minimum amount of time (29½ days) has passed since the baby's birth, one should wait until the morning of the 31st day. (Nodah B'Yehuda, Y.D. (187)). This, of course, would not be applicable in our case where 31 days have already elapsed. (2) *Pidyon haben* is comparable to redeeming *kodshim* which cannot be done at night. (Cited in Sefer Pidyon HaBen K'hilchoso) (3) There is a greater *pirsum* and *hidur* when the mitzvah is performed during the day. (Sharei Teshuvah (O.C. 568, 8) (4) Since *Makas Bechoros* occurred at night it is inappropriate to have to redeem a *bechor* at night. (Cited in Teshuvos Maharsham (2,43))

These reasons would seemingly apply on Motzei Shabbos / Yom Tov as well. The Shulchan Aruch holds that indeed one should wait until Sunday morning (Y.D. 305, 11). The Vilna Gaon (Ibid, 20) explains that it is similar to Bris Milah, which should not be done at night (even when the eighth day has already passed).

Others are of the opinion that it is better not to delay the *pidyon haben* unless there will be significantly greater *pirsum* and *hidur* if one waits until Sunday morning, and if one does delay - even until the following morning - he will have transgressed the aforementioned *issur* of not performing this *mitzvas aseh d'oraysa*. (Teshuvos Mahari Asad (Y.D. 262)

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (164,3) holds that if the 31st day is Shabbos or Yom Tov, the *pidyon haben* should be performed as soon as possible (on Motzei Shabbos), which is how some are *noheg*. (This is the p'sak of HaRav Dovid Zucker, shlita).

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