

Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Vayikra- Rabbi Zvi Feiner

Time to Reflect

"Hashem called to Moshe and spoke to him..."(Vayikra 1:1)

Rashi concludes from the above terminology that the "Call of Hashem" only related to when Hashem actually spoke to Moshe, and not during the intervals between words. What then, asks Rashi, was the function of these "hafsakos", intervals? To provide Moshe Rabeinu with time to reflect and think about the D'var Hashem. Rashi elaborates with a kal va-chomer; If Moshe Rabeinu, hearing directly from Hashem, required pause for reflection, then certainly an ordinary person learning from someone else requires "a break", time to pause and reflect about what he recently learned and absorbed.

This message is elucidated in Mesilas Yesarim, where the Ramchal writes that it is incumbent upon every person to cogitate regularly upon following the proper Torah path and then reflect upon his actions, ensuring that he remains on that derech (end of chapter 3). Ramchal continues (Chapter 5) to write that one of the greatest deterrents to this necessary reflection is our busy lifestyle which does not leave us the ample time required for such reflection. Without spending the time to think about the direction in which our lives are heading, without the intervals to

pause and reflect, it is near impossible to remain guided completely and unequivocally by the "Call of Hashem".

Those who were zocheh to witness the Mashgiach, Rav Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l, recite Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh on Thursdays in Elul saw the emphasis he placed on the Rosh's words "Al Tevahel Maasecha" – Not to hurry one's actions, but rather to spend the necessary time and thought to ensure that all of one's maasim (actions) are truly proper and will further lead him on the derech haTorah.

It is no coincidence that Parshas Vayikra marks the beginning of Bein HaZmanim and ushers in the Yom Tov of Pesach. Our "Bein HaZmanim", like Moshe Rabbeinu's "Bein parsha l'parsha" provide us with the opportunity to renew and reflect upon what we learned and absorbed, what we accomplished and what we have not yet accomplished. Eight days of Yom Tov give us the essential time to reflect and recharge. If we use these hafsakos properly then we too will hear the "Call of Hashem".

Rabbi Feiner, an alumnus of the kollel, gives shiurim at the kollel regularly.

Halacha Encounters

Going away for Pesach

Rabbi Dovid Greenberg

The mitzvah of Bedikas Chometz

One of the mitzvos that we fulfill in preparation for Pesach is the mitzva of Bedikas Chometz. Although "bitul" (mental nullification), suffices to circumvent the prohibitions of owning chometz over Pesach, the Rabbis enacted an additional obligation to search for and get rid of any chometz in our possession. Chazal were concerned that one may own an expensive item of chometz, and though he may say it's batul, his resolve would not be firm enough to nullify the chometz. Additionally, since one is accustomed to eating chametz all year long, if there is chometz within reach over Pesach, one may erroneously eat some (O.C. 431:1). Chazal established the night of the fourteenth day of Nissan as the proper time for the search; the night being the time when most people are home, and the time when a candle offers better illumination to search in crevices (ibid 433:1).

When going away

The Gemara tells us that thirty days before Pesach, one should begin studying the laws of the Yom Tov and increase his consciousness of its imminent arrival. Therefore, if one plans to depart his home within thirty days of Pesach, he must fulfill the requirement of Bedikas Chometz. One may appoint a shaliach (messenger) to search in his stead at the proper time, and the shaliach may also recite the brocha for Bedikas Chometz. If one is unable to appoint a shaliach, he must search for chometz the night before his departure. When doing the bedikah early, one may not recite the brocha of "Al Biur Chometz", because this brocha is referring to the process of searching and destroying the chometz. An early bedikah however, probably does not result in the burning of that chometz, rather just its removal from the premises. If one was unable to search at night, he's required to do so by day. One should annul all chometz in his possession that he may not be aware of, by saying "kol chamira" immediately after the bedikah. If a person leaves his home more than thirty days before Pesach and has no intention of returning until after the Yom Tov, although no bedikah is required, he must nullify his chometz before Pesach. If one knows about chometz in his possession, many poskim say that he should remove it or arrange to sell it, before he departs (ibid 436:1).

Selling the House

One is only required to check for chometz in areas under his ownership. If one sells his property to a non-Jew, he need not search there. It has become common to sell not only one's chometz to a non-Jew before Pesach, but even the area where the chometz is found. This sale usually takes place during the day on Erev Pesach. There is a disagreement amongst the poskim if this "future" sale exempts the current owner from bedikah in that area on the night of the fourteenth. All agree that one should not place himself in a position where he'll be totally exempt from the mitzvah of Bedikas chometz, (i.e. selling the entire house, while being a guest in someone else's house). In fact, many Poskim conclude, that if one did sell the entire house within thirty days before Pesach and does not have another personal residence, he's required to check the house before the non-Jew takes ownership of it. Such is the extent of the obligation of bedikah. The Mishna Berura poskens that one may rely on the lenient view that it is unnecessary to search places that one plans to sell to a non-Jew, however, he should exclude one area from the sale. This allows one to fulfill the mitzvah of Bedikah in that unsold area. Preferably though, one should sell those areas that he does not plan to check on the thirteenth of Nissan before the obligation of bedikah begins. This

can be arranged through most Rabbanim. This way, if one is going away for Pesach, he may commence such a sale, and search just the area not being sold, on the night before his departure. One who will be renting an apartment or staying in a hotel before the night of the fourteenth of Nissan, will be obligated to do a bedikah there. Because that will be his fulfillment of the mitzvah of bedikah, he may sell his whole house. However, one must keep in mind that if the house is sold, one may not allow others to stay there over Pesach without the agreement of the buyer. (436:2)

The Form of the Bedika

When searching for chometz in a house where one won't be over Pesach, one need not be concerned with crumbs, moldy pretzels and the like. The reason for this is as follows: The prohibition of eating chometz on Pesach is extremely stringent. Therefore, in the house where Pesach is being observed, one must be extremely careful not to have even a speck of chometz, for fear that it may enter someone's mouth. However, when one is leaving his house, and is therefore only concerned with the prohibition of owning chometz, then only the chometz which is truly considered food, or any chometz that is the size of a kzais (even if it's moldy) must be gotten rid of. This would include chometz the size of a kzais, even if it's a little moldy. Aside from this, all other forms of chometz are automatically nullified (M.B. 242:33, IGM O.C. vol 1 s. 145).

Hotels and Family

If someone is going to a hotel for Pesach, and he arrives there on the night of the fourteenth of Nissan, he is obligated to do Bedikas chometz. Preferably, he should hide some chometz around his room before searching, to make sure he will find some. If he arrived on the day of Erev Pesach or during Pesach, and if the owner of the hotel is an observant Jew, one should inquire if the room was checked for chometz. If it wasn't or if the proprietor is not a religious Jew, then one must search his room for chometz with a bracha.

When going to relatives for Pesach, even if you're given a private room, your status is of a guest and not an owner. Therefore, while you may help with the bedikah, you may not recite your own separate bracha.

Time Zones

There is a halachic query as to whether the prohibition of possessing chometz, is determined by the onset of Pesach in relation to when Pesach begins for the owner, or in relation to where the chometz is. For example, if an American travels to Eretz Yisrael for Pesach, the Yom Tov will start and end earlier for him than for his chometz. Therefore, when selling the chometz in such a situation, one should be stringent. If one selling chometz in Eretz Yisrael, one should request of the Rav not to buy back his chometz before Pesach ends in America. If one is selling his chometz in America, one should make sure the sale commences before midday on Erev Pesach in accordance with the time in Israel. Alternatively, one may give his chometz as a gift to a friend remaining in America, thereby eliminating any problems (IGM O.C. vol 4, s. 94).

In conclusion, because Chazal equate chometz with our evil inclinations, let's not view our Pesach preparations as a tiresome chore or at best a spring cleaning. Rather, let's commit ourselves to cleansing our homes and our hearts from all forms of chometz in order to usher in the Geula Shleima B'korov.

Rabbi Greenberg learns full-time at the kollel.