

This coming Sunday is the 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, which is *Pesach Sheni* / the “Second Passover.” The Torah relates in *Parashat Be’ha’alotecha* that, a year after the Exodus, Moshe Rabbeinu told *Bnei Yisrael* to prepare to bring the *Korban Pesach*. The Torah continues (*Bemidbar* 9:4-5), “There were men who were *Tamei* / impure through a human corpse and could not make the *Pesach*-offering on that day; so they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day. Those men said to him [Moshe], ‘We are *tamei* through a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering *Hashem’s* offering in its appointed time among *Bnei Yisrael*?’” In response, *Hashem* taught the laws of *Pesach Sheni*, a second chance to bring the *Korban Pesach*.

R’ Gedaliah Schorr z”l (1910-1979; *Rosh Ha’yeshiva* of Yeshiva Torah Voda’as in Brooklyn, N.Y.) asks: What was their complaint; do our Sages not teach, “*Ones Rachamana patrei*” / “The Merciful One exempts one who is unavoidably prevented from performing a *Mitzvah*”? He explains:

The *Zohar* relates that several Sages of the *Mishnah* were returning from performing the *Mitzvah* of redeeming captives when they met someone who said, “I see on your faces that you did not recite *Kriat Shema* today.” They answered him that they were exempt from *Kriat Shema* because they were engaged in another *Mitzvah*. Nevertheless, writes R’ Schorr, we see from here that when a person misses out on performing a *Mitzvah*, even justifiably, that fact makes an impression on his soul.

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## Bitachon

This year--a *Shemittah* year--we will *iy”H* devote this space to discussing the related subject of *Bitachon* / placing one’s trust in *Hashem*.

This week, we begin to address the question: Does having *Bitachon* guarantee a “good” outcome, i.e., that *Hashem* will do what one wants?

R’ Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz z”l (1878- 1953; Bnei Brak, Israel; the “*Chazon Ish*”) writes: There is an old misconception rooted in the hearts of many when it comes to the concept of *Bitachon*. This term, used by the righteous to name a celebrated and central character trait, has undergone a change. *Bitachon* has mistakenly come to describe the supposed obligation to believe, in any situation in which one finds himself, whenever one faces an uncertain future with two apparent outcomes--one good and the other not--that surely the good one will occur. If one is doubtful and fears the possibility of the opposite of good occurring, he is accused of lacking *Bitachon*.

The *Chazon Ish* continues: This understanding of *Bitachon* is not correct, for as long as the future has not been revealed through prophecy, it is unknowable. Who among us knows *Hashem’s* calculations?! Rather, *Bitachon* refers to the conviction that nothing happens by chance, and that everything that occurs under the sun is the result of *Hashem’s* decree.

(*Emunah U’vitachon* ch.2)

[The *Chazon Ish’s* view is consistent with the view of R’ Avraham *ben Ha’Rambam* z”l (son of Maimonides; Egypt; 1186-1237), presented previously on this page.]

However, writes R’ Baruch Aryeh Halevi Fischer *shlita* (rabbi and educator in Brooklyn, N.Y.), if the view that the *Chazon Ish* rejects is “an old misconception rooted in the hearts of many,” it is incumbent upon us to understand its origins and basis.

(*Lev Ha’ari* p.46)

– To be continued –

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**“You shall count for yourselves--from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the *Omer* of the waving--seven weeks, they shall be complete.” (23:15)**

R' Moshe Yitzchak Ashkenazi z"l (1821-1898; Trieste, Italy) asks: What is the purpose of this daily counting? Surely, we are not worried that we will forget to celebrate *Shavuot*!

(Of course, writes R' Ashkenazi parenthetically, even if our Sages had commanded us to count the *Omer* without any reason or benefit, we would do it, for the traditions of our ancestors are worthy of deep respect, and woe to Judaism if we question those traditions! Nevertheless, it is appropriate to inquire what the purpose of a *Mitzvah* is.)

He continues: As difficult as our subjugation to Egypt was, living under a cruel dictatorship is preferable to living under anarchy. Therefore, our Exodus on the fifteenth of *Nissan* would have been a negative development were we not destined to receive the Torah fifty days later. Receiving the Torah was our true salvation, as our Sages comment: “A truly free person is one who engages in Torah.” They did not say “one who studies Torah.” “Engaging” in Torah includes studying it, fulfilling its *Mitzvot*, and living with the *Yir'at Hashem* / reverence of G-d that the Torah teaches. One who has *Yir'at Hashem* does not fear anything else, and the trials and tribulations of life do not faze him.

For this reason, R' Ashkenazi writes, we are commanded to count the *Omer*--to connect the holiday celebrating our physical freedom with the holiday celebrating our soul's freedom.

Why is this counting connected with the *Omer* / an offering of barley marking the harvest of the new crop? R' Ashkenazi explains: The Torah envisions an agricultural society, with all other trades and crafts playing only a supporting role, for such a lifestyle leads to good *Middot* / character traits. [R' Ashkenazi does not explain this statement. However, we do find that the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 31a) associates farming with *Emunah* / faith. The *Tosafot* explain that planting one's hard-earned seeds in the ground requires faith in the Creator.] Why a barley offering? Barley is viewed by our Sages as animal feed. Thus, bringing a barley offering on *Pesach*, followed by a wheat offering on *Shavuot*, reflects the elevation we have undergone from the time we were liberated physically until the time we received the Torah and became truly free.

R' Ashkenazi concludes: At first glance, counting the *Omer* appears to be a very “light” *Mitzvah*. However, if we keep the above ideas in mind, it has the potential to sanctify us and elevate our thoughts Heavenward.

(*Simchat Ha'regel: Drush 2*)

**“You shall sanctify him, for he offers the food of your *Elokim*.” (21:8)**

The *Kohanim* were divided into 24 *Mishmarot* / “watches,” each of which served in the *Bet Hamikdash* for one week at a time. Each *Mishmar* was further divided into family groups, each of which served for one day of his *Mishmar*'s week. Thus, the average *Kohen* served in the *Bet Hamikdash* only twice a year, one day every 24 weeks.

R' Avraham Elkanah Kahana Shapira z"l (1914-2007; *Rosh Ha'yeshiva* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav and Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel) asks: Because a *Kohen* worked two days a year, he should be shown honor and given tithes all year round?!

He answers: In order to be fit to represent the Jewish People in the *Bet Hamikdash* on two days of the year, the *Kohen* must work on himself every day of the year!  
(*Imrei Shefer* p.147)

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Similarly, continues R' Schorr, we read at the end of *Megillat Esther*: “For Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Achashveirosh; he was a great man among the Jews, and found favor with most of his brethren.” Why “most” of his brethren? The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 16b) explains that many of Mordechai's contemporaries were displeased with him because his duties in the royal court detracted from his Torah study.

But wasn't Mordechai busy saving the Jewish People and promoting the interests of the Jewish People, and therefore exempt from Torah study? As noted, “*Ones Rachamana patrei*”! True, answers R' Schorr. Indeed, *Halachah* requires a person to interrupt his Torah study to save lives. Nevertheless, the fact that *Hashem* placed Mordechai in a position to save lives instead of studying Torah indicates that *Hashem* did not completely value Mordechai's Torah study.

In this light, R' Schorr concludes, we can understand the verses regarding *Pesach Sheni* as follows: The individuals who were *Tamei* and unable to participate in the *Korban Pesach* were in that situation because they had performed the *Mitzvah* of tending to the dead. Some say they had buried Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu. Still, being unfit to bring the *Korban Pesach*, they were missing out, as in the story quoted above from the *Zohar*. Therefore, they searched their souls for a reason why *Hashem* would not want their offerings and, only when they couldn't find any reason, did they come to Moshe Rabbeinu and cry out: “Why should we be diminished by not offering *Hashem*'s offering in its appointed time?” And what was the answer? It was that because of their great yearning for *Mitzvot* (demonstrated by their recognition that they were, in fact, missing out), *Hashem* wanted them to be the vehicle to teach about a new *Mitzvah--Pesach Sheni*, through which Jews in all generations can have a second chance to come close to *Hashem*.

(*Ohr Gedalyahu*)