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PESACH



# Beit HaMikdash at the Seder

Maimonides describes the order of practices of the Seder night in the eighth and final chapter of the “Laws of Chametz and Matzah” in his Mishna Torah. It is a simple description of the steps of the Haggada which almost any Jewish school child could have written equally as well. But there is something surprising: after the eating of Matzah and Maror he suddenly gets to the meal- what we call *Shulchan Orech* and this is how he describes it: “the body of the Paschal lamb, and the meat of the festive offering of the fourteenth of Pesach [is brought out].” Whoa! The Rambam lived over a thousand years following the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and wrote a **practical** guide to Jewish law for people living in his time. Why would he say that we bring out sacrificial meat fully realizing that this was impossible?

Yes, he does immediately write “At present, we bring two types of meat on the table: one in commemoration of the Paschal sacrifice and one in commemoration of the festive offering.” But this seems to be a strange and perhaps even confusing way of describing what one should do at the Seder.

Rambam is attempting to make something crystal. The essence of the Passover Seder is the Beit HaMikdash. No matter how grand and festive a Seder may be – it is lacking until we are able to eat the sacrificial meat. It is no mistake that Pesach is celebrated while we

read the Parshiot that describe the Mishkan and the sacrifices. The worship of God in his Temple in Jerusalem is the only way that the Torah can be fully realized.

This message lurks behind almost every page of the Haggada. One example is Karpas. Some classical commentators (see Maharil Seder HaHagadda 16) suggest that we eat Karpas because it increases our appetites. The Matzah and the Korban Pesach are to be eaten with an appetite and so we eat Karpas. At the outset this seems strange, writes Rabbi Mordechai Breuer in his *Pirke Moadot* (Volume 1:82-87). There is a significant amount of time between the eating of Karpas and the eating of Matza. Certainly, the increase in appetite caused by a small amount of Karpas would be far more effective done closer to eating the Matza. We eat the Karpas when we do according to Rav Breuer because in the time of the Temple the Korban Pesach would be eaten directly after the Karpas and before the reading of the Haggadah different from the order we do it today (See also *HaHaggada Mimekora* by Rav Rimon p. 23 note 2). So even though it would be far more effective in doing what it is meant to do if eaten later, we eat it when we do to remind us of the Temple.

The Temple is not simply a physical structure. It is meant to serve as a metaphor of peace and unity for all who wish to worship

the One God in peace. Our current struggle against those who attack us is essentially about this. Soldiers report that almost every home in Gaza had a picture of “Haram Al Shariff” and Al-Aqsa Mosque on the wall. It was no mistake that the actual name of October 7th attack was “Operation Al Aqsa Flood” by Hamas. The battle is over whether our concept of the Temple as a place of moral and ethical monotheism will win out.

Do we have pictures of the Temple mount on our walls? Are we willing to go the extent that they are (Lehavdil) in order to make sure that our vision wins the day? As we celebrate the Seder this year where the multiplicity of reminders of this concept about this is something that I suggest we think about as the Rambam reminded us we need to do many hundreds of years ago. ■



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