



Parashat Tzav 5770

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On Pesach...

Question: Doesn't it seem inappropriate to eat bitter herbs at a meal of thanksgiving and redemption? Shouldn't we eat only tasty foods?

Answer: It is forbidden for us to deceive ourselves. We must realize that there is also bitterness within glorious events, and all the more so on the way to redemption. The Messiah comes when people are not thinking about it, i.e. in unexpected ways. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (97a) says: "Three things only come when people are not thinking about them – the Messiah, finding a lost object, and a scorpion." We can ask: This is an important piece of information regarding the Messiah so that people do not despair, but why do we need to know this about a lost object and a scorpion? The Meharsha answered that this is all one subject because for one person the coming of the Messiah is like finding a lost object, while for another it is like a scorpion. It all depends on his merits (Meharsha ibid.). One who imagines the coming of the Messiah as a rose garden will be disappointed when he sees difficulties and he will rebel against the Redemption, like one who finds a scorpion. But one who knows that Redemption is acquired with suffering will rejoice at everything his eyes see, like finding a lost object. One, however, should not make the opposite error. We are not so pessimistic as to see bitterness in everything. We are realists or, more precisely, we are idealistic-realists. There are people who consider themselves as realists and see everything in black, and there are people who consider themselves idealistic and see everything with rose-colored glasses. Neither one of these will bring the Redemption. We are optimistic and we know that good will overcome evil, and that in a dynamic manner good will continue to conquer evil in the world. The Master of the Universe, the Creator of the World, is good to everything and His mercies are on all of his creatures; "G-d saw it was good," "very good." The Rambam clarified in an organized fashion how our world is mostly good and only slightly evil (Moreh Nevuchim 3, 12). Our world is good, but we must realize from the outset that there is also some bitterness in it. Rabbenu Bachya placed a condition on the service of Hashem that one must be ready to accept the bitterness (Chovot Levavot, Sha'ar Avodat Ha-Elohim, chapter 5). Our revered teacher, Rav Kook, wrote: "This is completely necessary, and any time that he says to himself 'peace, peace' and only

pleasantness will follow on a paved way, he is close to the stumbling block" (Musar Avicha, p. 34). The Land of Israel is also acquired through suffering (Berachot 5a). Hillel the Elder is the one who teaches us to wrap the matzah of redemption with the bitterness of maror. He lived in extreme poverty and learned through the chimney, while he was covered with snow (Yoma 35b), and he became the "Nasi" (head of the Sanhedrin) of Israel.

Rav Aviner on...

"Why is this night different from all other nights?"

This is how it is different. *During all other nights* refers to our long exile when we were in foreign lands, as opposed to *on this night* when now once again we find ourselves in our Land. On all *other nights* we had to serve foreign nations, while now on *this night* we are again free. On all *other nights* we built foreign cities like Pitom and Raamses, while on *this night* we are building in Tel Aviv and Ein Charod. On all *other nights* we spoke Russian and German, while on *this night* we are speaking Hebrew. On all *other nights* we wore the uniform of foreign armies, while on *this night* we adorn ourselves with the uniform of our army – Tzahal – the Israel Defense Force. Blessed is Hashem, through Whose kindness towards us, much has changed.

Stories of Rabbenu – Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Our Rabbi and the Yeshiva Students – Part 2

Serving Torah Scholars

A student who was serving in our Rabbi's home was in doubt whether when Elisha poured water on Eliyahu's hands it was considered "serving Torah scholars" (Berachot 7b, Ein Aya – Berachot chap. 1:87). Once, when he brought our Rabbi a cup of tea, he asked: "Ha-Rav, is this serving a Torah scholar?" Our Rabbi was quiet for a long time and said: "It is unclear if I am worthy of being called a Torah scholar." He was quiet again and then added: "The essence of serving a Torah scholar is learning (halachic) reasoning as Rashi explains" (Berachot 47b). (Ha-Rav Eliyahu Mali)

Fear of Heaven

After the Yeshiva moved to the new building, our Rabbi noticed that there were students who were talking during davening, and he looked at them with a severe stare. The same occurred the next day, and then a third time. On that day after davening, he went to the library and cried. When he was asked about it, he responded: If my words are not heard, it is a sign that I do not have fear of Heaven (see Or Le-Netivotai 25, 308, 326). (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald)

Young students

When our Rabbi gave permission for students to attend a protest (since there are times when stopping learning Torah leads to greater observance of Torah), this ruling was for older students and not younger students. (Iturei Cohanim #57)

Get yourself a teacher (Pirkei Avot 1:6)

Our Rabbi said that "Get yourself a teacher" requires more toil than "acquire a friend for yourself." (Ha-Rav Yechezkel Greenwald – Iturei Cohanim #266)

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

When My Wife Speaks with Me

It is a holy moment when my wife wants to speak to me. I do not mean when she asks if I made a sandwich for Yossi for school or where is the tape. I am talking about when she wants to have a personal conversation. Therefore, similar to all holy acts, I prepare: I shut off my cell phone, I turn off the ringer on the land line and I turn off the doorbell (I figured out how to do it). Since I haven't figured out how to turn off Yossi, Tali and Riki, I set them up with something interesting to do. If they nonetheless cry and scream, it is okay, I learned that it is actually healthy for them not always to get what they want. I then sit across from her or next to her – depending on the situation – and I listen. It is so interesting. Don't get me wrong, my wife is not a professor, lecturer or artist. She is much more than this: she is my wife. It is true. If someone else spoke to me like this, it would bore me to death. But because she is my wife, it is so interesting. I am beginning to believe that we are two beings who are in fact one.

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