

Parsha: Tetsave

Starting all over again – Parshat Ki Tisa (Shemot/Exodus) 30:11-34:35

Purim is an opportunity to reset and get a fresh start. Parshat Para, which is read after Purim, is a milestone which signifies our starting over, purifying and renewing ourselves so that we can become cleansed and purified for Passover.

Each year, the Shabbat which occurs after Purim is also called Shabbat “Para” (cow).

Our sages declared that on the Shabbat following Purim we would read the parsha of the Red Heifer, which deals with purification from ritual defilement which comes through contact (or carrying) the dead (Numbers 19:1-22). The reason is to inform us that anyone who wants to purify himself from ritual defilement which comes through contact with the dead should be careful to purify himself in time to be able to bring the Passover offering. As is known, the Passover sacrifice cannot be made if a person is in a state of ritual impurity, unless most of the nation is in such a state (Pesachim, 80a).

Rebbe Nachman gave a lesson about the following declaration of our sages:

Our sages taught that after Purim we read the parsha of the Red Heifer which is used to purify the impure before Passover. “Para” (cow) is the direct result of Purim, since Purim has its source from the “pur” (lot) of Haman. Rebbe Nachman teaches that the word “pur” (lot) becomes “para” (cow), referring to the Red Heifer. (The full explanation of this can be found in the writings of the Arizal, the kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria). And from here we can understand how Purim itself is a preparation for Passover.

Rebbe Nachman further establishes this idea that Purim is a preparation for Passover using the following verses. “His lips are roses dripping flowing myrrh” (Song of Songs, 5:13). Rebbe Nachman explains that the words “his lips” refer to the power of speech which was freed on Passover. As it is known, in Egypt, the Jews were unable to speak properly with G-d (Likutei Moharan 1:7), and when they left Egypt on Passover, their ability to speak was renewed. The word “Pesach” (Passover) is made up of two Hebrew words “peh” (mouth) and “sach” (speaks). The word “shoshanim” (roses) hints at “Esther” (both words have the same gematria or numerical equivalent). The words

“notfot mor oveir” (dripping flowing myrrh) hint at Mordechai who is called “mor dror.” (This refers to the question posed in the Talmud: Is there a reference to Mordechai in the Torah? The Talmud answers by quoting the verse that contains the words “mor dror” (Exodus 30:23), whose translation in the Targum is “mira dachyah,” whose letters spell out the name Mordechai if you discount the final letters yud and aleph which are part of the structure of the Aramaic language.) Mor dror refers to fragrant spices which receive the dripping flowing myrrh (Chulin 139b, see Rashi). This verse also hints at the connection between Purim and Passover. Purim is the preparation for Passover when we free the power of speech.

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This is the reason that we find a hint to Purim in the Torah in the verse that speaks of Passover: “Eat matzot for seven days as I commanded you, at the appointed time, the month of springtime, since that is when you went out from Egypt. You will not see My face (meaning, do not appear before Me) emptyhanded” (Exodus 23:15). The first letters of the words “mimitzrayim v’lo yireh p’nai raikam” (...from Egypt. You will not see My face emptyhanded) spell out the word Purim. This teaches us that Purim is the means to prepare ourselves for Passover so that we will be able to avoid chametz as is fitting.

We have seen, Purim is the means to properly prepare for Passover regarding several issues: ritual purification from the impurity of contact with the dead, taking speech out of exile to freedom, and being careful regarding avoiding chametz on Passover.

Rebbe Nachman summarizes the Torah: Up until now, Passover was considered the beginning of everything. Therefore, all the commandments are a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. But now...” and he did not finish the sentence. (Rebbe Nachman did not explicitly explain the intention of his words – Likutei Moharan II, 74).

Although Rebbe Nachman did not explicitly say that from now on everything begins anew from Purim, from the context of his words in the lesson “that at first all the

beginnings were from Passover, but now..." it appears that his intention was that from now on all the beginnings are from Purim.

However, the B'Ibei HaNachal (Rav Baruch Efraim son of Jacob) notes that the fact that Rabbi Nachman did not finish his sentence leaves us to understand his intention ourselves. Therefore, he provides an explanation through hints about what Rebbe Nachman meant.

The B'Ibei HaNachal points out that the gematria (numerical value) of "Nachman" is equal to the gematria of the word "Pesach" (Passover), which is 148. As explained above, Rebbe Nachman taught that through the "pur" (lot) the "para" (cow-Red Heifer) was made. It is well known that the Red Heifer involved an astonishing contradiction: it purified the impure but at the same time made the pure impure. It purified those who had become ritually impure through contact with the dead, but those who were involved in preparing the red heifer became impure. Similarly, when a person reaches the gravesite of a tzaddik, the other people who are buried in the cemetery cause ritual impurity from the impurity of the dead, so a person who prays at the grave of a tzaddik will become impure from the impurity of the dead in the cemetery. But when a person comes to the gravesite of a tzaddik and is wholeheartedly awakened and recites Psalms and supplications from the depths of his heart, and especially when he says the 10 Psalms which Rebbe Nachman revealed (which is known the Tikkun Klali), he is purified from any impurity. Clearly, this is similar to the contradiction involved in the Red Heifer.

Purim is the means to properly prepare for Passover!

Now the B'Ibei HaNachal adds another clue: the word "para" (peh, reish, heh) are the roshei taivot (initial letters) of the words "Pesach Rosh HaShana." This means that, like Passover, which is the beginning as was mentioned above, Rosh HaShana is also the "rosh" (head) and a beginning. It is well known that Rabbi Nachman spoke extensively about Rosh Hashana and about the importance of spending Rosh Hashanah together with him, a practice which is still done today. The B'Ibei HaNachal therefore connects the two concepts and suggests a wondrous explanation learned out through hints:

When a person merits to the holiness of Purim and starts his preparations (for Passover), this is the aspect of turning a “pur” (lot) into a “para” (cow–Red Heifer), just as when he merits to come to the tzaddik on , because the tzaddik is the aspect of “Pesach,” and Pesach and Rosh HaShana both represent the beginning, as mentioned above. Just as on Passover when we left the impurity of Egypt, so too the tzaddik in his holiness can purify us from any wrongdoing and renew our souls so that we can serve G-d anew.

The connection between Pesach and Rosh HaShana is not new; it was mentioned in the Sefer HaTikkunim which was cited in Likutei Moharan 49:6: “And it is called Kabbalah, when it is between the two arms of the King. The two arms are Tishrei and Nissan” (see annotation there). As we explained, when a person comes to the gravesite of our Holy Rebbe, who is the aspect of Pesach and Rosh HaShana, everything that a person needs to rectify is included in a wonderful completion and he merits to return in repentance and also to the final redemption, may it come quickly and in our days. Amen.

May we read the parsha of the Red Heifer and merit to cleanse our hearts of all impurity, and may we begin to serve G-d anew in the merit of the tzaddik that revealed all of these holy insights. And we should merit that the Red Heifer should be revealed and that we should build the Temple quickly and merit to bring the Passover offerings this year at the correct time and in purity. Amen.