

PESACH REFLECTION ON SHABOS

Parshas Emor

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

A wise man once interpreted the Seder night response to the wise son of the Arbah Bonim as follows: "Ain Maftirin following the Afikomen" we do not say farewell to the Pesach afikoman. The spiritual taste of the matzo lingers on, everlastingly. Especially is that Pesach message continuously felt on Shabos, every Shabos of the year. One ventures to suggest that the very reason Pesach is called Shabos, in the context of the Omer counting (Vayikra 23:15), is to give emphasis to this vital conjunction. Many are the links joining Shabos and Pesach. The followings are worthy of special note:

a) The Halacha requires the mention of the Exodus in the Shabos Kidush (Psochim 117b). This is in correlation with the very Shabos law in the Ten Commandments, the second Tablets. "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem, your G-d, has taken you out from there..., therefore Hashem, your G-d, has commanded you to make the Shabos day" (Devorim 5:15). Shabos is described herein as the most precious gift to Israel. It uplifts us from the lowest dungeon as slaves in Egypt to the highest peak of humanity, that of servants of Hashem.

The Shabos Shachris, "Yismach Moshe..." calling Moshe a "faithful servant" does not seek to place him on a pedestal apart from others. On the contrary, it reflects upon every Jew striving to attain that level. Imbibing fully the Shabos sanctity affords the opportunity to thus achieve. The Bracha of Redemption on the Pesach Seder night, over the second cup of wine, concludes with the recital of the first chapter of Hallel. The response to Mah Nishtana (why is this night different) begins with "we were slaves", and concludes with the first Hallel chapter, calling us Avdei Hashem, servants of Hashem. (Beth Shamai's

opinion. The custom is as Beth Hilel to add the second chapter of Halel). This basic Pesach concept, attaining the level of being servants of Hashem, is experienced every Shabos, by the fervently conscientious Jew.

b) The portion in this week's Sidra which deals with the festivals, and is designated as the Torah reading selection on the festivals, begins with Shabos. The inclusion of Shabos in this context proves that the Torah regards Shabos, too, as a festival, and, moreover, "Techila..." "Prologue to the holy convocation." The Friday night kidush distinctively mentioned this unique note of Shabos.

There is a fundamental distinction between the two. While the festivals celebrate Jewish experiences, as the Exodus and receiving the Torah, Shabos was divinely sanctified prior to the existence of Israel. Yet, since the Jewish people was chosen, exclusively, to sanctify the Shabos, this day, too, is called a Jewish experience, justifiably included in the list of festivals.

The above offers a remarkable insight on the wording of the conclusion of festival sanctity. On all the three festivals the Bracha concludes, "Who sanctifies Israel and the festival seasons". The question arises: why not be more specific? On Pesach the Bracha should conclude "Who sanctified Israel and Chag Hamatzos". On Shavuos, "Chag Hashevuos" or "Chag Hoatzeres". On Sucoth "Chag Hasucoth". Indeed in Masechet Sofrim, regarding the concluding Bracha, following the Haftora reading on festivals, mentions each festival by its specific name, instead of the general "Hazmanim".

The author of Torah Temima, in his Sefer Mekor Baruch (page 1398) ventures to suggest that when printing-publishing first began, the word "Vehazmanim" was printed in smaller letters, indicating to mention here the specific festival; later printers unknowingly printed the word as the Bracha conclusion. The author reports that he has spoken about it to his father the Aruch Hashilchon, who did not agree to change the traditional wording of the Bracha.

Based on the above, the linkage between Shabos and the festivals, to the point that Shabos itself is considered a festival, there might be a reason and purpose in the use of the word “Hazemanim”. For even when a festival is observed in the middle of the week, it is, nevertheless, absorbed with the sanctity of Shabos. It is for this reason that the announcement of Rosh Chodesh and supplication that it be blessed (called Birchas Hachodesh) takes place on Shabos. Thus the conclusion of the festival Bracha, the word “zemanim” is used, a word which includes Shabos as well.

The wording in Masecheth Sofrim, mentioning each festival specifically, is no contradiction to the above. For the Haftorah on each festival is reference to that particular festival, thus logically the concluding Bracha refers to that particular festival.

c) There is another vital precept, connecting Shabos and Pesach, as follows: The Mishna teaches (Psochim 116a quoted in the Seder Hagadah) “Rabon Gamliel used to say ‘whoever failed to recite these three: Pesach, Matzo and Moror (explaining the reasons) did not fulfill the Mitzva...” For the passage reads “and you shall SAY, it is a Pesach offering to Hashem...” Knowledge and thought (about the purpose of these three mitzvahs) is not sufficient. There must be clearly spoken recitals.

A similar instruction is found regarding Shabos. The Shabos morning Kidush quotes Isaiah (58:13,14) calling for Oneg Shabos and honor it by “restraining from” (Maiasos) seeking your needs, “Vedabair Dovor”, not Midabair (restraining from). The Shabos requires only being selective about which subjects to discuss. Words of Torah should be vocalized. Shabos, as Pesach (Peh-soch) bestows sanctity in the right words uttered.

