

# PREPAREDNESS, READINESS FOR MITZVOHS

## Sidra Shemini, Parshas Poroh

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

Parshas Poroh, the third of the four special portions, coinciding with Sidra Shemini, occurs only once in several years, as in the current year. It should thus be of interest to explore the meaning of this simultaneousness.

In order to be uplifted in observing a mitzvah, our teachers tell us, proper preparation is a requisite. The Bracha recital before fulfilling a mitzvah, ASHER KIDSHONU, Who sanctified us with His mitzvohs, proves that by performing a mitzvah one reaches new spiritual heights.

It is no wonder that prior to the execution of a mitzvah one finds in the siddur a special prayer, YEHI ROTZON, which puts the performer in the proper frame of mind. Jumping into a mitzvah without prior adjustment of the mind and every fiber in body lacks the conditions to feel personally sanctified by its observance.

The paragraph Uvo Letzion includes two passages following one another. The first from Chronicles (29:18) "...and may You (help) prepare their hearts to You". Immediately after this passage follows a second passage from Tehilim (78:38) "He, the merciful One, forgives iniquity..." The connection of the above two passages from two different sources is deemed appropriate because the iniquity referred to here is the lack of preparedness, thus appealing for divine help to "prepare their hearts to You". The chapter **אשרי ישב ביתך** before the Amidah is meant to literally sit down with **ישוב הדעת**, contemplatively, before Shemona Esra.

The Mishna (Brochos 30b) informs us about the early Chasidim that they spent three hours in their daily prayer, one hour before the actual prayer (in preparation), one hour in prayer itself, and one hour following prayer. Commentators are wondering why the need for that third hour. They respond that since they were well prepared, mind and soul, they remained so attached in their high level of ecstasy and spiritual rapture, that it took an hour to slowly descend to their normal selves.

This, they further explain, was the cause of Moshe's six hour delay in descending from Sinai with the Tablets. Would the Israelites have understood this position they wouldn't have fallen into the trap of the golden calf.

This basic concept is applicable to every mitzvah. Prior adjustment, gathering of all faculties of mind and soul, raises the level of performance to the desired heights. This brings us to the Parsha.

The name of this week's Sidra speaks volumes. The day was Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the first day of the first month in the calendar, the divinely designated day, in which to erect the mishkan (Shemos 40:2). The Midrash elaborately explains the reason why this day was chosen, although the Mishkan complex was completed months earlier. Yet, when this august day was reached, the Torah calls it "Shemini", the eighth day. It is obvious that with this designation the Torah seeks to draw our attention to the fact that there were seven days of practice, "MILUIM", prior to this "eighth day". This "Shemini" was indeed the day of such focus because Moshe and Aaron and the Kohanim were well prepared, by being secluded inside the Mishkan for seven days, laboring in preparation, body and soul, to this illustrious day, the erection of the Mishkan.

The previous Sidra, Tzav, concluding with the seven days of preparation, "miluim", is presented as a model for two more Avodos to be preceded with seven days of practice: a) the Avodah of Poroh Aduma, for purifying someone who became contaminated by a corpse, and b) the Avodah of Yom Kippur (Rashi Vayikra 8:34).

Poroh Aduma is the ultimate of preparedness, Tahara, purity, to be eligible for the Korban Pesach. It is for this reason that Parshas Poroh is scheduled for prior to Rosh Chodesh Nisan. The fact that the laws of Prisha, seven day seclusion, come intermingled, combining Poroh and Yom Kippur, is indicative of an inner affinity between the two major events:

Yom Kippur, the day of repentance and atonement is designated as a day experiencing Tahara, purification from "deadly" sin. As we quote in the Ne-ila "...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in the return of the wicked from his way, that he may live" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Poroh Aduma, the other basic element in the equation, is called a "chatos", sin offering (Bamidbor 19:9), vested with the Yom Kippur gain. Emerging purified one is ready to enter the Mishkan and bring the Korban Pesach. "And I will sprinkle upon you clean water, and you shall be clean..." (Ezekiel 36:25).

How befitting the Slichos quote in proximity, from Isaiah (56:7) "I will bring them to My holy mountain and I will exalt them in My house of prayer.

