Where is Your Pascal Sacrifice?!
Pesach Special

Leil Haseder, Pesach 1985, Bnei Brak. My teacher, the Lelover Rebbe, came in to conduct the Seder. He was visibly moved and immersed in emotions.

"This is the bread of affliction", the Rebbe pointed to the Matzos, and then became silent. Silence in the room. Everyone anticipated his pending words, while he sat with tears in his eyes. Then we heard him, with a feeble voice, talk about the last year with his Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Elimelech of Karlin.

During Rosh Hashana of 1939, immediately after the beginning of World War Two, the Rebbe entered the Beis Hamidrash, the study hall, and boomed: "Resolute in kingship, Lord of the universe, where is your resoluteness? Show us your resoluteness and annul the horrible edict hovering over the Jewish people". A silence prevailed in the hall.

"Those were shocking moments," the Lelover Rebbe, his student, recounted. "The students felt that the Rebbe sought to find a merit for the Jewish People, and for the first time spoke harshly to the Heavens, an act he was not accustomed to. That was the Rebbe's preparation for the mass self-sacrificing during the terrible years of the Holocaust."

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In the Haggadah we read: "And numerous," as it is said: "I passed over you and saw you wallowing in your bloods, and I said to you `By your blood you shall live,' and I said to you `By your blood you shall live!'"

Our Sages teach us that theses "bloods" (the Hebrew is plural) are those of the Passover offering and of circumcision. At the time of the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were bare of Mitzvos, and for of these two commandments they merited redemption.

What is the connection between the bloods of Passover and circumcision? Our Sages tell us that in Egypt, many Israelites did not circumcise themselves.

At the time of the first Passover offering in Egypt, the Israelites approached Moshe and asked to participate in the sacrifice. He told them they must undergo circumcision prior to sacrificing the Passover offering. They immediately underwent circumcision, and the blood of the circumcision mingled with the blood of the sacrifice, and G-d came to each individual and kissed and blessed him, saying "I passed over you and saw you wallowing in your bloods."

We are further told that angels sustained the Israelites during their bondage in Egypt. Each Israelite was given a vessel of oil and one of honey, and when the Egyptians would seek to kill them, a miracle occurred, and the Israelites would be swallowed into the ground and oxen would plow above them, and after the Egyptians passed they sprouted out of the ground like grass.

And even though, when the time of redemption came, when the Israelites required a miracle, G-d sought those who had neglected to fulfill the commandments until that point, and sacrificed themselves now, and not those who lived miraculously until this point.

Even though they circumcised themselves now only for the sake of eating the Passover offering, they did ultimately make a covenant with G-d, and in merit of this they were redeemed.

The fundamental issue is that of self-sacrifice. The Beis Avraham of Slonim would say that if there is "wallowing in your bloods," if there is self-sacrifice to the extent of bloodletting, then one merits true life from G-d – "By your blood you shall live." Only through self-sacrifice could they have brought the redemption.

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Why was the Rebbe sharing this with us? Why has he chosen to do so now? Then he lifted the Matzos and said: "This is the bread of affliction. My father would change the first word, saying: "Have the bread of affliction". The Rebbe raised his eyes to the Heavens and said: "Have the bread of affliction, Lord of the universe, take them", the Rebbe choked on his tears, "Without a Passover offering, who needs the Matzos?"

"Whoever is in need let him come and conduct the Seder of Passover'. Lord of the universe, where is your Passover offering, WHERE?"

The Rebbe continued to conduct the Seder, as we sat there, not understanding this occurrence.