



Through Your Blood Shall You Live

Tzav

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

His name is Boris and he is a Jew with a great soul. He lived for many years under the oppression of the USSR and was unable to live as an observant Jew. With the fall of Iron Curtain, Boris was as happy as can be. He was very excited to move to Israel, something he had yearned to do for years. He experienced many adventures before he made it to Migdal Ha'Emek, where he became closely acquainted with his Jewish heritage. He would spend much of his time immersed in Torah study.

It has become a tradition at Migdal Ohr to hold a group Seder for immigrants from the former USSR. During the Seder they become better acquainted with their Jewish religion, history and culture.

During one year Boris registered to participate in the group Seder, adding that he wanted special permission from me. I did not know why he needed my permission, and so I met with him. Boris sat in my living room and told me of his past. It turns out that back in the USSR he would clandestinely observe whatever Mitzvos he could and study Torah wherever he could, hiding from the KGB. "I did not know fear", he stated. I was amazed by his dedication and sacrifice. He then lowered his eyes and began to cry: "This year I can't participate in the Seder." Why? I inquired. "I can't because I have not been circumcised", he revealed. A silence hung in the room, and I carefully contemplated my words.

During the Seder ceremony we recite the verse from Yechezkel: "And I passed by you and saw you downtrodden with your blood, and I said to you, 'With your blood, live!', and I said to you, 'With your blood, live!'." ¹ Our Sages teach us that the blood related to here is the blood of covenant – of the *Bris*, circumcision, and of the Passover offering. The Midrash relates to the Jewish People before their redemption from Egypt – "but you were naked and bare" – bare from Mitzvos, and then G-d bestowed upon us these two commandments, and in their merit we were redeemed.

What is the connection between these two commandments? Our Sages tell us ² that there were many Jews who did not circumcise themselves in Egypt, "And when Moshe came to sacrifice the Passover offering... the Jewish people came to Moshe, they told him: 'Please share with us your offering', for they smelled the offering. He responded: 'If you do not circumcise yourselves you may not eat, as it is decreed by the Torah'. They immediately circumcised themselves, and the blood of circumcision mingled

with the blood of the offering, and G-d went to each one and kissed him and blessed him, as it is written: 'And I passed by you and saw you downtrodden with your blood'."

The dynamics of leaving Egypt described here are self-sacrifice and the offering of blood. The Beis Avroham of Slonim ³ would say that even today one can be 'downtrodden with your blood', this means self-sacrifice to the point of offering blood to G-d; then one merits true vitality from G-d – "and I said to you, 'With your blood, live!'"

Only through the power of self-sacrifice did the Jews merit to exit Egypt, become a nation and receive the Torah. They came to Mount Sinai, and there they were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, as the Abarbanel said: "The nation became one with their G-d."

This is the true Passover sacrifice, and therefore "No uncircumcised male may partake of it." ⁴ He who has not sacrificed for G-d cannot partake in the spiritual essence of the Passover. "And you", I told Boris, "have come to the proper understanding that if you wish to share in G-d's commandments and holidays you must first circumcise yourself. You are praiseworthy."

The circumcision ceremony was set just before Pesach, and Boris offered me to be the *Sandak*. He then made an unusual request: he wished to experience the Mitzvah without any anesthetic. I tried to dissuade him. His age did not enable such a thing, but he was unwavering in his decision. He requested to be tied to a pole so that he would not move, as Yitzchak who was bound on the altar.

During that moment I lifted my eyes to the heavens and declared: "Lord, here you have the blood of the *Bris* and the blood of the Passover. Facing such self-sacrificing Jews you must send us the *Mashiach*, so that we can properly sacrifice the Passover offering this year."

I saw before my eyes the words of the Midrash: "So said the Lord: in the merit of the circumcision blood and Passover blood you were redeemed from Egypt, and in their merit you will be redeemed in the future."

³ Rabbi Avraham Weinberg of Slonim (1884 - 1933), author of BeitAvraham, son of Grand Rabbi Shmuel.5thSlonimerRebbe.

⁴ Shmot 12, 48.

¹ Yechezkel 16,6.

² Shmot Rabbah 19,5.

