YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**PESACH 5783**

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Dedicated in memory of HaRav HaGaon R. Chaim Heller zt"l,  
whose yahrzeit falls on the 14th of Nissan,  
by Vivian S. Singer.

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In memory of Pinhas ben Shalom (Paul) Cymbalista z”l   
Niftar 20 Nissan 5752.  
Dedicated by his family.

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Dedicated in memory of Sidney Gontownik,   
brother of Jerry Gontownik,   
on the occasion of Sidney's upcoming thirteenth Yahrzeit,   
on the 24th of Nissan. May his memory be for a blessing.  
The Gontownik Family

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**"In the Manner that Kings Eat":**

**The Mitzva to Eat the *Korban Pesach* and *Matza***

**By Prof. Alan Jotkowitz**

In a previous *shiur*,[[1]](#footnote-1) we discussed how the mitzva of *matza* represents the transition from slavery to freedom. We saw that *matza* as a mitzva object is defined as *lechem oni*, bread of affliction. The Gemara in *Pesachim* 36a asks, "For what purpose does the Torah state that *matza* is the bread of affliction? To exclude the making of *matza* from a dough kneaded with wine, oil, or honey." But the Gemara also teaches us that we have to eat on Pesach night as a poor man does:

Rav Pappa said: All agree that on Pesach, one places the broken piece [of *matza*] inside the whole [*matza*] and then breaks [them]. What is the reason? Because “bread of affliction” is written [in the Torah]. (*Berakhot* 39b)

Based on this Gemara, I suggested that the phrase *lechem oni* does not only define the *matza* itself, as an object (*cheftza*), but also mandates how a person (*gavra*) eats the *matza*: like a poor man. Perhaps this is the reason there is a special halakha to limit one's eating on Erev Pesach, or even to fast as Rav Sheshet did (*Pesachim* 108a) – to mimic the behavior of a poor man. I also suggested that eating *matza* at the *end* of the meal on a full stomach mimics the behavior of a free person, as the holiday is a celebration of our freedom.

However, that *shiur* did not address the halakhic basis for the assertion that there is an obligation at the end of the *seder* to eat the *afikoman* as free men and women. That is the purpose of this *shiur*.

**Eating with “Greatness”**

The Mishna (*Pesachim* 10:8) teaches: “*ein maftirin achar hapesach afikoman* – one does not conclude after the *korban pesach* with *afikoman*.” Rather, the rest of the meal should be eaten before the *korban pesach*, so that one eats it when already satiated and has nothing more after it.

The Yerushalmi (*Pesachim* 6:4) explains the reason for eating the *korban pesach* on a full stomach: because we don’t want people to break the bones of the *korban pesach* while eating, which they might do if they are hungry**.** The Rashbam (*Pesachim* 119b s.v. *kegon*) comments on Shmuel’s explanation of *afikoman* with a different reason: the prohibition against eating anything after the *afikoman* is based on the obligation to eat sacrificial meat "in the manner that kings eat." Kings do not only eat when they are ravenous; therefore, one is required to eat the *korban pesach* when one is satiated, like a king.

This law of eating like kings is derived from a verse which states regarding gifts given to the priests:

The Lord told Aaron: Behold, I have given you the charge of My gift [offerings]. I have given you all the holy things of the children of Israel *for distinction*, and for your sons, as an eternal portion. (*Bamidbar* 18:8)

The Gemara says these gifts must be eaten roasted because of the law of "greatness":

R. Chisda said: The priestly dues may be eaten only roasted and only with mustard. What is the reason? Scripture says: “for distinction” – [as a mark] of greatness – [they must therefore be eaten] just as kings eat. (*Chullin* 132b)

Tosafot (*ad loc.* s.v. *Ein*) comment that if a *kohen* prefers to eat these gifts *not* roasted, he is allowed to, based on the halakha that a *kohen* can eat consecrated meatin any way he wants, because of the law of "greatness”:

[The Mishna says:] “And with all of these [offerings], the priests are permitted to deviate [in how they eat them.”

What is the reason? Scripture says, “[I have given you all the holy things of the children of Israel] “for distinction” – [as a mark of] greatness – [so that they can be eaten] just as kings eat. (*Zevachim* 91a)

It appears that Tosafot feel the halakha of "greatness" is not related to the *cheftza* of the consecrated meat or the priestly gifts, but to the manner of eating – and the *kohen*, like a king, can choose how he eats his portion; in other words, this is a halakha of the *gavra*.

Rashi (*Yoma* 14a s.v. *Mi*) expands this *gavra* obligation and maintains, based on the principle of "greatness," that one is required to eat *korbanot* in a state of happiness. Similarly, Tosafot (Yoma 25a s.v. *Ein*) explain that one sits while eating *korbanot*, even in the *azara* (an area of the Temple where sitting is not typically permitted), because of the law of "greatness." Both of these halakhot relate to the person, not the *cheftza*.

Now we can understand why the Rashbam expanded the definition of "greatness" to include eating *al hasova* (when already satiated), which is also a halakha of the *gavra*. The Rashbam also maintains that the law of "greatness" applies to a non-*kohen* eating *kodashim*, which is not at all self-evident**.**

The Gemara in *Zevachim* 28a suggests that the skin of a sheep’s tail is not considered *akhilat kodashim* (eating sanctified sacrificial meat),because of "greatness":

It might enter your mind to say that [the halakhic equation between the skin of the tail and the tail itself] applies only regarding impurity, as the skin is soft and counts together with the tail; but *here*, I would say [the Torah writes] “fordistinction” – [as a mark of] greatness [so that they must be eaten] just as kings eat – and kings do not eat [the skin of the tail; I would say [that it is] *not* [considered like the tail itself]. Therefore, [the Mishna] informs us [that it is].

Excluding the skin of the tail because of “greatness” would clearly be a matter of the *cheftza* of the *korban*. However, that suggestion is only a *hava amina* (what someone might initially have thought). The Gemara rejects it – possibly *because* "greatness" is a rule of the *gavra*, not the *cheftza*.

The Rashbam’s explanation of the reason the *korban pesach* is eaten *al hasova* includes three halakhic innovations:

1. The law of "greatness" applies to *korbanot* as well as to priestly gifts.
2. It applies to Israelites as well as to *kohanim*.
3. The law of "greatness" explains the requirement to eat *korbanot al hasova*.

**The Rambam**

The position of the Rambam on the halakha of "greatness" is not clear at all. The only time the Rambam quotes this halakha explicitly is to echo Rav Chisda’s statement:

The priests should only eat the gifts roasted, with mustard, as it is stated, "for distinction" [i.e., “greatness”] – the way kings eat. (*Hilkhot Bikkurim* 9:22)

Tosafot (*Zevachim* 75b s.v. *bechor*) maintain that the law of "greatness" only applies to priestly gifts,and the *Mishneh Lamelekh* (*Hilkhot Ma’aseh Hakorbanot* 10:10) feels that this is the view of the Rambam as well. This position is difficult, however, because the Gemara in *Zevachim* 91, quoted above, explicitly applies the law of “greatness” to *kodashim*.

The Rambam does say, like the Rashbam, that *kohanim* have to eat *korbanot* when already satiated (*Hilkhot Ma’aseh Hakorbanot* 10:11):

If they had only a small amount [of sacrificial meat] to eat, they eat ordinary food and *teruma* with it so that it will be eaten in a satisfying manner (*im hasova*).If they had a large amount [of sacrificial meat] to eat, they should not eat ordinary food and *teruma* with it, so that one will not have overeaten (*akhila gasa*). And thus with regard to what remains of meal offerings.

However, the *Kessef Mishneh* (*ad loc*.s.v. *hayeta*) maintains that Rambam learns this rule from another Gemara, not from "greatness":

Why does the Torah state: They shall eat? This teaches [us] that if there was only a little quantity [of the meal-offering] the priests may eat *hullin* and *terumah* with it in order that it may make a satisfying meal. (*Temura* 23a)

It is possible to explain that the Rambam feels "greatness" is a halakha of the *cheftza,* not of the *gavra*, and thus cannot teach the law of *al hasova*.

When the Rambam rules in *Ma’aseh Hakorbanot* 10:10 that a *kohen* can eat *kodashim* any way he likes, the *Mishneh Lamelekh* points out that with regard to the priestly gifts, he rules that it must be roasted with mustard, based on "greatness"; this led him to the conclusion that the Rambam must maintain that "greatness" only applies to priestly gifts. If there is a personal preference involved, it makes much more sense that it is a halakhaof the *gavra*; since the Rambam feels "greatness" is a halakha of the *cheftza*, it can't apply to regular *kodashim*. The problem with the *Mishneh Lamelekh*’s approach, however, is that the Gemara in *Zevachim* 91a learned that a *kohen* can eat the meat of *kodashim* in any way he wants from the principle of "greatness."

Alternatively, one can suggest that that the Rambam feels the law of “greatness” is a halakha of the *cheftza* with regard to priestly gifts and of the *gavra* with regard to *kodashim*. The rationale for this distinction is that there can only be a halakha of the *gavra* when there is a mitzva for the person to eat the food. There is no mitzva for the *kohen* to eat the priestly gifts of the *zeroa, lechayayim and keiva* (the foreleg, cheeks and abomasum, given from any slaughtered animal), but there is a mitzva to eat sacrificial meat:

It is a positive commandment for the sin offerings and the guilt-offerings to be eaten, as [*Shemot* 29:33] states: "And they shall eat [the sacrifices] which convey atonement." The priests eat the sacrifices, and the owners receive atonement. This also applies to other sacrifices that are eaten by the priests; partaking of them is a mitzva. (*Hilkhot Ma’aseh Hakorbanot* 10:1)

**How far does “greatness” go?**

The Rambam rules about the *korban pesach*:

The optimal manner of performing the mitzva is to partake of the Paschal sacrifice in a manner of satiation. Therefore, if one sacrificed festive peace-offerings on the fourteenth of Nisan, one should eat them first and then eat the meat of the Paschal sacrifice, so he will be satiated from it. Even if one does not eat more than an olive-size portion, he fulfills his obligation. (*Hilkhot Korban Pesach* 8:3)

Reb Chaim Soloveitchik explains that this is a special halakha of the *korban pesach* (*Chiddushei HaGrach al HaShas* p.167). There is otherwise no halakha of *al hasova* for a non-*kohen*; if there were, it would apply to the *korban chagiga* as well.

The disagreement between Rashbam and the Rambam about whether there is a halakha of *al hasova* for a non-*kohen* might depend on another dispute: whether there is a mitzva to for a non-*kohen* to eat *kodashim*. Rashi (*Pesachim* 59a) rules that there is a mitzva for even a non-*kohen* to eat *kodashim*, while the Rambam apparently feels this mitzva is limited to *kohanim* (above, 10:1). However, on Pesach night, when there is a mitzva for *all* Jews to eat the *korban pesach*, the halakha of *al hosova*, based on the principle of "greatness," would apply.

The *Rishon* who takes the halakhic principle of "greatness" to the greatest extreme is the *Sefer Hachinukh*, who uses it to explain many of the laws of *korban pesach*:

And the reason we were commanded to eat it [the *korban pesach*] roasted is because children of kings and officers eat roasted meat because it is good and tasty. (Positive Mitzva #7)

And the reason we were commanded not to leave over [from the *korban pesach*] is because kings and officers do not need to leave over [their food] for the next day. (Positive Mitzva #8)

And this [not breaking the bones] also follows from the previously discussed principle, that it is not honorable for children of kings and advisors of the land to gnaw at the bones or break them like dogs. (Positive Mitzva #16)

**“Greatness” Today**

There is one more halakha that depends on "greatness": The Gemara in *Sota* 15a. maintains that a meal-offering has to be eaten with honey and oil. The Rambam codifies this halakha as follows:

All of the meal-offerings that are brought to the altar are *matza* (unleavened). Similarly, the remaining portions of the meal-offerings, that are eaten by the priests – although they may be eaten with all foods and with a sweetener, they may not be eaten leavened, as [*Vayikra* 6:10] states: "It shall not be baked leavened; their portion...." [Implied is that] even their portion may not be leavened. (*Hilkhot Ma’aseh Hakorbanot* 12:14)

The halakha of "greatness" teaches that the *matza* of the *mincha* can be mixed with honey – in other words, *matza ashira*. The Mordechai (page 34 in the pages of the Rif) teaches that *matza* should be eaten *al hasova*. *Matza*, according to this perspective, is eaten like kings. Our *lechem oni* is turned into the food of kings on Pesach night, because all of Israel are treated like royalty on this night and must eat like kings do. The *matza* is transformed and so should we be.

When I wrote the previous *shiur* about eating *matza* first as poor men and then as free men, it was at the height of the first wave of the Covid pandemic. We all understood what it meant to eat *matza* as poor men, and for some of us, that meant even celebrating the holiday alone. Now, hopefully we can once again observe the holiday with our families and loved ones, and eat *matza* as free men and women – as transformed people.

It has always been difficult for me to fulfill the commandment on Pesach night to feel as if I personally was freed from the slavery of Egypt. But Rav Medan has taught that we should apply that principle to our own lives. If not us directly, then certainly our parents and grandparents have witnessed a redemption in their lifetimes – from the horrors of the *Sho’a* to the miracle of the birth of the State of Israel. The pandemic has taught us that even with all our scientific and technological prowess, we are not truly in control of our own destinies. Like our forefathers in Egypt, we need to look to our Father in Heaven for salvation and redemption. This requires of us that we free ourselves from our personal servitudes, whatever they may be, and act as free men – in "greatness" and with gratitude to the One above.

1. Available at <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/pesach/mitzva-matza>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)