



BEHAALOTCHA

LOVE LETTERS TO G-D

When Doing a Mitzvah Feels Too Good to Miss

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Behaalotecha

Aaron is commanded to raise light in the lamps of the *menorah*, and the tribe of Levi is initiated into the service in the Sanctuary.

A “second Passover” is instituted in response to the petition, “Why should we be deprived?” by a group of Jews who were unable to bring the Passover offering in its appointed time because they were ritually impure.

G-d instructs Moses on the procedures for Israel’s journeys and encampments in the desert, and the people journey in formation from Mount Sinai, where they had been camped for nearly a year. The people are dissatisfied with their “bread from Heaven” (the manna), and demand that Moses supply them with meat. Moses appoints seventy elders, to whom he imparts of his spirit, to

assist him in the burden of governing the people. Miriam speaks negatively of Moses and is punished with leprosy; Moses prays for her healing, and the entire community waits seven days for her recovery.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Why do Jews get excited about doing a *mitzvah*?

Why are you positively disposed toward *mitzvot*?

What do you get out of it?



RASHI RULE

Rashi doesn't present Midrashic homilies.
The simple meaning of the biblical text
always drives his explanations.

TEXT 1

Numbers 5:2

צו את בני ישראל וישלחו מן המחנה כל צרוע
וכל זב וכל טמא לנפש.

Command the Children of Israel to banish from the camp
all those afflicted with *tzaraat* or with a male discharge
and all those who are ritually unclean through [contact
with] the dead.



One becomes ritually impure if afflicted with *tzaraat*, affected by male discharge, or comes in contact with the dead.

TEXT 2A

Numbers 9:1-5

א. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי
בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיָּה לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן לֵאמֹר.

ב. וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַפֶּסַח
בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ.

ג. בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה בֵּין
הָעֶרְבִים תַּעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ, כְּכֹל
חֻקֹּתָיו וְכָכֹל מִשְׁפָּטָיו תַּעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ.

ד. וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת
הַפֶּסַח.

ה. וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת הַפֶּסַח בְּרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבַּעָה
עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים בְּמִדְבַּר
סִינַי, כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה כִּן
עָשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

1. G-d spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert, in the second year of their Exodus from the land of Egypt, in the first month, saying.

2. "The Children of Israel should make the Paschal Lamb at its appointed time.

3. "On the afternoon of the fourteenth of this month, you should make it at its appointed time and in accordance with all its statutes and ordinances."

4. Moses spoke to the Children of Israel [instructing them] to make the Paschal Lamb.

5. So, on the first month, on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month, they made the Paschal Lamb in the Sinai Desert: according to all that G-d had commanded Moses, so did the Children of Israel do.

TEXT 2B

Numbers 9: 6–7

ו. וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, וַיִּקְרְבוּ לְפָנָי מִלִּשָּׁה וְלִפְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא.

ז. וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הַהֵמָּה אֵלָיו, אֲנַחְנוּ טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם, לָמָּה נִגְרַע
לְבַלְתִּי הַקָּרֵב אֶת קָרְבָּן ה' בְּמַעַדוֹ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

6. Some men were ritually unclean [because of contact with] a dead person and could not make the Paschal Lamb on that day. So they approached Moses and Aaron on that day.

7. Those men said to him, "We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person; [but] why should we be excluded so as not to offer a sacrifice to G-d in its appointed time, with all the Children of Israel?"

If this group of Jews knew their impurity prevented them from entering the Tabernacle, why did they still ask, "Why should we be excluded?"



TEXT 3

*Rabbi Eliyahu
Mizrachi, Numbers 9:6*

איך שאלו זה?

וכי עדיין לא שמעו פרשת שלוח הטמאים? והלא שמונה
פרשיות נאמרו בו ביום שהוקם המשכן ואחת מהן פרשת
שלוח טמאים.

How could they ask this question?

Had they not yet heard the instructions about banning the ritually impure from the camp? Of course they did! After all, eight sets of instructions were given to Moses that day, one of which was about the banishment of the impure.

TEXT 4

Rashi, Numbers 9:7

THE RASHI

"לָמָּה נִגְרַע". אָמַר לָהֶם, "אִין קִדְּשִׁים קִרְבִּים בְּטִמְאָה".
אָמְרוּ לוֹ: "יִזְרַק הַדָּם עָלֵינוּ בְּכֹהֲנִים טְהוֹרִים, וַיֵּאָכֵל הַבָּשָׂר
לְטִמְאִים".

"Why should we lose out?" Moses told them, "Sacrifices can't be offered in a state of impurity."

They said to Moses, "Let ritually clean priests sprinkle the blood for us, and we will eat the meat in a state of ritual impurity."

QUESTIONS ON RASHI

1. Rashi makes it seem as if Moshe told them this rule for the first time. But we have established that they already knew it, and Moshe knew they knew it. Why, then, did Moshe repeat it?
2. They suggested that though they would not sprinkle the blood, they would eat the sacrificial meat. How could they say that, knowing they were ritually impure?
3. How does Rashi know about this dialogue? It doesn't appear in the written Torah.

LEARNING EXERCISE

Review Texts 2A and 2B with a fine-tooth comb. Can you spot the distinction between the word used to describe bringing the Paschal Lamb in Text 2A and the first line of Text 2B, and the word used in the final lines of Text 2B?

THE ANOMALY

A. making the Paschal Lamb.



B. offering a sacrifice.



The shift from “Paschal Lamb” to “offering” only occurred after the people complained about being left out.



Until Moshe's reply, the people didn't think the Paschal Lamb was an offering that required ritual purity. That's why they asked why they were being left out.

TEXT 5

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 28, p. 72*

על דרך הפשט האט פסח מצרים ניט
געהאט קיין גדר פון קרבן.

על פי פשוטו של מקרא, איז פסח
מצרים געווען א מצוה מיוחדת: צו
שחט'ן א שה און עסן אים בליל פסח
(צלי אש) צוזאמען מיט מצות ומרורים,
ותו לא. דערביי איז ניט געווען קיין
ענין וציווי פון הקרבת קרבן לה' . . .

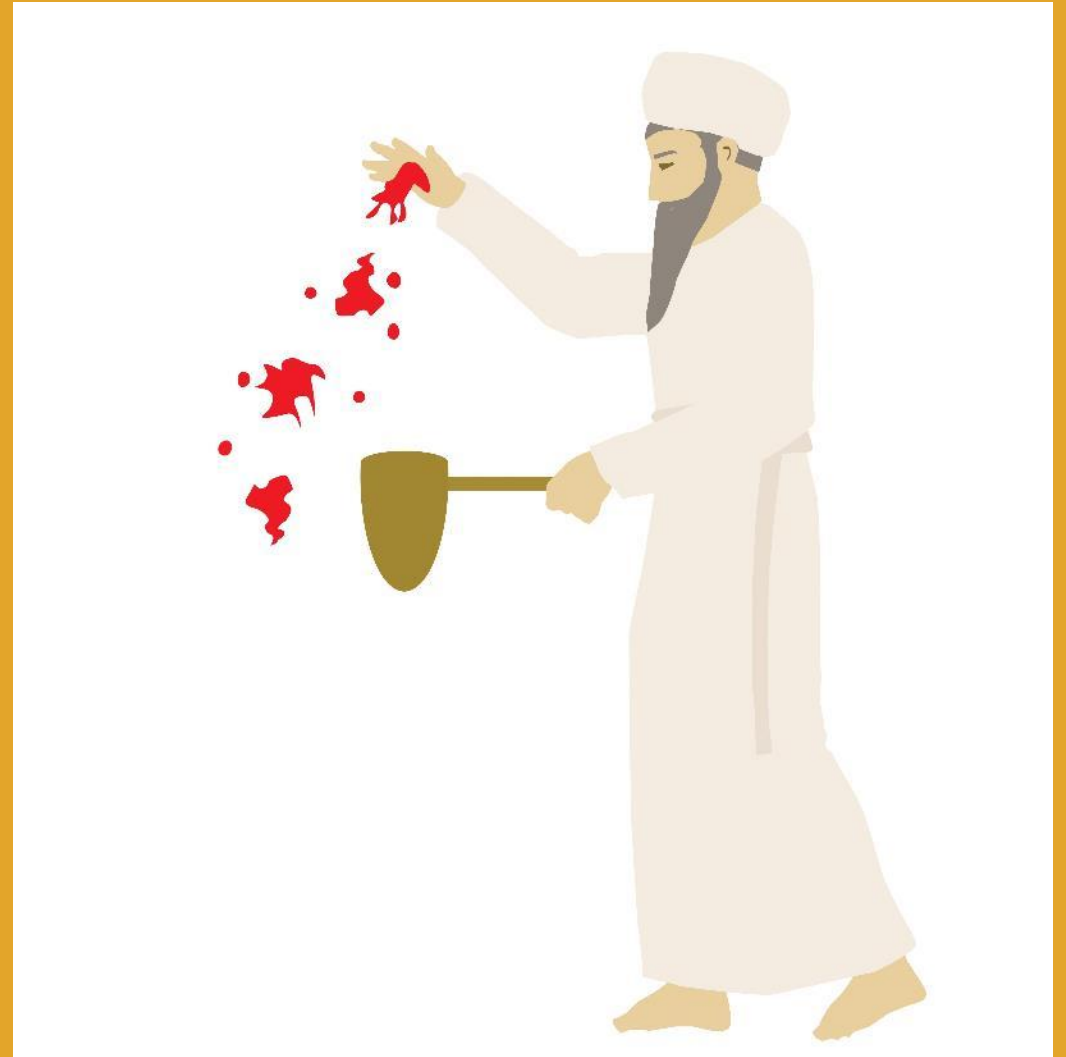
וואס דערפאר געפינט מען ניט ביי פסח
מצרים אז עס זאל אנגערופן ווערן בשם
קרבן, נאר בלויז בשם "זבח"
("ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא" (שמות יב,
כז)) - וואס דער ווארט "זבח" מיינט
ניט דוקא א קרבן לה', נאר יעדע
שחיטה לאכילה ווערט גערופן זבח.

If you follow the Torah's literal meaning, the
Paschal Lamb they brought [the previous year]
in Egypt did not have the status of an offering.

The Paschal Lamb that the Jews were instructed
to bring in Egypt was a unique *mitzvah*. They
were to slaughter a lamb, roast it, and eat it on
the night of Passover together with matzah and
maror. That was the extent of the *mitzvah*. They
were not instructed to bring a traditional
sacrifice to G-d.

This is why the Torah describes the Paschal
Lamb brought in Egypt as a "slaughtering"
rather than an "offering." "And you shall say, it is
a Paschal slaughtering" (Exodus 12:27). The
word *slaughtering* does not pertain specifically
to an offering to G-d. Every animal that is
slaughtered to be eaten is called a *slaughtering*.

After learning that it was an offering, they suggested that ritually clean priests would take care of sprinkling the blood for them, and they would eat the Paschal Lamb.



TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 28, pp. 73-74*

וויבאלד אז ביי פסח מצרים איז ניט
געווען קיין ענין פון הקרבה לה'
(על גבי המזבח) נאר בלויז די
מצוה בפני עצמה פון (זבח ו)אכילת
הפסח, האבן די טמאים לנפש אדם
געהאלטן, אז דאס וואס יעצט (נאך
הקמת המשכן) איז עס א גדר קרבן,
איז דאס א צוגעקומענער באזונדער
ענין, וועלכער איז ניט גורע,
ופשיטא ניט שולל, די מצוה פון
אכילת הפסח ווי ס'איז געווען בא
פסח ביז יעצט. און פארוואס זאל
דען ווערן א שינוי (ובפרט א
שלילה) אין מצות אכילת הפסח?

The Paschal Lamb they brought in Egypt was not a [sacred] offering to G-d and was not placed on the altar. It was a stand-alone *mitzvah* to slaughter and eat a Paschal Lamb. This led the people who were impure to suppose that the new status added to the Paschal Lamb after the Tabernacle was erected was layered on top of the original status. It did not negate or even diminish the original *mitzvah* of eating the lamb as they did the previous year. Why would the new status negate or even alter the [original status, namely the] *mitzvah* to eat the Paschal Lamb?

TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 28, Pp. 73-74*

קומט אויס, אז אין פסח זיינען
פאראן צוויי באזונדערע ענינים
(וועלכע זיינען ניט תלוי זה בזה):
(א) מען ברענגט א קרבן לה' (אויפן
מזבח) אלס זכר (והודיה) אויפן
ענין פון גאולת מצרים, "ופסח ה'"
(שמות יב, כג). (ב) עס איז דא די
מצוה פון אכילת הפסח בליל ט"ו
(ניט אלס אכילת קרבן דוקא, נאר)
על דרך ווי די מצוה פון אכילת
מצה ומרור.

They thought the Paschal Lamb now had two independent sets of status, one layered over the other. (A) It was an offering to G-d on the altar to serve as a memorial and an expression of gratitude to G-d for the Exodus from Egypt. [As the passage states,] "And G-d passed over" (Exodus 12:23). (B) The *mitzvah* of eating the Paschal Lamb on the eve of the fifteenth of the month. This was not considered eating an offering. It was like the *mitzvah* of eating matzah and *maror*.



G-d's reply to their suggestion was that unlike the previous year, the *entire* Paschal Lamb would now have the status of an offering. So G-d granted them a makeup date thirty days later.

ANSWERS ON RASHI

1. Moshe knew the people were aware that offerings may not be eaten in a state of impurity. He said it because he realized they did not know the Paschal Lamb was an offering.
2. They suggested they could eat the sacrificial meat despite their impurity because they assumed that only the blood sprinkled on the altar had the sacred status of an offering. They thought eating the meat remained a *mitzvah*, like eating matzah, as it had been the previous year.
3. Rashi knew about this conversation because the Torah shifts from calling it a Paschal Lamb to an offering.

QUESTION

Why did they omit mention of eating the offering? They only said, “Why should we be left out of bringing the offering?” instead of asking to eat the meat after its blood is sprinkled.

ANSWER

They were so eager to bring an offering that they completely overlooked eating the meat, since offerings bring G-d the greatest pleasure.

TEXT 7

Rashi, Leviticus 1:9

נחת רוח לפני שאמרתי ונעשה רצוני.

I am delighted when I speak, and My will is done.

TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot p. 75*

בשעת זיי האבן געהערט אז דער ענין
פון פסח איז א קרבן לה', איז דאס
געווארן ביי זיי דער עיקר הענין פון
פסח: ביי זיי האט שלא בערך מער
תופס מקום געווען דאס וואס זיי
האבן די מעגליכקייט צו מקריב זיין
"קרבן ה' במועדו" . . . ווי די מצוה
וואס איז פארבונדן מיט זייער אכילה,
אכילת הפסח.

ווייל דער גרעסטער תענוג ביי זיי
(פון א אידן) איז, בשעת ער טוט
אויף דעם "לחמי לאישי" (במדבר
כח, ב), וואס איז גורם דעם "אשה
ריח ניחוח לה'" (ויקרא א, ט).

When they heard that the Paschal Lamb
was an offering to G-d, it became their
most important motive for partaking.
They were incomparably more excited
about the opportunity to bring G-d an
offering at the right time than about
performing a *mitzvah* through eating the
Paschal Lamb.

Giving G-d what He termed "My
sustenance, my fire" (Numbers 28:2)
brings about what G-d termed "My fire,
the aroma of my delight to G-d"
(Leviticus 1:9). To be the source of G-d's
delight was their greatest delight and is
the greatest delight of every Jew.

A Jew's greatest delight is
to bring pleasure to G-d.
Today, we bring G-d
pleasure through *mitzvot*.



TEXT 9

*Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak
Schneersohn, Igrot
Kodesh 5, p. 242*

א מענש זאל זיך מתבונן זיין, ווי גרויס חסדי הבורא ברוך הוא זיינען, אז אזא קטן שבקטנים ווי דער מענש איז, קען ער מאכען א נחת רוח גדול צום גדול הגדולים, וכמו שכתוב: "ולגדולתו אין חקר" (תהלים קמה, ג).

דארף דער מענש זיין תמיד באגייסטערט און טאן די עבודה בלב ונפש חפצה.

We should contemplate the great kindness of the Creator. He made it so that the tiniest of insignificant beings—the human—can bring inordinate delight to the most eminent and great G-d, of Whom it is said, "His greatness cannot be fathomed."

This causes us to be perpetually excited to carry out the Divine service with an eager heart and willing spirit.

TEXT 10

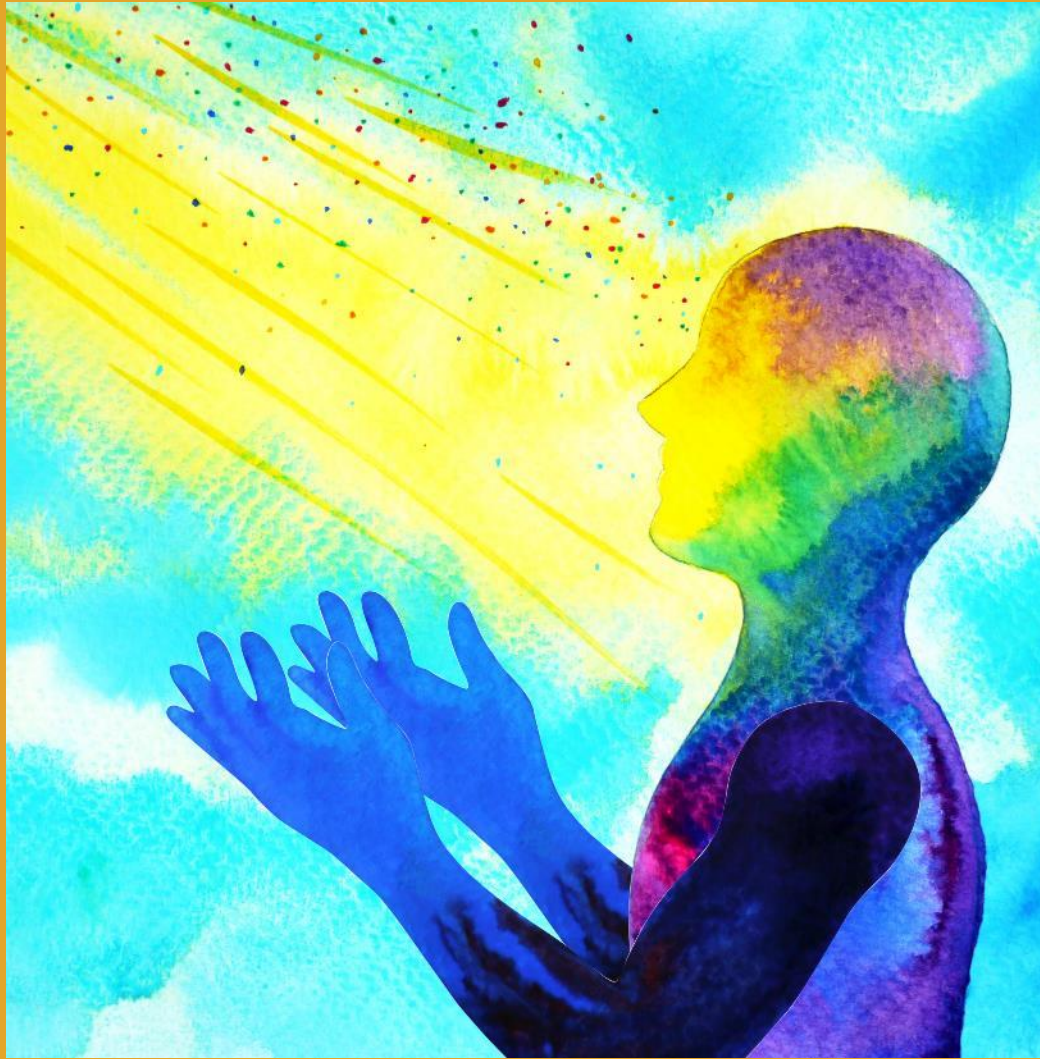
*Rabbi Yisrael Baal
Shem Tov, Keter
Shem Tov, Chapter
145*

שאלו היה מאמין זה כמה היה עובד ה' בשמחה וביראה מרוב כל . . .

וגם לתת לב אל מה שאמר שלמה עליו השלום: "אם תשכבון בין שפתים" (תהלים סט, יד), שהקדוש ברוך הוא שומר ושוקד על שפתי האדם לנושקה כשהוא אומרה בתורה ותפלה בדחילו ורחימו.

If we genuinely believe [that G-d cares for our efforts], we will be ecstatic to serve G-d. . . .

This is especially true when we contemplate the words of King Solomon, ["Your lips drip flowing honey, O bride" (Song of Songs 4:11), which are based on the words of his father, King David,] "If you lie between the lips" (Psalms 68:14). G-d awaits with diligence to kiss our lips when we speak the words of Torah and pray with love and reverence for G-d.



When we realize how much G-d loves us, we are moved to do all we can to love Him back and to give Him pleasure.

TEXT 11

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman
of Liadi, Tanya,
Likutei Amarim,
Chapter 25*

כשיעשה רצונו יתברך . . . תהיינה נפשו האלקית והחיונית
ולבושיהן כולן מיוחדות בתכלית היחוד ברצון העליון ואור אין סוף
ברוך הוא, כנזכר לעיל. וייחוד זה למעלה הוא נצחי לעולם ועד, כי
הוא יתברך ורצונו למעלה מהזמן.

When we do what He desires . . . our G-dly soul, along with our
animating soul, and all their garments become fully attached to
G-d's supernal will and infinite blessed light.

In G-d's sphere, this attachment is eternal because G-d and His
will transcend the limitations of time.

Doing *mitzvot* forges a loving bond with G-d from which G-d derives eternal pleasure.



KEY POINTS

1. When G-d instructed Jews to bring a Paschal Lamb in the desert, those who were ritually impure wanted to partake, thinking that the Paschal Lamb was not a sacrifice that required ritual purity.
2. When Moses told them it was a sacrifice, they thought this pertained only to the new requirements of this year's offering and that eating the lamb did not have the status of eating an offering. Thus, they suggested that pure priests sprinkle the blood and they eat the meat.
3. Though they intended to eat the Paschal Lamb, they didn't mention that detail.
4. When Jews have an opportunity to delight G-d with a sacrifice, everything else pales by comparison. It is not even worthy of mention.
5. Jews are excited to perform a *mitzvah* because our good deeds delight G-d. And there's nothing a Jew enjoys more than being a delight to G-d.

