

Workers of the World

וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כִּן עָשׂוּ

"The Bnei Yisroel went and did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Ahron, so they did." 12:28

Rashi comments on the seemingly superfluous nature of the final words of this Possuk, which reiterates that Klal Yisroel did as they were commanded, with regard to gathering and Shechting the Korban Pesach. He explains that the Possuk is including Moshe and Ahron, and means that they also performed all the necessary actions for preparing the Korban. The Ksav Sofer finds this explanation of Rashi difficult. He asks that surely it is obvious that Moshe and Ahron would fulfil the will of Hashem; after all, whom would we expect to be more concerned with fulfilling their obligations than these two men?

To answer this question, he first establishes that there are two separate parts to the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach, and they have different Halochos. The first part, the taking of the Korban as a live sheep, the guarding, slaughtering and roasting, can all be done by someone else. Meaning that a person can appoint a Shaliach, an agent, to perform these actions for him. In contrast, the actual eating of the Korban must be done by a person himself. The first preliminary actions also have the distinction of being the type of labour that a person would not normally have done himself in those days. They would have been given to a servant of the household to do, since they are not particularly conducive to maintaining one's honour, e.g. dragging sheep through the streets, and are permissible to be done via a Shaliach. Therefore, it was precisely these parts of the Mitzvah that the Torah (as Rashi explains the Possuk) needed to expound on; Moshe and Ahron's willingness to be involved in the early stages of preparation. They themselves went to the market to buy an animal, even though they were the leaders of the entire Jewish nation and would have been expected to leave this type of work to their servants.

This understanding, continues the Ksav Sofer, can also explain the question of the Rosho on Seder night. The Rosho famously asks, "What is this work to you." However, the Ksav Sofer asks why it is that the Rosho is particularly bothered by this Mitzvah. Surely, there are many Mitzvos that he finds difficult to understand or is unwilling to accept, so why does he single out this one for questioning? It would appear, he writes, that this Rosho is usually willing to let his father and others keep Mitzvos if that is what they want to do. However, when he sees a Mitzvah which involves his father embarrassing himself, and losing his dignity as he drags a recalcitrant animal through the streets, he feels that he can no longer stay quiet. He demands to know why his father is doing the jobs that are normally reserved for a servant, since he thinks it a disgrace that his father should be involved in these. As such, he asks, "What is this work to you," meaning, this work, the work of a servant, what is it to you, i.e. why are you, father, involved in it? In response, concludes the Ksav Sofer, the father tells his son, "For this, Hashem took me out of Egypt." It is well known that Klal Yisroel had no merits which entitled them to redemption. Therefore, Hashem gave them the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach to serve as a merit. However, the eating of meat, notes the Ksav Sofer, is hardly difficult and deserving of reward. Rather, the father is explaining that it is this work, the degrading and difficult work of preparing the Korban, that each person undertook, which served as the merit for Klal Yisroel to be redeemed.

Night Light

לֵיל שְׁמֵרִים הוּא לֵה

"A night of guarding to Hashem." (12:42)

The Midrash comments on this Possuk that the night of Makas Bechoros was as light outside as the middle of the summer (Tekufas Tammuz). The Chanukas HaTorah explains how the Midrash saw this idea in the Possuk.

He begins by citing the Possuk in Bereishis, "G-D called the light, day, and the darkness He called night." He quotes a Midrash that asks why it is that the Possuk refers to Hashem by name when speaking of the naming of day, but only refers to Hashem as, "He," when speaking about the calling of the darkness, night. The Midrash answers that Hashem did not desire His name to be associated with darkness, since darkness symbolizes evil. Based on this, the Chanukas HaTorah writes that the Midrash we began with is easily understandable. The Midrash had difficulty understanding how it could be that Hashem would allow His name to be associated with the night of Makas Bechoros, since darkness symbolizes evil and Hashem does not want His name associated with it. From this, the Midrash understood that the night must have been lit up like a summer's day, which meant Hashem was willing to have His name used in connection with it.

Forbidden Meat

כֹּל בֶּן נֹכֵר לֹא יֹאכַל בוּ

"No foreign son shall eat of it." (12:43)

The Midrash and Onkeles both explain the foreign son forbidden by this Possuk to eat the Korban Pesach to mean a heretic Jew. The Meshech Chochmoh explains this interpretation. He writes that the Torah cannot be forbidding a Jew to give a non-Jew some Korban to eat, as then the Possuk should have said, "No... may be fed of it." Nor can the Possuk be directly forbidding a non-Jew to eat, since the Torah was not given to non-Jews to read. Rather, it must be referring to a Jew who acts like a non-Jew i.e. a heretic.