



Kinder Torah

Parashas Re'eh

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The Three Firsts

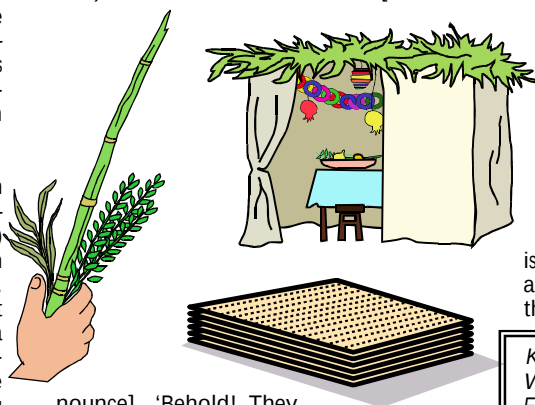
“Observe the month of springtime, and make Pesach for Hashem, your G-d” (Devarim 16:1). Thus, the Torah begins recounting the *Shalosh Regalim* - the three festivals when Klal Yisrael would go up to the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalayim and rejoice in the glory of Hashem's Holy Presence. The Torah previously detailed the laws of these festivals in parashas Emor. “On the first day there shall be a holy meeting, you shall do no *melacha* (constructive work)” (Vayikra 23:7). This verse is referring to the mitzvah of resting by refraining from *melacha* on the first day of Pesach. “On the first day there shall be a holy meeting, you shall do no *melacha*” (Vayikra 23:35). This verse refers to the mitzvah of resting by refraining from *melacha* on the first day of Succos. “You shall take for yourself on the first day (of Succos) a beautiful fruit (*esrog*), the branches of date palms (*lulav*), twigs of a myrtle tree (*hadassim*), and willow of the brook (*aravos*)” (Vayikra 23:40). This verse details the mitzvah of the *dalei minim* (four species). The Torah instructs us to take them on the first day of Succos.

What do these three verses have in common? They all contain the word “*rishon*” - first. The Gemora (Pesachim 5a) states that the word *rishon* in the Torah refers to the time before an event begins. However, these three *rishons* are different from all the others. They are used for a beautiful drasha. The Maharsha elaborates that Klal Yisrael will merit three other *rishons* as their reward for keeping these three *rishons*. They will defeat the descendants of Eisav, who is called *rishon*, as the verse states, “The first one (of Rivka's twins - Eisav) emerged red” (Bereshis 25:25). This will be in the merit of their refraining from *melacha* on the first day of Pesach. Why? Because Pesach commemorates the redemption from Mitzrayim. At that time, The Almighty judged our tormentors, punished them with all sorts of plagues, and ultimately drowned them in the sea. In the merit of our resting on this day, the *rishon*, we will be redeemed from our current oppressor, Eisav, who was the *rishon* - the first one to afflict us. It will occur in the very same month - Nissan. Additionally, we destroy all *chometz* before Pesach. *Chometz* is compared to our internal enemy - the Yetzer Hara, who gives strength to the guardian angel of Eisav. At the time of the ultimate redemption, the angel's strength will be cut off, and along with it, the power of Eisav.

When Hashem redeemed us from Mitzrayim, He spread His “succah of

peace” upon us. As the verse states, “I settled the Bnei Yisrael in Succos” (Vayikra 23:43). The chag of Succos commemorates this event. In the merit of refraining from *melacha* on that day, the *rishon* of Succos, we will merit seeing the building of the Beis HaMikdash. It is also called *rishon*, as the verse states, “Like the Throne of Glory - first (*rishon*) exalted - is the place of the Mikdash” (Yirmiyahu 17:12). At that time Hashem will spread His Shechina (Divine Presence) upon us like a Succah, as the verse states, “Then His Succah (figuratively meaning Tabernacle) was in Yerushalayim (Tehillim 76:3).

On the *rishon* - first day of Succos - we take the lulav. There is intense *simcha* on that day. In the merit of our performing this mitzvah with great *simcha*, we will merit the indescribable *simcha* of the coming of Mashiach. He is also called *rishon*, as the verse states, “The first (*rishon*) ones to come to Zion [will an-



nounce], ‘Behold! They are here!’” (Yishaya 41:27). His name will be Menachem, which means comforting. For he will comfort us and bring us joy, as the verse states, “Gladden us according to the days You afflicted us” (Tehillim 90:15). May we merit it speedily in our days.

Kinderlach . . .

This coming week is Rosh Chodesh Elul. It marks the beginning of an important seven week period of time. We begin with the month of Elul, doing teshuva and drawing close to Hashem. On Rosh Hashanah, we crown Him as King over the world. We intensify our teshuva during the Aseres Yimay Teshuva, culminating in Yom Kippur. We fast and pray the whole day, and our sins are forgiven. What a reason to be happy! And so, we arrive at the first day of Succos, intensely joyous. We refrain from *melacha*, and we take the lulav. In the merit of these two mitzvos, may we merit to see the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash and the coming of Mashiach, amen.

Hashem's Children

You are children to Hashem, your G-d - you shall not cut yourselves and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes when mourning” (Devarim 14:1). Tearing the skin in time of mourning is a barbaric custom practiced by the nations of the world. In the same verse, the Torah reminds us that we are Hashem's children, and commands us not to follow this custom. What is the connection between these two ideas?

The Daas Zekanim MiBaalei HaTosfos explains that the custom of tearing the skin was an expression of despair about the future. The child was now alone in the world without a father. However, the Jewish people are different. We are Hashem's children and He is our Father. He is alive and well, and we have no reason to despair.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh and the Sforno have a different angle on this question. People despair in mourning because they think that their loved one is gone. However, we know that this world is only temporary. Hashem sends His children down here for a short time, and then He calls them back. They return to their Father, Who is the source of all life. The life that they are now living in the next world is nicer than all of the pleasures of this world.

Kinderlach . . .

We are Hashem's children. He loves us as a Father loves his child. He wants to be close to us, and He wants us to be close to Him. We are now at the beginning of the month of Elul. The letters of the word Elul form the acronym of the verse, “Ani LiDodi ViDodi Li” (I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine) [Shiur HaShirim 6:3]. This describes the depth of the relationship that we are capable of having. This month is a golden opportunity. Hashem makes Himself available and comes close to us in Elul. Seize the opportunity. Get close to Him.

Parasha Questions:

- Which birds may not be eaten? (14:12-19)
- What do you do to a Jewish slave who does not want to go free after six years? (15:17)
- What shall we bring on the regel in order to not come empty-handed? (16:16)
- What aspects of the matza remind us of Yetzias Mitzrayim? (16:3 and Rashi)
- What shall you give a poor man if he does not want to accept a gift? (Rashi 15:8)

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