

וַיִּדְבֹר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיָּה לְצֵאתָם מִמִּצְרָיִם מִצְרַיִם בְּהַדָּשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן לֵאמֹר: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַפֶּסַח כְּמוֹעֶדוֹ (ט:א-ב). Hashem said: I want you to bring the פסח. What happened? There were people who couldn't bring it. The פסוק says: וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טִמְאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם (ט:ו). For whatever reason, their קדושה was at a level that prevented them from bringing the פסח. What did Hashem give them the opportunity to do? He gave them the mitzvah of פסח שני.

If you were to ask any one of us: What is the most profound relationship we can have with הקדוש ברוך הוא? Most of us would confidently answer: When הקדוש ברוך הוא comes down to עולם הזה to dwell among us, וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְכֶם. However, as frum Yidden with a good השקפה, there is an even greater relationship than that, and that is for us to seek out הקדוש ברוך הוא, not wait for Hashem to come to us.

R' Aharon Soloveitchik זצ"ל, once gave a דרשה in Kew Gardens where he alluded to this thought. There's a Gemara that the Caizer - the Roman emperor, who was a רשע eventually killed רבי עקיבא - asked רבי - a fascinating question. "In your opinion, which are greater? הקדוש ברוך הוא's achievements or man's achievements?" רבי עקיבא instead of answering immediately, said, "Give me three days to give you back the answer." The Caizer agreed. רבי עקיבא went home and told his wife to bake her finest cookies and finest cakes which she was famous. "Make them special," he said. "They're for the Caesar." Thus motivated, she outdid herself. Over the next three days, she prepared a magnificent selection of baked goods. She arranged them masterfully in a basket and רבי עקיבא began the trip back to the palace. On the way back, he stopped along the roadside and picked up some pebbles, rocks, and shmutz, and added them to one side of the basket. When he came before the Caizer, the Caizer asked, "Do you have the answer to my question? Which are greater, man's achievements or הקדוש ברוך הוא's?" רבי עקיבא replied, "The answer is in the basket." He offered the basket to the ruler and said, "Try a cookie." The Caizer ate one and said, "Delicious!" Then רבי עקיבא told him to taste a little bit of the sand and shmutz. The Caizer took some of the sand and shmutz and spat it out רבי עקיבא said, "That's your answer. Now you see whose achievements are greater." To which the Caizer replied, "You are wise, רבי עקיבא. Had you answered that God's achievements are greater, I would have denounced you for doing ברית מילה on your children. Who are you to think that you can improve what Hashem does?"

In a similar fashion, Hashem wants man to achieve the highest level of קדושה. We can achieve a certain level by doing our מצות, we can achieve the level where Hashem is וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְכֶם, but Hashem wants even more than that. He wants man to come to Him. And that's what happened with פסח שני. People came to משה רבינו and said, למה נגרע? We want to have an opportunity to serve Hashem. They came up and said, "We want to come to Hashem". Hashem said, "I'm going to give you another chance." Of course, everyone knows that פסח שני represents that we always get another chance. But in the in the in the realm of what I'm saying to you here, this represents Man's striving to come close to Hashem, which is an even higher מדרגה than Hashem wanting to come to us.

That's what Hashem really wants from us, to reach that מדרגה that we want to come close to him, doing more than exactly what the תורה tells us, לַפְנִים מִשְׁנֵי הַדִּין. We could compare this to נדב ואביהוא who also wanted to do more but they did it outside the boundaries of what is acceptable. We cannot invent our own ways of serving Hashem. But these people - whoever they were, whether they were יוסף of נושאי ארון, or people who were טמאי מת מצוה, whatever the case may have been - did it right. They came to משה and asked, "What can we do?" And Hashem said, "You know what? You deserve a מצוה; I'm going to add an extra מצוה in the תורה in your זכות. I'm going to give you פסח שני." So it was in the merit of their wanting to come close to Hashem that we see what man's opportunities are. Man has an opportunity through עבודת השם to come close to Hashem and to strive to be greater.

