



And I Said to You - By Your Blood You shall live!
Pesach Special

The holy house in Netivot had seen many things. I merited being a welcome guest in the house, from which emanated salvation and light to the Jewish people. Thousands streamed to the small house.

The Baba Sali, Rabbi Yisrael Abu-Hatzeirah, sat in his room studying the Zohar. This was a common scene, and we often found him like this. Even when his eye sight was failing he continued to study diligently. Though his body was weak, his spirit was strong, and when prayer time came he would spring to his feet, saying that his suffering was a show of love from G-d, and would commence praying.

When he concluded praying, many would come to him for a blessing. On that particular day, a family from France which had encountered many tribulations had come to him for help. The Baba Sali uncharacteristically did not give them a blessing and appeared to be evading them. I had never seen such a scene before. The family persisted, but he appeared not to hear or see them.

After much pleading, the Baba Sali told them: "I cannot help you; you need a vessel for a blessing. I cannot bless, cannot." The family was distraught, but the Baba Sali was not able to bless them.

I felt bad for them, and suggested they visit Rabbi Meir, the son of the Baba Sali, in Ashdod. They asked me to come with them and I agreed. We went to Baba Meir's humble apartment. Rabbi Meir was sitting and studying. I did not want to disturb him, and so we stood there for a while and waited for him.

After a significant time period, I approached him and told him the story.

In the Haggadah we read: "And numerous," as it is said: "I passed over you and saw you wallowing in your bloods, and I said to you 'By your blood you shall live,' and I said to you 'By your blood you shall live!'"

Our Sages teach us that these "bloods" (the Hebrew is plural) are those of the Passover offering and of circumcision. At the time of the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were bare of Mitzvos, and for of these two commandments they merited redemption.

What is the connection between the bloods of Passover and circumcision? Our Sages tell us that in Egypt, many Israelites did not circumcise themselves.

At the time of the first Passover offering in Egypt, the Israelites approached Moshe and asked to participate in the sacrifice. He told them they must undergo circumcision prior to sacrificing

the Passover offering. They immediately underwent circumcision, and the blood of the circumcision mingled with the blood of the sacrifice, and G-d came to each individual and kissed and blessed him, saying "I passed over you and saw you wallowing in your bloods."

We are further told that angels sustained the Israelites during their bondage in Egypt. Each Israelite was given a vessel of oil and one of honey, and when the Egyptians would seek to kill them, a miracle occurred, and the Israelites would be swallowed into the ground and oxen would plow above them, and after the Egyptians passed they sprouted out of the ground like grass.

And even though, when the time of redemption came, when the Israelites required a miracle, G-d sought those who had neglected to fulfill the commandments until that point, and sacrificed themselves now, and not those who lived miraculously until this point.

Even though they circumcised themselves now only for the sake of eating the Passover offering, they did ultimately make a covenant with G-d, and in merit of this they were redeemed.

The fundamental issue is that of self-sacrifice. The Beis Avraham of Slonim would say that if there is "wallowing in your bloods," if there is self-sacrifice to the extent of bloodletting, then one merits true life from G-d – "By your blood you shall live." Only through self-sacrifice could they have brought the redemption.

The Baba Meir sat, engulfed by sanctity. He looked at the family and said: father is correct, they cannot be blessed. The family began to weep as they found no relief, and the Baba Meir told them: one needs a vessel for a blessing. One cannot be blessed if his soul is not ready to accept it.

As he was about to return to his study I told him: the family is willing to become vessels. They want to become vessels.

The Baba Meir looked up and said: to become a vessel, one must self-sacrifice. Only with self-sacrifice can one contain a blessing.

He then turned to the head of the family and asked: will the stores close on Shabbos? The family lowered their eyes in shame and said: we accept upon ourselves to shut down our shops on Shabbos, and request a blessing.

If you go against nature you will merit blessing and salvation, Rabbi Meir blessed them, and all were relieved. Soon they were redeemed.