



A Worthwhile Sacrifice
Parshas Tsav

Itzik and Shmueli were immigrants whose family had come from Morocco. The new language and the new surroundings were daunting, as they knew no one in their adopted homeland.

Their acclimation process was not easy. Over time, their situation deteriorated, and they joined negative elements on the street, spiraling down a bad path which led to an abyss.

Someone who knew the family asked me to meet the family and enroll the two at Migdal Ohr. I thought I would meet opposition from the parents, but when I met them I was surprised – the father was a religious looking individual, whom I found studying Torah.

"Welcome Rabbi," he invited me in. The mother set a pot of tea on the stove. Arabian carpets covered the house, while Torah texts were the center of it.

I would never have imagined such a stark contrast between parents and sons. I was pained that the parents had made such an effort to come to Israel, and then to see their children leave the fold, while receiving no support from anyone.

This was only a prelude to what I was about to learn in the coming minutes.

Many reasons are given for our marking of Shabbos Hagadol, the Shabbos just before we celebrate Pesach.

"Speak to the entire community of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month, let each one take a lamb for each parental home, a lamb for each household.'"¹ According to tradition, this happened on Shabbos Hagadol.

Our Sages teach us that the lamb was worshipped by the Egyptians, and therefore was chosen to be sacrificed by G-d, amidst the sacrilege of Egypt.

Picture this: The Israelites are neck deep in impurity, at its 49th and last gate, and are at the verge of staying in this impure state for eternity. While still serving the Egyptians, they take the Egyptian idol and sacrifice it.

Now imagine this situation: the Egyptian returns home and searches for his beloved idol, the lamb. The room is a special one, dedicated to the deity. He then hears lambs bleating in the house of his next-door neighbor, the Israelite.

He then learns that his deity is about to be sacrificed to the God of the Hebrews. How should the Egyptian react? One would think he would resort to violence to avenge the mocking of his god. However, a miracle occurred, and no Israelite was harmed.

The Jewish nation demonstrated true self-sacrifice. They were slaves, and yet they rebelled and instead went with their belief in G-d, not fearing possible perilous outcome.

This is the reason that the tenth plague, in which the first-born died, preceded the exodus. While the Egyptian were harshly hit and lost their possessions and cattle in the previous plagues, Pharaoh still hardened his heart and did not let the Israelites go. Only after the tenth plague did Pharaoh relent.

The reason for this is that in the first nine plagues, the Jewish nation did not take an active role. In the tenth plague, the Israelites partook in the plague by slaughtering a lamb, taking some of its blood and putting it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they ate it, through true self-sacrifice.

Only after this sacrifice, only after the Israelites participated in a real effort, were they redeemed. When a Jew demonstrates self-sacrifice, G-d redeems him and bestows upon him true freedom, in any situation he may be.

I sat with the parents for a meaningful discussion and learned of their unique qualities and inner strengths.

I discovered that in Morocco they did not have a Jewish school, and therefore educated the boys at home. The father did not go to work so that he could educate his children, and the mother was the main provider. After encountering an ugly incident at work, she quit.

Both parents did not go to work for about a year, the father educating and the mother being a principled individual, until the awaited moment came, and they moved to Israel.

In Israel, the children were allowed to go out into the street for the first time, and the encounter was ruinous for them. I told them that the process was still reversible and that the boys could be saved. They enrolled their sons at Migdal Ohr.

Today, Shmueli and Itzik are leading students at top Yeshivas. The parents' self-sacrifice stood for them and saved them.

¹ Shmot 12:3.