

Shabbos Behaalosecha – Gershon Hepner (reprinted)

י"ט סיון תשע"ו – 25th June 2016 – שבת פי' בהעלותך

About fifteen years ago, on the Shabbos afternoon of Parshas Behaalosecho, I arrived for Mincha about ten minutes early. This was highly unusual for me (and still would be), and I received my reward on the spot...

...Rabbi Cooper shlito raced up to me, his eyes sparkling, and said, "Gershon, you must hear the following Dvar Torah!" Here it is.

To mark the first anniversary of Yetzias Mitzrayim, Klal Yisroel were commanded to bring Korban Pesach in the Midbor. The pessukim proceed to tell us that some people were prevented from bringing the Korban because they were teme'im. They were duly instructed to bring their Korban one month later, on what we know to be Pesach Sheni.

The possuk giving the command to offer up the Korban Pesach on the fourteenth of Nissan, is worded strangely. "Veya'asu V'nay Yisroel Es HaPosach BeMo'ado" (9:2). The unusual word in this short possuk is "HaPosach". The Torah here has used a form of the word that would normally appear at a hiatus or pause in the possuk. The normal form of the word would be "HaPesach", and one would expect the 'pausal form' "HaPosach" to be used only at the end of a possuk (on the Sof Possuk note) or at another natural pause (like the Esnachto note).

We are not surprised to find this word "HaPosach" elsewhere in Shemos (12:43) where the phrase reads "Zos Chukas HaPosach". Here the word appears on the Esnachto note, and this cadence calls for the use of the 'pausal form'. The question is why is the 'pausal form' "HaPosach" used in our possuk? The answer is given by Reb Yaakov Kaminetzky in his Sefer Emess Le'Yaakov. Where a possuk appears without an Esnachto note, there is one particular note that serves as the next best hiatus in the possuk. This note is the Tipcho which generally marks the end of a phrase or clause. With no Esnachto in our possuk, the Tipcho note becomes the main pause in the possuk, and is located on the word "HaPosach" – thereby changing the word from its normal form "HaPesach".

This phenomenon is rare, and typically occurs in short pessukim, where the possuk is too brief to be split by an Esnachto note. Another example of this is found at the start of next week's Sedra. "LeMateh Efroyim Hoshea Bin Nun" (13:8). This is another short possuk with no Esnachto, where the Tipcho changes the word "Efrayim" into "Efroyim".

Rabbi Cooper shlito gave an additional insight into our possuk. Tosfos in Kiddushin (37b) explains that much to the shame of Klal Yisroel, only one Korban Pesach was brought throughout the forty years in the desert. This sad situation arose as a direct result of the spies giving their evil report about Eretz Yisroel, shortly after the Pesach Sheni mentioned earlier.

Upon the return of the spies, HaKodosh Boruch Hu decreed that Klal Yisroel would spend forty years in the desert before being admitted to Eretz Yisroel. Throughout this time, the mitzva of Bris Miloh was suspended as the people could be required to travel at a moment's notice. To journey through the desert immediately after a Bris could be injurious to the baby, particularly as the north wind and its healing properties were withdrawn throughout this period.

Failure to perform Bris Miloh upon a child prevents both father and son from partaking of the Korban Pesach. Consequently, the suspension of Bris Miloh in the Midbor had a knock-on effect in that the Korban Pesach was similarly deferred. This state of affairs continued until Klal Yisroel entered Eretz Yisroel under the leadership of Yehoshua, when they performed Bris Miloh prior to bringing their first Korban Pesach in Eretz Yisroel (Yehoshua chapter 5).

At this stage, Rabbi Cooper turned to me expectantly. He clearly presumed that I would now be able to answer the original question – why does the Torah use the 'pausal form' "HaPosach", instead of "HaPesach"? I couldn't.

By using a pausal form, the Torah is alluding to the fact that this Korban Pesach would be the last one in a series. Korban Pesach was originally brought in Mitzrayim, and then again one year later. This second Korban Pesach would be the final one for a further thirty nine years, until the days of Yehoshua in Eretz Yisroel. The Torah gives a 'remez' – a hint - to this, by using a tone of finality – "HaPosach".