



## Do You Care?

Our Parsha introduces us to the various offerings that were brought in the Temple, with extensive discussion about the *korban chatat*, the sin offering. These offerings were brought specifically for mistakes made, rather than for deliberate and malicious acts. Nonetheless an offering is required as an act of atonement – for a mistake!

Mistakes happen in a context. Simply put – we make mistakes when we are careless, not when we are careful. We can forget anything anywhere, but we are more likely to leave our worn raincoat on the train than our wallet because we care far more about the wallet than about the old coat. In this light, the concept of atonement for mistakes implies the expectation that we must truly care about doing things right in the realm of Torah and Mitzvot.

How do we make ourselves truly care?

What matters to us most is not what others expect of us but what we ourselves value and are passionate about. As slaves in Egypt, we did

absolutely nothing that we cared about. Our days were filled with Pharaoh's priorities and with exercises in futility, such as building pyramids on quicksand. The freedom celebrated on Pesach brought us to a place where we could finally focus on our greatest values and on G-d's will, the greatest thing to be passionate about.

The freedom of Pesach is the freedom to really engage in what we care about.

It is fitting that the Yom Tov of Pesach is where the Halachic context promotes profound care for doing things right. We see this in the Torah obligation to free our entire home of the Chametz that we are not supposed to eat, in the Halachic notion unique to Pesach that even a tiny bit of Chametz can render a mixture not kosher for Pesach, and in the widespread customs of Pesach home preparation that go beyond the basic Halachic requirements. Pesach is handled with the utmost care.

The ultimate symbol of this elevated care and conscientiousness is the Matzah itself. Matzah is made with care – *ush'martem et hamatzot*; and it is made with alacrity. Matzah baking is not a casual enterprise in any sense. And our Sages saw this as a paradigm for all Mitzvot, as the Sages played on the similarity between the Hebrew spelling of the words Matzot and Mitzvot and said that all Mitzvot should be performed with that same care and enthusiasm.

Not only to avoid mistakes, but to really get things right and make things happen, we need to care. When we are motivated by the issue and project at hand, when we are doing it not just because we have to, we are able to preserve our values and live a passionate life. ■

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