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Erev Pesach at the Kotel: Participating in An Age-Old Minhag

**AT THE KOTEL WITH RAV KOOK,
RAV HUTNER AND RAV SONNEFELD**

A memorable story is told of a chance meeting that took place during the afternoon hours prior to Pesach, in close proximity to the Kotel.

Rav Kook observed the practice each year of going to the Kotel to recite the text of the *Korban Pesach* (the service of the *Pesach*-offering in the Temple), as was customary in Jerusalem. Despite his many tasks on the busy day before the Seder, Rav Kook would pray and linger at the remnant of the Beit HaMikdash, the Kotel.

One year, Rav Yitzchak Hutner, the young prodigy who attached himself to Rav Kook, accompanied his mentor, Rav Kook, on his way home from the Kotel. They encountered Rav Chaim Sonnenfeld, the spiritual leader of the Hungarian separatists. Rav Kook hastened

to wish his eminent colleague *Chag Sameach*. Rav Sonnenfeld returned the greeting and added, "I bless you that I will see you here next year with your bare feet immersed in blood." (He meant that since Rav Kook was

a *Kohen*, he should merit to officiate the *Pesach*-offering, of which the Talmud says, "It is a compliment to the descendant of Aharon that they walk in blood up to their knees." [Pesachim 65b]). (Celebration of the Soul, Neriyah, p. 146)

We see from the above anecdote that the practice of many of the pious people of Jerusalem was to make their way to the Old City

and pray at the Kotel at precisely the auspicious time when the *Pesach*-sacrifice was offered when the Beit Hamikdash stood.

THE CUSTOM TO RECITE *KORBAN PESACH*

The distinguished author and sage Rav Eliyahu Kitov, in his classic work on the laws

Invitation



Rav Kook observed the age-old minhag of reciting the text of the Korban Pesach on the eve of Pesach at the Kotel.

In this spirit, please join me at the Kotel on Wednesday, April 1, Erev Pesach at 1:15 pm for a Mincha minyan followed by the reading of the Korban Pesach.

We will conclude at approximately 1:45 pm.

Men and Women are invited.

We will meet in the back, next to the mechitza be"H.

Wishing you Chag Kasher v'Sameach!

We will gather only if we are allowed according to the safety regulations.

of the Festivals and monthly practices, writes about this time-honored custom: “After Minchah on Erev Pesach it is the custom to read about the sacrifice of the Pesach lamb. We read the relevant verses from the Torah, the *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* and also a description of the sacrifice as it was actually performed in the Beit HaMikdash. This recital is in accordance with the verse, ‘We will give the offering of our lips in place of the bullocks.’ We yearn to fulfill the mitzvah of the Pesach sacrifice as we were commanded, in the holy place and in the company of the pilgrims. But as we have not been found worthy to do so, we bring the offering of our lips instead... and we read those chapters which tell us of the Pesach offering and its special mitzvot.” (The Book of Our Heritage, vol. 2, p. 220)

The recitation of the text that describes bringing the *Korban Pesach* serves as a beautiful supplication to Hashem in which a Jew expresses the longing to once again bring the Pesach offering in our own day. It’s a prayer that also expresses a yearning to usher in a time of peace and harmony for Israel and all the nations. The classic Siddur of Rabbi Yaakov Emden, from the middle 1700’s, cites the custom to recite the *Korban Pesach* and includes the text to be recited. (Cited in *HaSeder HaAruch*, Weingarten, vol. 3, p. 48)

The illustrious sage of Jerusalem, Rav Yechiel Michel Tucazinsky (1871-1955), well known for compiling the annual *Luach Eretz Yisrael* calendar which delineates the yearly practices and customs to be observed each Shabbat and Festival, specifies this *minhag* to recite the text of the *Pesach Sacrifice* on *Erev Pesach*. (*Luach Eretz Yisrael*, 5786, p. 61)

It is noteworthy that this *minhag* is highlighted in many Haggadot. For example,

Rav Reuven Sasson, a prominent Rabbinic leader in Israel today with an extensive following, in his recently published Haggadah (*Be’Ohr Panecha*) includes an introductory teaching to reciting the Pesach-offering to be contemplated while one recites the text of the Pesach-offering (See *Haggadah Be’Ohr Paneach*, Sasson, p. 121-122)

IN SIGHT OF THE MAKOM HAMIKDASH ON EREV PESACH

There is special significance to reciting the passage of the *Korban Pesach* in the presence of the Kotel, in close proximity to the Temple Mount. Reciting this prayer specifically at the Kotel is a custom that dates back generations (*HaSeder HaAruch*, p. 48).

In Temple times the nation as a whole would gather on the afternoon of Pesach, from all over the country, to offer their ‘Paschal-lamb’ which would begin their celebration of the *Festival of Freedom* in Yerushalayim.

This year, our prayers for redemption, at this auspicious moment in Israel’s history, have profound meaning as our people face an extremely tense time and are engaged in battle. May our special prayers on *Erev Pesach* and throughout Pesach bring added strength in our efforts to obliterate evil and spread light and goodness to all humankind.

L’shana Haba B’Yerushalyim Habenuya! Next Year, In a Rebuilt Jerusalem, with the Beit Hamikdash.

May our *tefillot* be heard in *Shamayim*. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider’s most recent OU Press Publication, “Torah United” on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at arong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.