



Rav Doron Perez – Parashat Tzav 5780

In the corona crisis there has been an opportunity with all the challenge, to go back to basic principles: our identity as a home and a family and as a people.

Around 50 years ago, John Lennon released his most famous song, “Imagine”. Imagine a world without countries, without borders, without boundaries. Really? On the one hand, yes, we want to be part of the global village, universalism and globalism is important, but it dare not eradicate basic national identity.

We are seeing that many in academia see nation as a dirty word. Not only is it not a dirty word, it is absolutely core to identity, and universalism can only be built on it. Look how nations today are closing their borders and sealing their boundaries. The only way to curb the spread of this terrible virus is going back to collective responsibility and particular responsibility. The European Union for the first time in decades closed its borders. Why? Each country is responsible for its own citizens. That is what Pesach is all about. It is about our national identity.

You see, says Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi in the Kuzari, the God we are introduced to in Mitzrayim is not the God who created the world, it's not the God who “Bara Shamayim V'aretz,” that we bring in Rosh Hashana. Rosh Hashana is about the creation and judgement of all people. Not Pesach. Anochi Hashem Elokecha Asher Hotzeticha MiEretz Mitzrayim, Pesach is about a God who redeemed a particular people and selected them for a particular mission, about the birth of a collective nation of the Jewish people. That is the essence of Pesach. That's where the virus forcing us to go back to basics.

But what is a nation based on? Here is the secondary profound point, it's based on the private home. Look at how the home is so central. The only place of refuge that we have from this terrible virus is in our home. Yes, you can have social distancing; even in Israel to have more than two people, but not in our home. In the home people live together. And I noticed this year for the first time that is the essence of Pesach. I just noticed how many times it says the word “Bayit,” that

Hashem skipped over, Pesach Al Shum Mah?. Why do we have a Korban Pesach? Because Hashem skipped over the homes, al Batei Avoteinu. He skipped over our homes and redeemed us. Amartem Zevach Pesach Hu, Why? asher pasach al batey Bnai Yisrael BiNagpo et Mitzrayim V'Et Bayeynu Hitzil. Hashem saved us from the Plague of the First Born. How are we safe from the plague? In our homes.

I also noticed regarding Korban Pesach the focus on the house. It says explicitly, Babayit Echad Yeachel, lo tetze Min Habayit, you eat the Korban Pesach in your home in Chabura and you dare not take it out of the precincts of the home, of the Chabura. The essence of Pesach is our homes, our collective home as a people and our private home as individuals. The Korban Pesach is not a private offering and it's not a communal one, it's a family home-based offering.

May this Pesach, as difficult as it is to be away from certain family members, especially some of the elder members of our family, with all that challenge, we are though going back into our home and each home is its fortress. May we celebrate whoever is in our home with us. The power of the home is protection, physically and spiritually, and its fortitude that it gives us as a people; and of course celebrate our people, the Jewish people, in our national home and all around the world as people committed to family and home and committed to our collective identity in the royal mission that we have to play in the world.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach.