

Just One Second

Rabbi Moshe Friedman

"וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת

מצרים הרי זה משובח"

"And everyone who discusses the exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy"

Towards the beginning of the Haggadah, the Baal Hagadah teaches us the importance of recounting the story of yitzias Mitzrayim—the exodus from Egypt. This obligation is sourced in the Torah numerous times. One of them is in Parashas Re'eh 16, 3: "For you departed from the land of Egypt in haste—so that you will remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life."

R' Leib Chasman zt'l, the late Mashgiach of Yeshivas Chevron, questioned as to why we have a unique mitzvah to speak in great length about yitzias Mitzrayim? What is its significance and what is the lesson to be learned?

Secondly, the source in the Torah seems to link the fact that Hashem took us out b'chipazon—hastily, to the obligation of retelling the story of yitzias Mitzrayim. What is the correlation between those two ideas?

R' Leib explains that at the time that B'nei Yisroel were about to be redeemed they had reached the depths of tumah-impurity. They were on the 49th level of impurity, about to reach the 50th step. The 50th level would have been the point of no return. If they reached that lowly level, there would never be a chance for B'nei Yisroel to be redeemed.

When the Torah teaches us that we were redeemed b'chipazon—in haste, it is teaching us that Hashem intervened at the last second and saved us from hitting rock bottom. If we were to remain for one more second, there would be no hope. Hence, it was absolutely necessary for our nation to be redeemed quickly.

When the Torah links the obligation of sipur yitzias Mitzrayim to the idea that Hashem redeemed us hurriedly, it is teaching us for what we are thanking Hashem. We are thankful to Hashem for saving us at the very last possible moment. B'nei Yisroel were but an

instant away from disappearing into oblivion, but the next second they were boomeranged towards becoming the greatest nation to inhabit Earth. For this, we truly have an obligation to recount the great miracle of yitzias Mitzrayim.

It for this same reason that the Baal Hagadah teaches us—kol hamerbe l'saper byitzais mitzrayim harei ze mishubach. It is incumbent upon us to internalize the idea that Hashem has the power to change anything in a moment. One may find himself in what seems to be a hopeless situation, but moments later, he may see salvation.

This idea is a foundation of our emunah and bitachon in Hashem. It is imperative that we believe that Hashem can save us from any situation, anytime, anywhere. It for this reason that that it is so praiseworthy to recount yitzias Mitzrayim at length.

May this year be the year that Hashem redeems us from galus and gathers us together in Eretz Yisroel. "Yeshuas Hashem k'heref ayin". Although redemption may seem to be in the far distance, we maintain our wholehearted belief that with the wink of an eye Mashiach can be knocking at our door. *Achekeh lo bchol yom sheyavo!*

The Chacham and the Rasha ♦ Rabbi Avi Metchik

Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l used to say how all the illustrated Haggados have got it wrong. They depict the rasha, the wicked son, as this evil looking person, perhaps red and with a cape or horns; someone obviously very evil. However, Rav Yerucham explained if we take a look at the Haggada, what we see is that the rasha and the chacham, the wise son, ask very similar questions. Indeed, the Haggada tells us that we only can know that one is wicked by carefully analyzing his words. Otherwise, we may mistake the rasha for also being wise and a tzaddik.

The Chasam Sofer wonders which specific words of the rasha are in fact the giveaway that he is the wicked one. He explains that we find one word in the question of the rasha that we don't find in the query of the chacham.

The chacham asks, "What are the laws and commandments that Hashem our G-d has commanded you?" The question of the rasha is, "What is this service that you have?" Truth be told, when we look at the two questions they seem to be very similar.

The Chasam Sofer explains that there is one word that makes all the difference. We find in the question of the rasha the word zos, which translates as this. The meaning is that the ra-

sha is asking, "What is the meaning behind this service that you are about to perform right now? What is the reasoning behind this commandment that currently lies in front of you? If you can explain it to me well enough so that I understand it, then I am willing to be part of the family and participate in the service. However, if I don't understand it, then I am not willing to do it just because G-d said so!"

The question of the chacham is different, for it does not contain the word zos. The chacham is asking because he truthfully wants to understand the reasoning behind the commandments. However, he is willing and eager to perform the mitzvos even if he doesn't understand the reasoning. He would like to understand but his mitzvah performance does not hinge upon his understanding of the reasoning. Judaism welcomes honest questions, however we must be willing to accept and perform commandments even if currently we do not understand their reason. This is the lesson of the wise son.

As an aside, it's important to note that although we have demonstrated a serious problem in the attitude of the rasha, at least he is engaged somewhat in the religion and is *(continued on back page)*

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sometimes willing to join in the Mitzvah observance. According to Chabad chassidim, in reality there are five sons. The fifth son is the one who is completely disengaged from the family and chose not to attend the seder this year. Alternatively, the fifth son may be our brother who is so far removed from mitzvah observance and a Torah lifestyle that he did not even realize that tonight is the seder night. Either way, in as much as the Haggada stresses the evil of the rasha and how we should react to him, we must still be cognizant of the fact that he did come to the seder. This is of course tremendously positive. The message here is that we must train ourselves to recognize the good and the positive even in those who we term wicked. ♦

Hashem's Promise

Rabbi Zvi Selevan

“ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל...
”היא שעמדה לאבותינו”

“Blessed is the One who keeps His promise with Israel... And this has stood for us and our fathers...”

Hashem made a covenant with Avraham Avinu. Avraham's side of the treaty was that his children would be exiled, enslaved, and tortured for the lengthy time of four hundred years; Hashem's side of the treaty was to redeem them and punish their oppressors. A highly unusual contract. Most deals involve services rendered and payables received - yet here the children of Avraham seem to have no obligation of rendering any service. It appears that their whole obligation is to suffer, and Hashem promises to redeem them from the trouble that He seems to have caused in the first place?

Additionally, Hashem is a True and Just Judge. The children of Avraham should not have to suffer unless they or Avraham had done some misdeed. What wrong could they or he possibly have done to deserve such a grave punishment?

The Gemara (Nedarim 32a) asks the above question and relates several answers.

1) “Rabbi Elazar said because he conscripted a Torah scholar.” Avraham caused Eliezer his slave to fight with him against the four kings.

2) “Shmuel said because he doubted (the attributes of) Hashem as it says, “How do

I know that I shall inherit Eretz Yisrael?” Avraham was afraid his children would sin and lose the right to Eretz Yisrael.

3) “Rabbi Yochanan said because he ‘prevented’ people from entering before the Divine Presence.” The captives that they won in the war with the four kings were returned to the king of Sodom and Avraham did not try to prevail upon them to accept monotheism.

These are all very disparate reasons for having earned such a sentence. Is there some common ground among all these opinions? Another overreaching question evolves from this Gemara. If Avraham had not sinned we would have never gone to Mitzrayim. We would have never seen the ten plagues, we would have never crossed the Yam Suf, nor received the Torah at Har Sinai. The spectacular miracles that were constantly witnessed by all the Jewish People in the desert would have never occurred. The miraculous wars against the Canaanites upon entry to Eretz Yisrael would have never taken place. The entire Jewish faith is built upon these experiences, permanently etched upon our collective memory. If Avraham had not sinned, on what basis would our faith stand?

It appears that had Avraham not sinned, the Jewish People would have developed from their embryonic state to maturity in

ten plagues, to cross the Yam Suf, or to witness the constant miracles in the wilderness. All of these events would now be necessary in order to engender and strengthen Israel's faith in Hashem. It would be our birthright, an inheritance from our forefathers. We would then never sin and consequently never lose Eretz Yisrael.

Avraham Avinu's failure resulted in a weaker level of spiritual faith and fortitude in his children as well. This would lead to the possibility of sin, and ultimately, exile. In order to raise the Jewish People back to the level where they should be, Hashem struck a deal with Avraham. I'll send your children into exile, where they will be enslaved and tortured for four hundred years. This will bring them to the realization that they can rely only on Me, and only Me. After building this foundation, I will show them tremendous miracles and they will leave with a great treasure, the treasure of Ultimate Faith. They can then return to Eretz Yisrael.

In the event the Jewish People should lose the strength of their emunah and succumb to sin again, the same process would then be repeated. This is why Chazal tell us that Avraham Avinu was shown all the other exiles of the Jewish People during this covenant. The same underlying principle is at work in all the exiles. To overcome sin, their faith and conviction must be strengthened.

“The entire Jewish faith is built upon these experiences, permanently etched upon our collective memory.”

Eretz Yisrael, not in Mitzrayim. The Torah would have been given in Eretz Yisrael, and there would have been no need for all the miracles that they experienced.

The sins mentioned in the Gemara all have one common factor: a lack of emunah and bitachon in Hashem on Avraham's part (according to his exalted level). Had he not used Eliezer to fight his battles, or had he not questioned Hashem's promise of Eretz Yisrael, nor returned those captives to Sodom and had converted them, Avraham would have displayed that his faith in Hashem was rock solid. Hashem would help in times of war without Avraham resorting to using a Torah scholar. If Avraham had not sinned, this monumental level of faith would have then be transmitted to his children through his spiritual genes. There would be no need to go to Mitzrayim, to see the

By being in exile, we learn that only Hashem can help us. This lays the groundwork for the ultimate redemption that will be accompanied with miracles to bolster our emunah. We will ultimately return to Eretz Yisrael and Hashem will allow us to remain there. Forever.

On Pesach, as we recite the Haggadah and recount the story of our miraculous deliverance, let us grow in our emunah. As we eat the matza we can imbibe faith in our own speedy geulah. Through the bitterness of the marmor we can yearn for Hashem's deliverance from our own bitter exile. Although we do not actually eat the Korban Pesach, learning about it teaches us that Hashem protects every single Jew.

Let us hope that this Pesach will be the last one in exile, and next year we shall be in Yerushalayim celebrating together!

