
THE WEISS EDITION

פסח

pesach



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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

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הרה"ת **דובער** ב"ר **פייטל הלוי** ע"ה **לויין**

נלב"ע ביום ב' דחג הפסח ה'תשמ"ח

תנצב"ה

נדפס ע"י בנו הרה"ת יוסף יצחק הלוי וזוגתו מרת דינה שיחיו לויין

בְּנֵי אֲרֶבֶעַה בָּנִים דִּבְרָה תוֹרָה: אֶחָד חָכָם. וְאֶחָד
 רָשָׁע. וְאֶחָד פֶּתִי. וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינֹ יוֹדֵעַ לְשִׂאֹל . . . רָשָׁע
 מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר: מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם

*The Torah speaks of four children: One who is wise,
 one who is wicked, one who is simple and one who does
 not know how to ask... What does the wicked one say?
 “What is this service to you?”*

What’s Behind the Question?

Four verses in the Torah speak of “parent-child” conversations about the observance of Pesach. Per the Haggadah, each verse reflects one of four types of children who might be questioning our observances: a wise child, a wicked child, a simple child, and one who does not know how to ask. When looking back at the verses, we note that three of the four verses speak of the child in the singular tense, saying, “When your son asks,” or “You shall tell your son.” Only once does the Torah describe this as a conversation with multiple children: in the question attributed by the Haggadah to the wicked son, “And it will come to pass if your children say to you, ‘What is this service to you?’”⁷

One explanation for this distinction is that each of other three questions (or lack thereof) can be coming from only one type of child. The varying degrees of complexity in the questions clearly reflect varying degrees of academic achievement or ability; namely, a wise son, a simple son, or a son who does not even know enough to formulate a question.

7. Shemos 12:26.

The dismissive question of, “What is this service to you?” however, is not limited to a person of any specific level of intelligence or education. This type of question stems simply from spite. Therefore, “children,” in the plural, pose the question of the wicked son in the Torah, because this question could be coming from many different types of people. They might be as knowledgeable as the wise son, or as clueless as the simple son, or sadly, as tends to be the case, from those whose Jewish education and knowledge is so minimal that they truly “don’t know how to ask.”

—*Igros Kodesh, vol. 2, p. 365*

תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה זֹאת? וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו "בְּחֹזֶק
יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים."

The simple one, what does he say? "What is this?" "And you will say to him, "With the strength of [His] hand, G-d took us out from Egypt, from the house of slaves" (Shemos 13:14)."

The Strength to Go Free

As one would expect, the dialogue with the simple child seems to be the least complex of the conversations with the four sons described in the Haggadah. The child asks what the Pesach celebration is all about, and we respond that it is because G-d took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. There is, however, a profound message to be found in this noteworthy interaction.

The individual addressed here is not a cynic like the wicked son, nor are they unmoved like the son who does not know—or care—enough to ask. While the simplicity and sincerity of this individual is to be applauded, the Seder is an opportunity for them to draw motivation and energy for unprecedented growth.

In addition to asking about the goings-on at the Seder, the simple son's question is a burst of wonder and marvel about the incredible story of the Exodus. Wow! *What is this?!* How was it possible for millions of people to escape the control of one of the most powerful rulers of all time?

This amazement is an opening for them to leave their personal Egypt and begin to thrive.

"And you will say to him, 'With the *strength of His hand*, G-d took us out of Egypt.'" The story of the exodus from

Egypt demonstrates more than G-d's ability to perform extraordinary miracles. As related in the Zohar and Midrash, Bnei Yisrael of their own accord were not spiritually worthy of redemption.⁸ Moreover, of the 400 years that G-d had told Avraham that his children would be slaves in Egypt, they had only served two hundred and ten.⁹ Thus, freeing the Jewish people from Egypt required “the strength of G-d's hand” to *overpower* His own plans and principles, as it were.

Says the Haggadah to the simple child, the sincere individual stuck in their status quo: Just as the extraordinary redemption of our ancestors came about through G-d's strength to disregard *His* considerations, so, too, with determination—and perspiration—on your part not to reckon with *your* instinctive limitations, G-d will help you leave your current state and experience freedom.

—*Haggadah shel Pesach im Likkutei Taamim Uminhagim*, p. 141

8. See Zohar II:170b

9. See Shir Hashirim Rabbah 2:8(a).

וְאֵתֵי עֲמֻלְנוּ - אֱלוֹהֵי הַבְּנִים

“Our labor,” this refers to the “children,”

Raising Children: The Hardest Job of All

The offering of Bikkurim, the first-ripened fruits of the year that we bring to the Beis Hamikdash, is accompanied by a proclamation thanking G-d for His kindness that has brought us to this day. We mention in particular that He heard our voices when we were slaves in Egypt, and saved us from “our affliction, toil and oppression.”

Commenting on this verse, the Sifri states: “Our toil”—these are the sons, as it is written, ‘Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall keep alive,’”¹³ meaning that the words “our toil” allude in particular to the suffering we endured in Egypt with regard to our children.

It is worth noting that the Sifri demonstrates that there was a particularly evil decree targeting the Jewish children, but does not provide proof or explain how the words “our toil” allude specifically to children.

The Sifri’s omission of any proof that “our toil” refers to our children indicates that such proof is superfluous. For it is self-evident that raising children to grow on the proper path takes hard work—not only “effort,” but also what the Torah deems “toil,” difficult labor. It therefore goes without saying that our “toil” is our children.

¹³. Shemos 1:22.

The same is true with regard to educating and nurturing students, whom the Torah likewise refers to as “your children.”¹⁴ You have not fulfilled your most basic duties as an educator until you have invested yourself to the point of “toil.”

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 113-114*

14. See Devarim 6:7 and Rashi ad loc.

כָּל הַבֵּן הַיְלֹוֹד הַיְאֻרָה תִּשְׁלֹּקְהוּ וְכָל הַבַּת תַּחְיֶינָה

You shall cast into the Nile every boy who is born, but every daughter you shall make live.

Save Your Children from Pharaoh's Decree

At first glance, it would seem that Pharaoh's decree targeted only the infant boys born to Bnei Yisrael, but not the baby girls. If so, why was it necessary for Pharaoh to add and emphasize, "but every daughter you shall keep alive"? This implies that keeping the daughters alive was an active and integral part of his evil plan.

Pharaoh's objective was to stop the growth and continuity of the Jewish people. As such, he decreed that half the children born to Bnei Yisrael be annihilated physically—and the others spiritually. Pharaoh did not tell the Egyptians to *allow* the Jewish baby girls to live; he told them, "Every daughter [of Bnei Yisrael] *you shall make live*." You—the very same Egyptians who are murdering the Jewish boys—should instill your Egyptian values and lifestyle into all the surviving children, thereby spiritually annihilating whatever remains of Bnei Yisrael.

Indeed, the first part of Pharaoh's decree—to drown the baby boys in the Nile—conveys a similar message. Since it seldom rained in Egypt, the Egyptians relied on the waters of the Nile to irrigate their crops, and as they depended on it for their very sustenance, they considered the Nile a deity. Accordingly, drowning Jewish children in the Nile is a metaphor for immersing our children in the values, culture

and lifestyle of our secular surroundings, thinking that this immersion will grant them a secure future.

It is crucial that we recognize that this approach stems from the likes of the evil Pharaoh—those who seek to destroy Jewish growth and continuity, if not physically then spiritually. In order to give our sons and daughters life, we must grant them an education that focuses on their true livelihood—the vitality that we Jews receive from “the Torah of Life.”

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 111-112*

אלו עשר מכות שהביא הקדוש ברוך הוא על המצרים במצרים

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians...

Discovering the Real Motive

G-d struck the Egyptians with ten plagues to punish them for their cruel enslavement of Bnei Yisrael. These supernatural plagues also forced Pharaoh to recognize G-d's existence and might, as we read, "I have allowed you to stand in order to show you My strength, and in order to declare My name all over the earth."¹⁵

These reasons alone seem to provide sufficient cause for the Ten Plagues, yet Rashi brings a third reason. Commenting on the words "I will harden [Pharaoh's heart],"¹⁶ Rashi explains:

[G-d was saying:] "Since Pharaoh behaved wickedly and defied Me... it is better for Me that his heart be hardened, so that I can increase My signs and My wonders in him; thereby you will recognize My mighty deeds." Such is the custom of the Holy One, blessed be He. He brings retribution on the nations so that Israel should hear and fear.

According to this explanation, the primary goal of the plagues was not their effect on the Egyptians, but to inspire awe and wonder within Bnei Yisrael.

A principle that Rashi teaches on the very first verse in the Torah supports this approach. Rashi writes there that G-d created all of existence "for the sake of the Jewish people

¹⁵. Shemos 9:16.

¹⁶. Shemos 7:3.

and for the sake of Torah.” This is true not only of the initial creation of the world, but of every event that transpires at any time thereafter. Therefore, even when seemingly Divine Providence caused a particular event to occur for other reasons, the true objective is the direct impact the event will have on the Jewish people.

Accordingly, Rashi emphasizes that G-d brought the Ten Plagues upon the Egyptians not only in retribution for their treatment of Bnei Yisrael or to make them recognize the Creator, but for the effect that the plagues would have on Bnei Yisrael themselves—they would inspire within them a more profound fear of G-d.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 36, pp. 33-36*

דָּם

Blood

Escaping the Cold

Bnei Yisrael's exile in Egypt seemed interminable. Slavery was such a deep part of their identity that they refused to believe that their redemption was imminent. Egypt's oppression of Bnei Yisrael was so severe that even Moshe struggled to understand how it could be part of G-d's plan. It was only when G-d struck the Egyptians with the Ten Plagues that Egypt's grip on the Jewish people began to crumble.

“In every generation and every day, one must regard himself as though he has come out of Egypt on that very day.”¹⁷ The Torah's name for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, shares a common root with the Hebrew word *meitzar*, constraint. Accordingly, Chassidus explains that “in every generation and every day,” one must constantly strive to escape his personal “Egypt”—the internal constraints that hinder and restrain his devoted service of G-d. In this context, the Ten Plagues represent ten steps through which we can breach even the toughest internal barriers, freeing our souls to fully experience our attachment to G-d.

In the first plague, the waters of the Nile River—which the Egyptians worshipped as a god—turned into blood.

Water is naturally cold; thus, the waters of the Nile represent coolness and indifference toward things that are G-dly and holy. This attitude of coolness is the root of

17. Mishnah, Pesachim 10:5, cf. Tanya, chapter 47.

all spiritual ills, for it is impossible for a person to remain perpetually unexcited about *both* holiness and that which challenges holiness. Consequently, even if a person observes all the mitzvos but does so coldly and apathetically, his detachment will invariably bring him to interest in and attraction to ideas that are incompatible with a life of holiness.

The first and most crucial step toward our escape from Egypt is therefore to rid ourselves of the cold waters of the Nile, and infuse our Judaism and Torah observance with passion.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 119-124*

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח יוסף שאול
ב"ר אהרן הלוי ע"ה
מאסקעל
נלב"ע י"ג ניסן ה'תש"ס
תנצב"ה

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נדפס ע"י חתנו ובתו
הרה"ת יצחק יהודה
וזוגתו מרת חנה שיחיו
קופפר

לעילוי נשמת
מרת חיה לאה בת הרב זלמן ליב ע"ה
מאצקין
נפטרה ביום השבת קדש י' ניסן ה'תש"פ בעלות המנחה
תנצב"ה

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נדפס ע"י
בני משפחתה שיחיו

לע"נ החסיד
הרב ר' יצחק זלמן ב"ר שלום ע"ה
פוזנר ז"ל
שליח כ"ק אדמו"ר
תנצב"ה

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הוקדש ע"י צאצאיו משפחת דענעביים
שיחיו
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