

MITZVA 21: SIPUR YETZIAT MITZRAIM

THE WHY OF 'WHY' – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASKING QUESTIONS ON LEIL HA'SEDER

SEFER HACINUCH 21

Mitzvah 21

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מצות ספור יציאת מצרים - לספר בענין יציאת מצרים בליל ט"ו בניסן, כל אחד כפי צחות לשונו, ולהלל ולשבח לשם יתברך על כל הנסים שעשה לנו שם. שנאמר (שמות יג ח) והגדת לבנך. וכבר פרשו חכמים, (מכילתא בא שם) דמצות הגדה זו הוא בליל ט"ו בניסן בשעת אכילת מצה. ומה שאמר הכתוב לבנך, לאו דוקא בנו, (פסחים קטז, א) אלא אפילו עם כל בריה.

The commandment to recount the exodus from Egypt: To tell about the exodus from Egypt on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan (the first night of Pesach) - each person according to his own power of expression - to laud and to praise God, may He be blessed, for all the miracles He performed for us there, as it is stated (Exodus 13:8), "And you shall tell your son." [Although the verse doesn't specify when this should be done,] the Sages have already explained (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 13:8) that this commandment of retelling is on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan - which is the time of the eating of the matsah. And that which the verse states, "[and you shall tell] your son," [does not mean] exclusively one's son; but rather even with any creature (Pesachim 116a).

RAMBAM, MISHNEH TORAH, CHAMETZ U'MATZAH CHAPTER 7

מצות עשה של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן שנאמר (שמות יג ג) "זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים" כמו שנאמר (שמות כ ח) "זכור את יום השבת". ומנין שבלייל חמשה עשר תלמוד לומר (שמות יג ח) "והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה" בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מנחים לפניך. ואף על פי שאין

לו בן. אפלו חכמים גדולים חייבים לספר ביציאת מצרים וכל המאריך בדברים שארעו:
:ונשחיו הרי זה משבח

It is a positive commandment of the Torah to relate the miracles and wonders wrought for our ancestors in Egypt on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan, as [Exodus 13:3] states: "Remember this day, on which you left Egypt," just as [Exodus 20:8] states: "Remember the Sabbath day."

From where [is it derived that this mitzvah is to be fulfilled on] the night of the fifteenth? The Torah teaches [Exodus 13:8]: "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying: 'It is because of this...' [implying that the mitzvah is to be fulfilled] when matzah and maror are placed before you.

[The mitzvah applies] even though one does not have a son. Even great Sages are obligated to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. Whoever elaborates concerning the events which occurred and took place is worthy of praise.

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It is a mitzvah to inform one's sons even though they do not ask, as [Exodus 13:8] states: "You shall tell your son."

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He should make changes on this night so that the children will see and will [be motivated to] ask: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" until he replies to them: "This and this occurred; this and this took place."

What changes should be made? He should give them roasted seeds and nuts; the table should be taken away before they eat; matzot should be snatched from each other and the like.

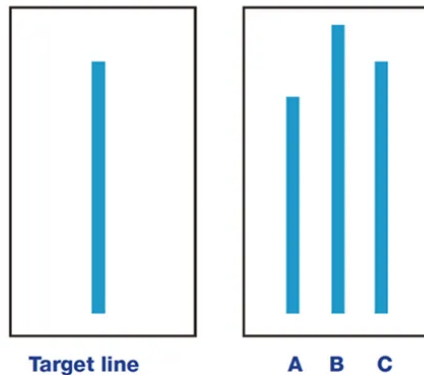
When a person does not have a son, his wife should ask him. If he does not have a wife, [he and a colleague] should ask each other: "Why is this night different?" This applies even if they are all wise. A person who is alone should ask himself: "Why is this night different?"

DEVARIM 4:29

ובקשתם משם את־יהוה אלהיך ומצאת כִּי תדרשנו בכל־לבבך ובכל־נפשך:

But if you search there for the LORD your God, you will find Him, if only you seek Him with all your heart and soul—

SOLOMON ASCH EXPERIMENT ON CONFORMITY



SHEMOT 13:8

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם:

And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I went free from Egypt.'

BEREISHIT 3:9-11

וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה:

The LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-קוֹלִי שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּגֶן וָאִירָא כִּי-עֵרָם אָנֹכִי וָאֶחָבֵא:

He replied, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵרָם אָתָּה הַמֵּן-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבַלְתִּי אֲכָלָתָּ:

Then He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?"

SHABBAT 89B

And the Jewish people will say before Him: Master of the Universe, to whom shall we go? Shall we go to Abraham, to whom You said: “Know certainly that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years” (Genesis 15:13), and he did not ask for mercy on our behalf? Or perhaps we should go to Isaac, who blessed Esau and said: “And it shall come to pass when you shall break loose, that you shall shake his yoke from off your neck” (Genesis 27:40), and he did not ask for mercy on our behalf. Or perhaps we should go to Jacob, to whom You said: “I will go down to Egypt with you” (Genesis 46:4), and he did not ask for mercy on our behalf. And if so, to whom shall we go? Shall we go to our Patriarchs, who do not have mercy on us? Rather, now God Himself says what punishment we deserve. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: Since you made yourselves dependent on Me, “If your sins be like scarlet, they will become white like snow.”

Apropos the Jewish people assessing their forefathers, the Gemara cites a related teaching. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “For You are our Father; for Abraham knows us not, and Israel does not acknowledge us; You, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer, everlasting is Your name” (Isaiah 63:16). In the future that will surely come, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will say to Abraham: Your children have sinned against Me. Abraham will say before Him: Master of the Universe, if so, let them be eradicated to sanctify Your name. God said: I will say it to Jacob. Since he experienced the pain of raising children, perhaps he will ask for mercy on their behalf. He said to Jacob: Your children have sinned. Jacob said before Him: Master of the Universe, if so, let them be eradicated to sanctify Your name. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: There is no reason in elders and no wisdom in youth. Neither Abraham nor Jacob knew how to respond properly. He said to Isaac: Your children have sinned against Me. Isaac said before Him: Master of the Universe, are they my children and not Your children? At Sinai, when they accorded precedence to “We will do” over “We will listen” before You, didn’t You call them, “My son, My firstborn son Israel” (Exodus 4:22)? Now that they have sinned, are they my children and not Your children?

And furthermore, how much did they actually sin? How long is a person's life? Seventy years. Subtract the first twenty years of his life. One is not punished for sins committed then, as in heavenly matters, a person is only punished from age twenty. Fifty years remain for them. Subtract twenty-five years of nights, and twenty-five years remain for them. Subtract twelve and a half years during which one prays and eats and uses the bathroom, and twelve and a half years remain for them. If You can endure them all and forgive the sins committed during those years, excellent. And if not, half of the sins are upon me to bear and half upon You. And if You say that all of them, the sins of all twelve and a half years that remain, are upon me, I sacrificed my soul before You and You should forgive them due to my merit. The Jewish people began to say to Isaac: You are our father. Only Isaac defended the Jewish people as a father would and displayed compassion toward his children. Isaac said to them: Before you praise me, praise the Holy One, Blessed be He. And Isaac points to the Holy One, Blessed be He, before their eyes. Immediately they lifted their eyes to the heavens and say: "You, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer, everlasting is Your name."