



The Exodus Epic: The Platform of Our Religious Identity

A compilation of שיחות given by Rav Blachman in KBY תשע"ו ותשע"ט

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The Mitzvah Remembering יציאת מצרים the entire year

ליל הסדר is a night with incredible potential for עלייה. It can change the way we live and breathe יהדות. But to actualize and maximize this opportunity, we need to understand what we are supposed to be doing. I'm not referring to the external acts of eating מצה and מרור. I'm alluding to the context in which this night is found, its goals and implications.

Before we talk about the מצוה of סיפור, I want to raise a question. The תורה says G-d performed the miracles in Egypt חז"ל use ברכות יב: in למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך. חז"ל explain why we recite the third פרשה of קריאת שמע to explain why we recite the third פרשה of שמע. It seems that there is an importance in remembering the Exodus each day. But is this a formal מצוה like any of the other 613 commandments or is it something else? If it is, what then makes this מצוה of סיפור different

from the general obligation to remember יציאת מצרים? To understand this well, I want to read to you the beginning of the הלכות קריאת שמע in רמב"ם. He writes the following (הלכות א-ג):



8638

מנין המצות

מצות עשה אחת והיא לקרות קריאת שמע פעמים ביום

הלכה א

פעמים בכל יום קוראין ק"ש בערב ובבקר, שנאמר ובשכבך ובקומך בשעה שדרך בני אדם שוכבין וזה הוא לילה, ובשעה שדרך בני אדם עומדין וזה הוא יום.

The one mitzvah here. Before we begin, we have to understand that there are no other מצוות עשה to be found in this chapter. The sole מצוה we're discussing in this פרק is the commandment of reading "קריאת שמע", which is, as of now, an undefined corpus of texts, during the evening and the morning. רמב"ם continues:

הלכה ב

ומה הוא קורא שלשה פרשיות אלו הן: שמע והיה אם שמוע ויאמר, ומקדימין לקרות פרשת שמע מפני שיש בה יחוד השם ואהבתו ותלמודו שהוא העיקר הגדול שהכל תלוי בו, ואחריה והיה אם שמוע שיש בה צווי על (זכירת) שאר כל המצות, ואחר כך פרשת ציצית שגם היא יש בה צווי זכירת כל המצות.

What is קריאת שמע exactly? He doesn't say the overall obligation is to recite all three פרשיות. In fact, Rashi says¹ that the מצוה מדאורייתא is only reading first פרשה. The rest is the extra פרשיות enhance our understanding of the first פרשה which is דאורייתא. They are additives, broadening our Torah obligation.

In any דין דרבנן, innately, there is always a potential problem of תוסף. The only thing ועשו משמרת למשמרתי, as sanctioned from גזירה, "add" is something which is חז"ל can really protect us from violating מוקצה דיני תורה. There is no problem that חז"ל formalized this concept. But what about creating new מצוות which are not a שמירה from an איסור? In those cases, what's the התיר? The ראשונים explain that חז"ל make these מצוות not as new creations *per se*, but as applications of biblical הלכות or values. This is how the רמב"ם in the end of his הקצור and רבנו דוד (סנהדרין פז) explain it. The ability to make פורים and מגילה was only made possible because we already had in our תורה the ancient value of praising G-d over the

¹ רש"י ברכות ב. See

miracles He performed for us. I want to make this clear. There is no explicit ציווי for the recitation of 'It. a value observed from the Jews said שירה at the Red Sea. It doesn't say they did any 'It. simply a value. At קריעת ים סוף we weren't commanded to do anything. But כלל did it because it's a value called שבח בשעת נס, an extension of 'אהבת ה'. Loving G-d, as a matter of fact, is another value which itself wasn't commanded until the end of the 40 years in the מצות אהבת ה'. That's what הלל is. This is what we did at קריעת ים סוף. 'It a fulfillment of the value of loving G-d. There was no ציווי; it was simply a value. Now that we have this value, we can extrapolate on that value. There is an idea of שבח; if we thank You for bringing us from servitude to freedom, all the more so we thank You for taking us out from the verge of death to life. Now that we have this value, the Rabbis can legislate that value. It's not something new. It's a broadening of a Biblical value.

Biblical values are normative. You're expected to do them. Don't think that it's a nice idea or an option. It's the will of G-d and you have to do that too. This idea goes to the extent that the רמב"ם writes prior to משה there was no prophet who delivered the commandment of G-d. His job was merely to teach the Will of G-d, not His commandments, to the people. נח was not commanded to do x or y. יעקב was not commanded to not eat אברהם. גיד הנשה was never commanded either. He was told to teach the masses the Will of G-d. Commandments began at Sinai. There was no ציווי before that point, but there still was the concept of a death penalty. The men of שכם died for violating רצון ה'. So, knowing רצון ה' is an imperative and is binding even without having a relationship between commanded and command. If it's true, then it's רצון ה', and the truth is inherently mandatory for it's the revelation of the Will of G-d. עושה את האמת מפני שהוא אמת. Truth is binding. This is the idea behind the 'It. not a מצוה or חובה in the formalistic sense. It's a value which we can legislate and expand. This is the דין דרבנן.

This is also how we understand the obligation to live in Israel. It seems that though many of 'don't count this מצוה as an imperative, but they do agree with the רמב"ן that it's an

² See הקב"ה, as he emphasizes that upon realizing a love of ה', he will naturally recite praise.

“והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול א כמו שאמר דוד צמאה נפשי לאלהים לאל ח”

overwhelming value. You are allowed to divorce your wife without a כתובה to live in ישראל, and she can also do the same thing. There is no mitzvah like it. But where is the commandment? This is a religious value which is not “constructed” to the language of commandment. There is no פסוק for it. That’s why the רמב”ם doesn’t count it as part of the מצוות. He reads the חומש like רש”י. I guess, being that you’re not commanded to do it, it’s up to you to live up to that value. That’s a heavy load. It’s easier to do a commandment. All you have to do is just check the box. To perform a value, you actually have to identify with it. Values are very important, theological principles. Commandments, though forming a Commander and a commanded, an I-Thou relation, don’t necessitate that level of identification.

So הודאה on a miracle is a biblical value but not a biblical imperative. I want you to understand that. The language of מצוה isn’t restricted to mean just commandment. It can *also* mean value. It can even be rabbinic, but it must be an extension of a mitzvah, or value, from the Torah.

We find this term “מצוה” in the language of חז”ל and the ראשונים to be used in more loose terms as well. What is the mitzvah of המת? לקיים דברי המת? The דרשות ר”י אבן שועיב, a student of the רשב”א, in פרשת ויחי writes the following:

וּכְתַב הָרֶב רַבִּינוּ מֹשֶׁה בֶּר נַחֲמָן זְכוּרוֹנוֹ לְבִרְכָּה לְפִי דְרַכְנוּ לְמַדְנוּ עֲשֵׂרָה דְּבָרִים בְּעִנִּין הַמֵּת מִזֶּה הַסִּיפּוֹר שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב, וַיֵּשׁ לָנוּ לְאַחֲזוֹז דְּרַכּוֹ, כִּי אֱלוֹ הָעֵנִיִּינִים הֵם לְהִיּוֹתֵן רִמְזָא לְבָנִים כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ יֵרָאוּ וְכֵן יַעֲשׂוּ בְּשָׂאֵר הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁלִּמְדָנוּ מִמֶּנּוּ, כִּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתַבְנוּ בְּפֶרֶשֶׁת וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב. הָאֶחָד הַצּוּאָה כְּשֶׁאִדָּם מִרְגִּישׁ אֶפְסִיסַת כַּחַתּוֹ וַיִּמְיוּ קְרוּבִים לְמוֹת שִׁיצוּה בְּנָיו וּבְנֵי בֵיתוֹ, כִּי כֵן מִצִּינוּ בִּיעֲקֹב וַיִּצּוּ אוֹתָם, וַיְכַל יַעֲקֹב לְצוּוֹת אֶת בְּנָיו, וְכֵן נִהְגוּ אַחֲרָיו, שֶׁמִּצִּינוּ בְּדוֹד וַיִּצּוּ אֶת שְׁלֵמָה בֶּנּוּ, וְכֵן אָמַר יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ לְחִזְקִיָּהוּ צוֹ לְבֵיתֶךָ, וְכֵן לְאַחִיתוֹפֶל וַיִּצּוּ אֶת בֵּיתוֹ וְגוֹמֵר. **וְהַשְׁנִי מִצּוּה לְקִיֵּים דְּבָרֵי הַמֵּת דְּכַתִּיב וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְּנָיו לוֹ כֵּן כְּאִשֶּׁר צִוָּם.**

When G-d writes something it’s something which we should apply for our lives. These are not מצוות; they’re values. One value is giving over a final testament. This doesn’t mean to say a declaration to divide assets amongst heirs. For יַעֲקֹב it’s an educational, spiritual directive. Another value is המת לקיים דברי המת. Again, this is a value. He doesn’t say it’s part of מצוות כיבוד אב.

This is derived from 'It. ³It's based on a value from Yaakov's children. ⁴It is called a מצוה too, but it's not a מצוה found in the תורה. Rashi explains it's derived from הַן צדק הַן צדק, rendering the פסוק as הַן שלך צדק⁴. This not the פשט in the הַן is an Aramaic word. הַן is a biblical measurement. Don't think this is a דרשה from the Torah. It's really an 'It. ³It's an expansion of our understanding of the values of the Torah. You should be a person of integrity and therefore express that honesty by paying your debts. The פסוק is just interpreted as a reference to this value.

Considering this, I want to learn the רמב"ם here. When discussing religious imperatives, the רמב"ם will use the term מצוה עשה. However, when the word מצוה is used, it doesn't have to mean one of the 613. It can even refer to something not defined as commandment like a religious value. When רמב"ם uses the word "מצוה" there is no reason for us to think that it is a מצוה עשה. Now, with this introduction, let's understand this next הלכה. He continues:

הלכה ב

ומה הוא קורא שלשה פרשיות אלו הן: שמע והיה אם שמוע ויאמר, ומקדימין לקרות פרשת שמע מפני שיש בה ייחוד השם ואהבתו ותלמודו שהוא העיקר הגדול שהכל תלוי בו, ואחריה והיה אם שמוע שיש בה צווי על (זכירת) שאר כל המצוות, ואחר כך פרשת ציצית שגם היא יש בה צווי זכירת כל המצוות.

We read the first פרשה because it has ייחוד השם ואהבתו ותלמודו, all three are collectively the עיקר הגדול. Together, they're the basic, fundamental values of religion. Monotheism, loving G-d and learning His Torah are all important. The only way to get to genuinely love G-d is by attaining a deep comprehension of ייחוד השם. As an aside, from this הלכה we see that תלמוד תורה is not just a commandment, independent of 'It. ³It means comprehending תורה. ייחוד השם is taken out from being called a general commandment and made into a vehicle for a much broader goal.

Now, after you have these basic concepts down, you recite והיה אם שמוע, discussing the other מצוות. The truth is that תלמוד תורה is also mentioned in that פרשה as well. But, again, there are two aspects of תלמוד תורה: one as part of the broad corpus of מצוות and another as the

³ ראה תוספות כתובות פו.

⁴ ראה ב"מ מט.

prerequisite to all 'ידעת ה'. If you take a look where the רמב"ם places הלכות ת"ת, you'll find that he places it in ספר מדע, along with יסודי התורה, דעות עבודה זרה, and 'It not just a commandment to understand what the תורה says. It's a prerequisite to developing a relationship with Him.

Then we recite פרשת ציצית because there is a reference the מצוה of remembering all the other מצוות. I want to emphasize again, there is no formal commandment of remembering מצוות. There is a commandment to put on ציצית, which will help facilitate a remembrance of all the other מצוות. But that's the *reason* to justify *why* we put on 'It not describing the commandment. It's describing the *purpose*, So . remembering all the מצוות is not a formal 'It a value which you do to enhance the שמים עול מלכות שמים. The 'It actually emphasizes this value when he codifies the הלכה. Anytime the תורה says "למען" it means that one must have כוונה when putting on the ציצית. This is מעכב. Aside from the regular requirement of מצוות צריכות כוונה, you have to connect to the value behind these types of מצוות as well.

Then the רמב"ם asks an important question which forces us to understand the function of the third פרשה at a different angle. He writes:

אע"פ שאין מצות ציצית נוהגת בלילה קוראין אותה בלילה מפני שיש בה זכרון יציאת מצרים ומצוה להזכיר יציאת מצרים ביום ובלילה שנאמר למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך, וקריאת שלש פרשיות אלו על סדר זה היא הנקראת קריאת שמע.

The רמב"ם is telling us, "Even though the מצוה of ציצית is not at night, we still read this פרשה at night. Why would you read something which is not נוגע?" What do you lose if you do say it? It's not worse than *laining* the תורה? It seems that חז"ל need to find a justification for reciting this 3rd פרשה at night because they wanted the recitation of this פרשה to remain as a קיום of the overall commandment of שמע. When I read פרשת ציצית, I am fulfilling an aspect of קבלת עול מלכות שמים. The גמרא in (יד:)⁵ explains that one would have thought since this is the case, the function of this פרשה would *only* be useful in enhancing the mitzvah when I'm obligated to wear ציצית, as the מצוות ציצית symbolize קבלת כל המצוות. If there would be no מצוות ציצית, then there would

⁵ ראה מאירי שם

be no requirement to recite the third פרשה. But חז"ל tell us that this is not reason. Though it is true that the מצוה of ציצית is conducive to the fulfillment of קבלת עול, it's not the ultimate motivation why I'm saying פרשה. The real reason why I'm saying this פרשה is because of its reference to זכירה. The זכירה is the element which enhances my קבלת עול מלכות שמים, and it's applicable both day and night.

Is there a formal mitzvah to mention יציאת מצרים by day and by night? Can pinpoint the imperative? Is it mentioned anywhere? If it is a mitzvah, why would רמב"ם bring it only in the context of שמע? Wouldn't he put it in somewhere else as well? It's for sure מצות עשה *not* since he doesn't count it in his list of the תרי"ג. But is that because it's missing some technicality in the שרשים or is it because there no explicit imperative? The litmus test would be to see if this idea is mentioned anywhere else as an independent obligation. Since רמב"ם brings זכירת יצ"מ *only* as a justification as to why we read the last פרשה of קריאת שמע, when ציצית doesn't apply, it doesn't sound like this is a formal רמב"ם מצוה. In contrast, when discussing the commandment לספר בליל פסח, רמב"ם elaborates over there about the nature of the commandment. He writes "מצות עשה של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים". There, he emphasizes the מצוה is from the תורה. Here, however, you don't find that language.

So, what's the source for זכירת יצ"מ? When רמב"ם uses the word מצוה, it's like the idea of למען תזכור את פסוק of a religious value derived from the פסוק. It or מצוה לקיים דברי המת. We can all agree that למען here means "the following is the purpose of". There is no commandment in that פסוק. This is merely a justification. Its' *not* a commandment. But it *is* a value. A *tremendous* value. There are so many מצוות which remind us of יציאת מצרים⁶. It means to say that this is רצון הקב"ה. This is a value. The difference between סיפור זכירת יציאת מצרים and יציאת מצרים is not that one is limited only to the night of the 15th of ניסן versus the other applies throughout the year, and it not related to the fact that זכירת יציאת מצרים will be מבטל in the days of 'It. It's simply a difference between an overall value versus a formal commandment.

Now there is a new question. רמב"ם concludes that these three פרשיות are included in the definition of the term קריאת שמע. We see there is a value in remembering the Exodus. But what

⁶. ראה רמב"ן סוף פרשת בא.

makes that value so important that it should be part of קריאת שמע? I understand the first two. אנכי ה' of מצוה. They're fundamental to applying the מצוה. פרשיות: קבלת ייחודו ומצותיו. But what does remembering the Exodus have to do with עול מלכות שמים? From the רמב"ם, it seems that קבלת עול enhances and gives scope to the implications of a true עול מצרים. How does this happen?

סיפור יציאת מצרים Understanding the Sources of

To understand all this, I want to learn with you a רמב"ם in (ז:א) הלכות חמץ ומצה, as he describes to us what the מצות היום of הגדה is. Understanding this will explain the critical importance זכירת יציאת מצרים has in our religious lives. He writes:

מצות עשה של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן שנאמר זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים כמו שנאמר זכור את יום השבת....

נסים ונפלאים. First of all, we have to analyze and distinguish the terms. רמב"ם. Look carefully at this. 'Its not semantics. There is a difference between these two words. What is the definition of a נס? What is the definition of a פלא? When we say רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות we're acknowledging our body's digestive system and its ability to digest and sustain the soul. This is what we call פלא. Would you call it a נס? It seems like that is not the case. The fact that our souls stay in our bodies because of the mundane food we eat is puzzling. It's not miraculous. The natural order which we find ourselves situated is *not* defined as something miraculous. Nature is wonderful and puzzling and even inspiring, but it's not supernatural, by definition. A נס, on the other hand, is something out of the normal system of nature. It's a supernatural event. When we discuss יציאת מצרים, there are two lens in which we need to look at the event. One on hand, the רמב"ם accentuates the fact that during יציאת מצרים there were נסים, supernatural occurrences, and on the other hand, there were נפלאים, amazing natural wonders.

'Its interesting to determine which of the 10 plagues were miracles and which were natural wonders:

1. The first מכה was דם. This is supernatural. The changing of the molecular structure of water into blood is out of the ordinary.
2. צפרדע is not a נס. It's very much a פלא. Manipulating the nature of frogs to travel in unison to Egypt is not miraculous nor supernatural. It's a wonder *within* nature.
3. כנים is a bit more complicated. It depends on what exactly happens. אהרן knocked on the earth and they suddenly appeared. I'm not sure if that was a נס *per se*. Lice can be found in many different areas on the globe. It seems like this too was a פלא as more and more lice infested מצרים.
4. ערוב is a פלא as well. The fact that the wild animals were not afraid of invading places of human habitation is not a supernatural phenomenon. It's again, a manipulation of nature.
5. דבר, pestilence, is not supernatural at all. It's like the epidemics we hear about today. Though spreading at wondrous speed, it's categorized as a פלא as well.
6. שחין. This is very interesting. The fact that their skin developed boils is natural. But to take a clod of ash and throw it into the wind, causing the outbreak of שחין it quite miraculous. The מדרש says that the small amount of ash thrown in the air actually spread throughout all of Egypt, causing the boils to occur. That's not normal at all! It's a borderline extreme manipulation of nature or it's a miracle. So far, all we've seen as a true נס is דם. But even that מכה, according to the רמב"ן's understanding of chemistry, is also a form of פלא. He understands that blood and water can naturally change. Because of our knowledge of modern science, I'm more comfortable saying this is a נס.
7. Then we have ברד. This, definitely, is a miracle. Having icy hail rain down with fire is not natural at all. It's naturally an impossibility. That's a נס.
8. ארבה. Just go to Baltimore. Every 16 years you'll see locust swarming around the city. This is no more than a פלא.
9. חשך. This is interesting. What does it mean that חשך occurred in מצרים? The רמב"ם writes that the מדרש said that it was so dark that the people couldn't even light a candle nor could they move. The humidity accompanying the darkness prevented

the Egyptian from igniting a flame. They didn't move because they were frozen in place, but because the darkness was so opaque and cloudy they were afraid of falling. They didn't want to get hurt. So they just stayed put. It's like living in the blind museum. If you were there alone, you'd be terrified to move around.

10. מכת בכורות. How did they die? It was death through heart attacks on a mass scale.

The fact that the firstborn in each household died is not miraculous. It's a wonder of nature. Again, this is a פלא.

So, if you look at it carefully, out of all the ten מכות, there were only two major miracles that occurred: דם and ברד. The rest are פלאים, but not נסים. For whatever reason, G-d found it more important to express Himself in the world of פלאות than the world of נסים. That's interesting to think about as we delve into this discussion about the goal of יציאת מצרים and what our objective is this evening.

The רמב"ם continues his discussion about the מצוה of יציאת מצרים. He writes:

ומנין שבלייל חמשה עשר תלמוד לומר והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך. ואף על פי שאין לו בן, אפילו חכמים גדולים חייבים לספר ביציאת מצרים וכל המאריך בדברים שאירעו ושהיו הרי זה משובח.

What do שאירעו and שהיו mean? שאירעו means occurrences and שהיו means situations. The רמב"ם writes in Hebrew and these two words have unique implications. These are, in fact, two different realities. You have an obligation to discuss not just the אירוע, the occurrences, but also מה שהיה, the situation, the background of the entire story. Your focus is to understand what happened and what was the overall context. This too must be understood on a broader plane.

To have an appreciation of what this מצוה entails, one must understand in depth the סיפור of מצוה תורה in פסוקים

פרשת בא (י:א-ב). The first source of סיפור is found in

(א) וַיֹּאמֶר י"י אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פְּרַעֲהָ כִּי־אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לְבֹוֹ וְאֶת־לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְּתִי אֶלָּה בְּקֶרְבִּי:

(ב) וּלְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנִי בְּנֶגְדְּךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלַּלְתִּי בַּמִּצְרִים וְאֶת־אֶתְנִי אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בָּם וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי יי:

G-d tells משה that He actually took away פְּרֵעָה's בחירה in order to place His signs, or אותות, in כלל ישראל's midst. The מכות are defined as אותות. An אות serves as a sign with a *specific* function. As the next פסוק tells us, the מכות ultimately exist to relate them to the ears of our children and grandchildren that which G-d manipulated and performed to know that He is the name י-ק-ו. As the של"ה tells us, this Name connotes an understanding of the Infinite Being Who expresses Himself as the Constant Creator. He's the תמיד מעשה בראשית. That's the goal of these 'It's to tell us *this* idea, you, the Jews, need to know and understand this reality through My אותות. Know G-d is G-d.

If you look elsewhere in the תורה, you'll find this theme. The אותות are constantly being used as a reference to the corpus of information which helps us make the decision to follow and understand G-d as He is G-d in their midst.

The Torah offers us a second allusion to this religious dialogue involving the Exodus. In **הקב"ה** tells **משה** about a future discourse between a father and his son. It says:

וְהָיָה כִּי תֵבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן יְקֹוֹק לָכֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת:

וְהָיָה כִּי יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מַה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם:

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם זָבַח פֶּסַח הוּא לִיקוֹק אֲשֶׁר פֶּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּצְרִים בַּנֶּגֶף אֶת מִצְרַיִם וְאֵת בְּתֵינוּ הֲצִיל:

This is not about the night of the 15th of ניסן. The time when the question was asked was on the day *before* the Laila of the Pesach, during the זמן שחיטת הפסח on the 14th day of “ והיה כי יאמרו. What is this service of the Pesach that you will be doing?” He “s wondering “What’s the context of all this?” You will answer that it’s a sacrifice to ה’ as He skipped over our houses when He killed the מצריים in ‘It. We thank G-d for saving us. like a תודה מכת בכורות.

How did this question develop? When does someone ask the question like מה העבודה הזאת לכם? As an educator, I've noticed there are two types of questions. There are times students ask me a question regarding their religious life. But there are times when the student *says* to me something, so-to-speak, *as* a question. It's more of a *rhetorical statement*. When I hear that, I ask him האם אתה שואל אותי או האם אתה אומר לי? If you want to tell me something, tell it to me. Why are

you *making* it a question? You're really just stating this fact or perception in the *form* of a question. When you *ask* a question, you want to understand something you don't know. But when you *state* something in the *form* of a question, you're doing something completely different. You'll making an exclamatory, challenging statement. You really aren't interested in the answer. You just want justification.

'Im sure you've experience this in your life as well. Rav Hutner once told me the following piece of advice. Before a student asks you something, make sure the question is *really* a question. It may very well be that his question is in fact his own answer. He really doesn't want to hear your answer. He just wants to express his frustrations and feelings to you. He wants your הסכמה. 'Dont give it to him. This is the difference between a שאילה and an אמירה. So, when I read the פסוק of כי יאמרו עליכם מה העבודה הזאת לכם, we understanding what's the underlying assumption of this discourse. He's not asking you anything. He's challenging you. He's saying *are*" you nuts?, "but he really means to say "you ".nuts *are*He ridiculing you. He has an agenda. What kind of person would speak like this in context of עבודת ה' ? Only a cynic. That's the language of אמירה. There is no question and he's not looking for an answer. That's probably why the בעל הגדה says that this child is the 'He רשע. challenging. It's not from 'It "s from the word אמירה.

But something interesting comes out of this שקלא וטריא. The תורה is educating us how to deal with people like this cynic. Even for the רשע, G-d tells us there is an answer to for him. The Torah tells us to respond a Be "*mensch*; have some ".הכרת הטוב. This, he can understand. In truth, this is not a conversation. The רשע is declaring his own agenda and his own feelings and it's your job to state the fact that there is a need for 'He. cynical. But we don't say to him, "Get out of here. "The חומש is bit more tolerant than that. Tell the רשע to show הכרת הטוב. Show some gratitude to G-d for saving your life. That's exactly what the פסוק is telling us. He skipped over our houses and *we were saved*. You have a debt of gratitude. I remember in the חברון ישיבה the worst sin you could do was to be an ingrate. Apparently, the biblical heretic was assumed to at least be a *mensch*. We expect of him to have morals and ethics.

This פרשה is interesting, but what does it have to do with the evening of the 15th of ניסן? The dialogue is dealing with the event of the הקרבת הפסח, on the afternoon of the 14th of ניסן.

מצות Before we discuss these questions, let's look at a few more sources about מצות is ט"ו ליל סיפור סיפור.

פרשה (שמות) There is a third source which discuss in context of this מצוה. The following פרשה (שמות) does refer to the night of the 15th.

- (א) וַיְדַבֵּר י"ג אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
- (ב) קֹדֶשׁ־לִי כָל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל־רֶחֶם בְּבִנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶדָם וּבְבִהֵמָה לִי הוּא:
- (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־ה' זָכוֹר אֶת־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבְּיַת עַבְדִּים כִּי בַחֲזָק יָד הוֹצִיא י"ג אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא יֵאָכֵל חֶמֶץ:
- (ד) הַיּוֹם אַתֶּם יֹצְאִים בַּחֲדָשׁ הָאֵבִיב:
- (ה) וְהָיָה כִּי־יֵבִיאוּךָ י"ג אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוֹסִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לֵאבֹתֶיךָ לֵאמֹר לְךָ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדִבַּשׁ וְעַבְדֶּתְךָ אֶת־הָעִבְדָּה הַזֹּאת בַּחֲדָשׁ הַזֶּה:
- (ו) שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצֶּמֶת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֵג לִי:
- (ז) מִצֹּת יֵאָכֵל אֶת שְׁבַעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא־יִרְאֶה לְךָ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא־יִרְאֶה לְךָ שֶׁאֵין בְּכָל־גִּבְלוֹךָ:
- (ח) וְהַגְדַּת לִבְנֶךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בָּעֶבֶר זֶה עָשָׂה י"ג לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם:
- (ט) וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת עַל־יָדֶךָ וְלִזְכָּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת י"ג בְּפִיךָ כִּי בִיד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאתָ י"ג מִמִּצְרַיִם:
- (י) וְשִׁמַּרְתָּ אֶת־הַחֻקָּה הַזֹּאת לְמוֹעֵדָה מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה:
- (יא) וְהָיָה כִּי־יָבֹאוּךָ י"ג אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי כְּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְךָ וְלֵאבֹתֶיךָ וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ:
- (יב) וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ כָל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם לִי וְכָל־פֶּטֶר שֹׁגֵר בַּהֶמָּה אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה לְךָ הַזֹּכְרִים לִי:
- (יג) וְכָל־פֶּטֶר חֹמֶר תִּפְדֶּה בָשָׂה וְאִם־לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעִרְפְּתָהּ וְכָל בְּכוֹר אָדָם בְּבִנֶיךָ תִּפְדֶּה:
- (יד) וְהָיָה כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בִּנְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה־זֹּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בַּחֲזָק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ י"ג מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבְּיַת עַבְדִּים:
- (טו) וַיְהִי כִּי־הִקְשָׁה פְּרַעֲהַ לְשַׁלַּחֲנוֹ וַיַּהֲרֹג י"ג כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכֹר אָדָם וְעַד־בְּכוֹר בַּהֶמָּה עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי זֹכֵר לִי כָל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם הַזֹּכְרִים וְכָל־בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי אֶפְרָיִם:
- (טז) וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְכָהּ וְלִטּוֹטְפֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בַחֲזָק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ י"ג מִמִּצְרַיִם:

In this פרשה, along with many other מצוות like תפילין and פדיון בכור, there is a reference to מצות remember the day we left Egypt. Yet, this source lacks one fundamental aspect of סיפור: the element of question and answer. In this פרשה we only read about the father speaking. It says והגדת לבנך. There is no question here. The child is silent. It's interesting. The *only* פסוק which deals with the night of the 15th doesn't even mention a question being asked!

In פסוק יד, we finally find a question. The child will ask מה זאת. But this can't be the source for the סיפור of מצוה. Over there, what's his question? The child is asking about מחר. מחר refers to a day in the future. It has nothing to do with 'He asking on a random day in חודש תמוז. On this question, you should respond כי בחוזה יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים. But this has nothing to do with ליל ט"ו.

In we find a fourth and final source of this מצוה. It says:

כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בִּנְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְקֹנֶךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֹתָם:
וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבִנְךָ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ יְקֹנֶךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה:
וַיֹּתֶן יְקֹנֶךָ אוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים גְּדֹלִים וָרַעִים בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּפָרְעָה וּבְכָל בֵּיתוֹ לְעֵינֵינוּ:
וְאוֹתָנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הָבִיא אֹתָנוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם:
וַיֹּצִיֵנוּ יְקֹנֶךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לִּירְאָה אֶת יְקֹנֶךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל הַיָּמִים לְחַיֵּינוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

Again, this פרשה has nothing to do with פסח. Your son will ask you, out of the blue, a question: what are all these laws? This understanding of this פשט, על פי פרשה, is quite simple. He just wants to understand the טעם המצוות. What's the *reason* we are we keeping מצוות? It's interesting to point out that the Torah presents the answer in the form of אמירה. When there was no שאלה, the response was in והגדת. When a שאלה is presented, the father responds with an אמירה. You will say to him about יציאת מצרים and how G-d took us out of Egypt *in order* to bring us to the א"י. Now, once we settled in the land where, as the רמב"ן tell us, the location of עיקר המצוות is performed we can develop our religious identity. It's there we perform the מצוות in order generate a sense of יראה before הקב"ה⁷, allowing us to live properly and do the right thing. The child asked, "Why are we doing this?" The father responds: "G-d took us out for this; He gave us א"י, a place where we will engage in יראת ה', ultimately לטוב לנו, giving us life. This justifies our existence. *That's* why we're doing it. "

This dialogue is a theological one. The son presents a religious dilemma and we tell him we do it because it's the right thing to do. How do you know? Because we met G-d in Egypt and

⁷ ראה מורה נבוכים חלק ג פרק נב

He took us out and told us to do them. But again, this has nothing to do with פסח. The son is asking the question in the middle of the summer!

Though we have just gone through an analysis of these various sources, when you read the הגדה, you'll find that the בעל הגדה understands the פרשיות differently, applying these פסוקים specifically to the night of the 15th. He writes:

חכם מה הוא אומר? מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלהינו אתכם. ואף אתה אמור לו כהלכות הפסח: אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן⁸:

In this piece, the חכם is asking questions applicable to the 15th of ניסן. Where in this פרשה did the בעל הגדה see that this dialogue is limited to just the מצוות of פסח? Why doesn't he also use what the תורה said?

Considering this, I see the הגדה is not trying to explain the 'He merely trying to use the פסוק to extract certain ideas. Similarly, the הגדה methodology in explaining the four sons uses the ideas of פסוקים found in חומש to describe various prototypes of children who will ask. This is not פשט though. It's educational advice how to do this מצוה of והגדת לבנך. So, we can't ask why doesn't the בעל הגדה use the answer of the תורה because the פסוקים are just being used as support for a certain educational model.

This is also applicable in our understanding of the question and answer of the רשע תם. ושאינו יודע לשאול. The הגדה says:

As an aside, the מכילתא explains that even if you have תלמידי חכמים who know everything they still need to learn the הלכות פסח. והגדת לבנך in קיום A פסח until midnight.⁸ This is not just a fulfillment of Torah, but a part of fulfilling סיפור. Is this a real דרשה? That פרשיות is referring to any day of the year? How can we juxtapose these two פסוק together? It must be that this is an אסמכתא and it was a tradition that this is a way to fulfill הלכות פסח חמץ ומצה. How does learning הלכות חמץ ומצה have anything to do with this? It seems that the concept of עולה כאלו הקריב עולה של פסח חמץ ומצה, which are eaten as part of the קיום of פסח, to be as if you actually offered the פסח קרבן itself. We can understand how it's connected. Learning the הלכות of the מצוה is connected to the performance of the מצוה itself.

רָשָׁע מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם. לָכֶם - וְלֹא לוֹ. וּלְפִי שֶׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִן הַכָּלָל כְּפָר בְּעֶקֶר. וְאִם אֵתָּה הַקֵּהָה אֶת שְׁנֵי וְאָמַר לוֹ: "בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם". לִי וְלֹא לוֹ. אֵלּוּ הֵיָה שֵׁם, לֹא הֵיָה נִגָּאֵל:

תָּם מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר? מָה זֹאת? וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו "בְּחוּזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרָיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים."

וְשֶׁאִינוּ יוֹדְעִים לְשֹׂאֵל - אֶת פֶּתַח לוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצִאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם.

סדר, are using the language of the פסוק, which is, clearly, not referring to the night of the חז"ל, using the literary style of the Torah to convey a certain perceptive on how to educate the cynical child. Again, the agenda here is not to tell you what the פסוק says.

What I see here is that ליל הסדר is to be a night *other* than a night of theology. He applies the פסוקים to specific details of the יום טוב. If this is not the case, why doesn't he mention what the פסוק *actually* says. It must be that בעל הגדה is using specific, localized themes, revolving around פסח and מורה נבוכים *not*. He must think that the function of the night is not to emphasize the fundamentals of faith, rather of יציאת מצרים and its הלכות.

This was how the בעל הגדה, derived from the מכילתא of רבי ישמעאל, understood the role of this night. Now, let's look at how another תנא understood the essence of the night. The following is the מכילתא of רשב"י. The רמב"ם in קנז writes quotes this מכילתא when describing the nature of the מצות סיפור יציאת מצרים. He writes:

והמצוה הקנ"ז היא שצונו לספר ביציאת מצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן בתחלת הלילה כפי צחות לשון המספר. וכל מה שיוסיף במאמר ויאריך הדברים בהגדלת מה שעשה לנו השם ומה שעשו עמנו המצרים מעול וחמס ואיך לקח השם נקמתנו מהם ובהודות לו ית' על מה שגמלנו מחסדיו יהיה יותר טוב. כמו שאמרו (הגש"פ) כל המאריך לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח. והכתוב שבא על הצווי הזה הוא אמרו ית' (ס"פ בא) והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא וכו'. ובא הפירוש (שם ומכיל') והגדת לבנך יכול מראש חדש תלמוד לומר ביום ההוא אי ביום ההוא יכול מבעוד יום תלמוד לומר בעבור זה בעבור זה לא אמרתי אלא בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך. כלומר מתחלת הלילה חייב אתה לספר... כלומר שהוא צוה לזכרו כמו אמרו (עשה"ד ע' קנה) זכור את יום השבת לקדשו. וכבר ידעת לשון אמרם (הגש"פ) ואפילו כולנו חכמים כלנו נבונים כלנו יודעים את התורה כלה מצוה

עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים וכל המספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח. וכבר התבארו משפטי מצוה זו בסוף פסחים (קט"ו ב - קיח:)

The רמב"ם is telling me *how* to perform this unique מצוה. Saying *vortlach* during מגיד is *not* what we are talking about. You have to be able to talk and explain, using your capabilities and experiences, the story and the lessons of יציאת מצרים.

The פסוק of כי ישאלך, as mentioned above, doesn't refer to 'It only in context of מכילתא. Yet, the רמב"ם quotes the מכילתא who asks:

ולשון מכילתא [דרשב"י במדרש הגדול] מכלל שנאמר כי ישאלך בנך יכול אם ישאלך אתה מגיד לו ואם לאו אין אתה מגיד לו

What is this question? It can't be talking about ליל פסח? Why would we think that a מצוה of והגדת מצות סיפור has nothing to do the פסוק כי ישאלך? That צורת המצוה in the form of סיפור should require a מצוה of סיפור. That פרשה is referring to an answer to a theological question raised by my son in the middle of the summer. He wants to know the basis of his theological life. It has nothing to do with a מצוה of סיפור! Why equate them?

The equation is indicative of an underlying attitude which warrants מצוות סיפור. For some reason, חז"ל saw that the והגדת of פסוק כי ישאלך is determined based on the theme of סיפור. The theme of סיפור is similar enough to the theme of והגדת that we can interpret one source off the other. What you do when your child asks you on any other day of the year is the same thing you do on the night of the 15th. I would have thought that since the questions asked both on the 15th of ניסן and the rest of the year discuss similar themes, the format should also be the same, in the form of question.

The מכילתא answers:

תלמוד לומר והגדת לבנך אע"פ שאינו שואלך אין לי אלא בזמן שיש לו בן בינו לבין עצמו בינו לבין אחרים מניין תלמוד לומר ויאמר משה אל העם זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים.

Now we are invoking the פרשה which actually deals with the מצוה of סיפור. This פסוק, which deals with the formal מצות סיפור, reveals to us the nature of the מצות היום. Even when dealing with other theological questions, outside of סיפור יציאת מצרים, one can and should initiate such questions and not need to wait for his son to ask. However, one would think that introducing מצרים as the basis for your religious life should apply *only* when the child asks the question. This outlook reminds me of the philosophy which claims that we should “not rock the boat unless he’s bothered.” As a child, I was raised with a different philosophy: a שאילה is beautiful. If I didn’t ask a question, they would ask me if I’m feeling ok today! Questions are good. Obviously, don’t challenge. But ask away!

The answer of the מכילתא is that since both these two פסוקים are independently presented, we don’t need the format of דברים פרקו to fulfill the מצוה of והגדת. Even if he doesn’t ask, we still have to initiate. That’s exactly what the תורה is telling us. Don’t think you should avoid telling him until asked. Do והגדת לבנך: initiate the discussion and talk about the same topics *as if* your son asked you while going through his religious dilemma. Though different in format, the theme of the night of the סדר is *still* the same as in דברים. That didn’t change. Talk about G-d and what it means to be Jewish. What comes out is that והגדת לבנך demands of us to do exactly what is asked of us to do as in והיה כי ישאלך בנך. There, we are not doing anything “לשם מצוה.” We’re using the Exodus and the phenomena revolving around that event as the basis for our theological existence. That style and methodology is to be expressed in the מצוה of הגדה.

The only way to understand this connection is by presupposing that the themes of ליל הסדר are parallel to that of כי ישאלך. If not, what does one verse have to do with the other? Regarding what themes do we predicate a discussion only when a question is asked? The honest truth is that deep, philosophical thought, challenging or asking about the foundations of faith, demands a mature thinker who is *already* open to a question. Religious thought demands an inquisitive mind which is capable of dealing and asking, not just dogmatic acceptance. One would have thought not to introduce the dilemmas of religion to one who doesn’t already have a developed and inquisitive mind, expressing a question. חז”ל explain since והגדת is mentioned apart from the other פסוקים, like כי ישאלך, we still to discuss those themes with our child. We need to initiate the conversation.

So, if we look carefully at these פסוקים mentioned in the הגדה, there are only two sources which actually deal with ניסן, and one of them deals with the day before the הסדר. And even within the source which discusses יציאת מצרים, there is only a reference to the הגדה and not שאילה. What must be concluded is that on ליל ט"ו our obligation is to answer in the form of the הגדה; however, when replying to a question raised any other day, we respond in an אמירה form. There is obviously a difference. חז"ל tell us that אמירה is בלשון רכה while the הגדה is בלשון קשה, a language of directing. On ליל ט"ו one is expected, without a question, to outline a direction for the child to understand; however, during the rest of the year, you *only* need to respond if the child comes forth to ask you something. The platform of religion and its adherence is in fact sourced in יציאת מצרים. סיפור. In context of any religious discourse, whether it be קדושת בכורה or משפטים, we allude to this epoch in our history. However, it seems that this platform must be initiated, even when the child does not ask, during one particular time in the year. That time is ליל ט"ו.

Various Aspects of ליל ט"ו on מצות זכירת יציאת מצרים

We've see a dispute between two schools of thought. Is this an evening of theology, and thus can be equated to כי ישאלך, or is it, first and foremost, a night focused on סיפור יציאת מצרים and the מצוות around it? In הלכה, we find the formulation of the מצות הגדה to reflect this presentation of the פסוקים: The רמב"ם writes the source of the הגדה is from two:

מצות עשה של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן שנאמר + שמות י"ג + **זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים** כמו שנאמר + שמות כ' + **זכור את יום השבת**, ומנין שבלייל חמשה עשר תלמוד לומר **והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך**.

The מצוה לספר is an expression of זכירה, similar to that of שבת. This equation is found nowhere in the רמב"ם. גמרא. formed this as he understands the מצוה demands an action. From this core obligation, the פסוק והגדת is a method of fulfilling the זכור.

There is a dispute among the ראשונים why there is no ברכה for למסקנה. הגדה, there are a few reasons why we don't recite a blessing. Some say it's because we said a ברכה during קידוש.

Others explain we make the ברכה when we recite the שמע. That's not at all דרך שאילה. What comes out is that, in essence, the מצוה is just a הזכרה. Even the recitation ארמי אובד is not the original ⁹דין דאורייתא. In fact, the most basic obligation of הגדה is merely telling your son what it means to be a slave and to be free. The רמב"ם tell us that when a father has to perform this מצוה with a young child he should do the following:

כיצד אם היה קטן או טיפש אומר לו בני כולנו היינו עבדים כמו שפחה זו או כמו עבד זה במצרים ובלילה הזה
פדה אותנו הקב"ה ויוציאנו לחירות

In other words, the bottom line, minimum obligation is not the retelling of the afflictions of servitude; nor the אירעו nor the 'It not even retelling the נסים ונפלאות; not even מתן תורה or any theology. The basic obligation is to recognize that we were slaves and now we are free. The child has no clue what slavery means. You have to teach this to him. Today, we think slavery means affiliation. Over here, that's not the case. The עבד here is 'He *mys* treated properly. He has dresses well and is healthy. The focus here is purely on the transition from slavery to freedom. We think of the slave ships. That's not the case in the רמב"ם. We're talking about *my* slave. There is no indication the עבד means affliction. What you show your son is the the value of freedom versus slavery.

Most of us come out of the סדר with an appreciation of the fact that we are now not being whipped and oppressed. We escaped the Nazis. But the evening is not just recognizing the lack of affliction and harassment. There is more to the night. You should come out with an awareness of where you are now, recognizing your past and your present states. You have transitioned from slavery to a state of freedom. You now have an ability and opportunity which you didn't have before. As an educator, I've seen that unless you emphasize this aspect of יציאת מצרים, the child won't appreciate the magnitude of this reality. How many people *really* know the value of freedom over slavery and are able to relate that to the next generation. That definitely has to be

⁹ See רם, ענייה requiring לחם שעונים עליו דברים הרבה who derives it from אור שמח. However, this must be an אסמכתא since if that's the case, there would be no ability to have פסחים קטני: work. See שומע כעונה.

a theme in the Seder. For this, I recommend you figure out what it means to be a slave. Read Alex Haley's *Roots*. In our mind, most of the pictures of slavery we have are of ugly slavery. According to the רמב"ם, you have to walk away from that imagery and look at *your* slave and still be able to say, "We were there and G-d took us out." The value of freedom is more precious than even the slave who lives in the lap of luxury. Why? Well, explain to me the value of freedom and the curse of slavery. The difference is that a slave is a חפצא and a free man is a גברא. The slave's body is not his own; rather, it's an extension of the owner. For that reason, the slave doesn't have responsibility for the damages he commits. In truth, he has no responsibility for anything. The brain behind him is his master and he is no more than the machine who performs the master's will. Freedom means you are your *own* person. You pay your *own* dues for you are *solely* responsible for your *own* life. You are now a person who has to make your *own* decisions. That's a major theme in the Seder!

Whenever the child is going through a religious dilemma we reintroduce the epic known as יציאת מצרים. But to do this, you must understand the story. Start learning the story בעיון as it's the basis of your religion. That's what we're doing on ליל פסח. You don't *need* a question. Ideally, it's appropriate to do it through a question-and-answer format, but the דין is that you do it even if there is not שאילה. This makes sense. When there really is a שאילה, an intellectually honest question, then the questioner can appreciate the enlightenment of an honest answer. He can respect the complexities and intricacies of the issue. When you have a serious question, and you go back and forth, back and forth, and you finally have it, it's an experience. All that עמל, with all that depth in those few, short lines! All of a sudden, your הבנה actually redeemed you from the darkness of a question. Rav Hutner would tell me, "Never give a תרץ until their tongues are white from the question." If you just say a סברא, it's *vort* a *s'*. It doesn't mean anything to you and you forget it. However, if you are עמל and you get to a conclusion, the answer becomes live and vivid. It's real because it becomes part of you. How *could* you forget it?

When I gave my first שיעור in KBY, the ישיבה was learning בימות. I prepared a famous question asked by רע"א on the beginning on the מסכתא. I had a student, I'll never forget it, who raised his hand and ask me, "Rebbe, if רע"א has a problem, let him deal with it. Convince me that this question bothers *me* too!" I learned so much from him. The question has to bother you. This

is a truth in education. *Vorts* don't change people. Genuine questions do. You need a real, burning קשיה to redeem the תירץ. The beauty of light is *only* appreciated in contrast to darkness. That's human nature. We don't appreciate what we have unless it's juxtaposed with not having it. אשר יצר is much more meaningful when one goes through surgery. We all think we live forever. But when you start realizing that you don't, you stop taking life for granted.

So, of course, a question and answer format is more ideal. Creating a dialogue allows for the child to internalize the values. Saying *vorts* doesn't do that. The question *has to* bother you. ליל פסח is not to a night of storytelling. It's about the reintroduction of the basics of faith to our life. It's the same issue happening in דברים, which is nothing more than a theological quest, using the Exodus as the platform to answer the son's theological questions. That's what we're supposed to be doing on ליל פסח. We would have thought that the מצוה would only require us to tell the son if he asks. The Torah then tells us that this מצוה is more expansive. We have to guide, והגדת, the son even if he is not bothered to ask. לכתחילה, as we just mentioned, do it in the form of question and answer. The קיום is through telling this story and explaining how this is the basis of our religious existence and life. It's basically saying, take the stories of מצרים and now teach me מורה נבוכים. The purpose of the night is an evening of theological discussion based on the revelations of יציאת מצרים.

מתחיל give us a calculated method in relaying these messages. We do this through בחינה. The Gemara in קטן quotes a dispute between רב ושמואל. They want to understand what is supposed to be the themes which we should start and end off with? How do we understand this dispute?

Some think that this discussion of רב and שמואל is merely a the dispute in methodology. Everyone agrees that we need to end off in יציאת מצרים, but the question is where to start. The Gemara never tells us what we need to end with. The discussion of the Gemara is only about what we start with? Do we start from the time when we were in Egypt or even beforehand, when our forefathers were pagans? It's a question of narrative. Do we start from our low spiritual situation or from our physical bondage? In סברא, I can understand this.

מחלוקת however, seems to indicate a different approach to understanding this הלכה. He writes in הלכה the following:

וצריך להתחיל בגנות ולסיים בשבח, כיצד מתחיל ומספר שבתחלה היו אבותינו בימי תרח ומלפניו כופרים וטועין אחר ההבל ורודפין אחר ע"ז, ומסיים בדת האמת שקרבנו המקום לו והבדילנו מן התועים וקרבתנו ליחודו, וכן מתחיל ומודיע שעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים וכל הרעה שגמלנו ומסיים בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לנו ובחירותנו, והוא שידרוש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה, וכל המוסיף ומאריך בדרש פרשה זו הרי זה משובח.

The first part of this story includes a more religious focus. We talk about how our great-great-grandfathers were idol worshippers. They were going after things which had not consistency. That's what הבל means. When explaining the word הבל, the רמב"ן¹⁰ describes the term to refer to something which looks all powerful and consuming, but is in fact nothing. It'll like a mist. But in the end, we found דת האמת. This is a contained story. You start by discussing how man engaged in paganism and all of humanity was still steeped in paganism, and, nevertheless, G-d to us out and introduced us to monotheism at Sinai. This is קרבנו לייחודו. This is one story. It's the story of the movement from paganism to monotheism.

Then there is another story. The רמב"ם writes וכן. וכן means there is a secondary story. When someone writes a clause and then adds the phrase, "and also, "it implies secondary importance. The primary goal was the first thing on the list and there is *also* another value which we need to emphasize. The other theme is the story of exodus itself. You have to start with our bondage in Egypt and end with the miracles and wonders which led to physical freedom. You have to say that you were slaves, afflicted in Egypt, and now you are redeemed and *even free*.

That theme of freedom is again reiterated in the in next part of the רמב"ם. He writes that one who fulfils this through an exegesis of פרשה אבי ארמי is praiseworthy. This is an emphasis of the second theme of the מצוה.

'Its noteworthy to point out that הגדה לספר כל המרבה does *not* refer to the entire הגדה. The term הגדה is a specific body of text, that of ארמי אובד אבי. Even the term הגדה has a more limited connotation in the thought of the רמב"ם. He writes:

הלכה ד

¹⁰ ראה הקדמתו למגילת קהלת

וצריך להתחיל בגנות ולסיים בשבח, כיצד מתחיל ומספר שבתחלה היו אבותינו בימי תרח ומלפניו כופרים וטועין אחר ההבל ורודפין אחר ע"ז, ומסיים בדת האמת שקרבנו המקום לו והבדילנו מן התועים וקרבנו ליחודו, וכן מתחיל ומודיע שעבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים וכל הרעה שגמלנו ומסיים בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לנו ובחירותנו, והוא שידרוש +דברים כ"ו+ מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה, וכל המוסיף ומאריך בדרש פרשה זו הרי זה משובח.

הלכה ה

כל מי שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בליל חמשה עשר לא יצא ידי חובתו ואלו הן, פסח מצה ומרור, פסח על שם שפסח המקום ב"ה על בתי אבותינו במצרים שנאמר +שמות י"ב+ ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה' וגו', מרורים על שם שמררו המצרים את חיי אבותינו במצרים, מצה על שם שנגאלו, ודברים האלו כולן הן הנקראין הגדה.

Those are its components. ר"ג אומר and מתחילה היינו, עבדים היינו, ארמי עובד אבי includes הגדה Everything else is praises and 'It all very nice,¹¹ but they are not the primary *anaic'Ta* texts of the הגדה. Those are not the הגדה. This doesn't include or והיא שעמדה שהגדה. Those are praises and introductions on *how* to perform the הגדה. Only that which was in the משנה is called the הגדה. Even the מה נשתנה is not part of the הגדה. That's just what the child says to initiate the discussion. You, however, say to עבדים היינו ארמי אובד אבי. The of הגדה is specifically the *riboi* הדרש. You, however, say as this is the *of* פרשת ארמי עובד אבי the הגדה.

You relate the story of פרעה and all the evil he performed and ה' performed miracles and took us out. This is done when reciting ארמי אובד אבי. The more one דרשן that פרשה, the better. The מצוה, according to the רמב"ם, is enhanced by using this framework. You don't need to look anywhere else. The סדר היום is פרשה זו, specifically.

סיפור יציאת מצרים of מצוה There are two distinct storylines, two potential scripts, for the מצוה. The opinions of רב ושמואל are both true. No one is arguing. These are two, separately contained issues. It must be a night discussing monotheism in contrast to the paganism of the day. The goal if וידעתם כי אני ה' is You need to explain what it means to believe in monotheism. But you also need to relay the values and beliefs of our religion in context of the story of the Exodus. The need for

¹¹ Throughout the הגדה we praise הקב"ה and sing הלל. This is not the הגדה, but is there still some שבח performed when one praises G-d for the גאולה. the רמב"ם and the חינוך writes that קיום is a קיום in the הלילה (see סה"מ). But the רמב"ם in the יד doesn't mention this, so it seems that it's not a קיום בעיקר דדינא של מצות והגדת.

and serve as educational tools. Contrast highlights the plot and the values which come out of the storyline.

The רמב"ם is telling us the following. The core of the הגדה is that which is quoted in the משנה. The text of עבדים היינו is the basic answer and baseline of חיו. At its core, the מצוה is to relate the transition from slavery to freedom. There is no theology here. For the child, he's too young to understand this. But he can understand slavery. This is before we talk about the affliction. But, ultimately, what's the *primary* theme? What's the aim in all of this? For the רמב"ם, the ultimate goal of this discussion is to end up talking about the transition from paganism to monotheism. Although the sequence in the Mishna starts with עבדים היינו, the רמב"ם emphasizes first because that's the עיקר theme. He's underlining this goal.

How does the רמב"ם know this? It's a s' in חומש! לב עבדיו! חומש a s' in פסוק! בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי לבו ואת לב עבדיו. למען שתי אותותי אליך בקרבו ולמען תספר באזני בנך ובן בנך את... וידעתם כי אני ה' That's the goal! This is the thinking represented in the מכילתא דרשב"י. When the מכילתא quotes the פסוקים of this is the connection. The reintroduction to the story of Exodus reconnects us to the values and philosophy of monotheism. It justifies why we do what we do. It's *because* of that event we know G-d. ה' tells the Jews **הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים**. It doesn't say "You weren't there. But you *were* there in Egypt. Although we use the נוסח of the הגדה, in the הלכה the רמב"ם is highlighting the primary theme and goal of this event is like the explains. "מכילתא דרשב"י. Its the transition from paganism to monotheism. To discuss and teach this, you have to understand what paganism is.

Appreciating Freedom and Redemption

To tell this story and internalize it, you need to understand what it means to go from the and be redeemed 'Let understand what happened to כלל ישראל while they were in Egypt. The רמב"ם writes: (א:ב) in

כיון שנגמל איתן זה התחיל לשוטט בדעתו והוא קטן והתחיל לחשוב ביום ובלילה והיה תמיה היאך אפשר שיהיה הגלגל הזה נוהג תמיד ולא יהיה לו מנהיג ומי יסבב אותו, כי אי אפשר שיסבב את עצמו, ולא היה לו מלמד ולא מודיע דבר אלא מושקע באור כשדים בין עובדי כוכבים הטפשים ואביו ואמו וכל העם עובדי כוכבים והוא עובד

עמהם ולבו משוטט ומבין עד שהשיג דרך האמת והבין קו הצדק מתבוננתו הנכונה, וידע שיש שם אלוהים אחד והוא מנהיג הגלגל והוא ברא הכל ואין בכל הנמצא אלוהים חוץ ממנו, וידע שכל העולם טועים ודבר שגרם להם לטעות זה שעובדים את הכוכבים ואת הצורות עד שאבד האמת מדעתם, ב וכן ארבעים שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו, כיון שהכיר וידע התחיל להשיב תשובות על בני אור כשדים ולערוך דין עמהם ולומר שאין זו דרך האמת שאתם הולכים בה ושיבר הצלמים והתחיל להודיע לעם שאין ראוי לעבוד אלא לאלוהים העולם ולו ראוי להשתחוות ולהקריב ולנסך כדי שיכירוהו כל הברואים הבאים, וראוי לאבד ולשבר כל הצורות כדי שלא יטעו בהן כל העם כמו אלו שהם מדמים שאין שם אלוהים אלא אלו. כיון שגבר עליהם בראיותיו בקש המלך להורגו ונעשה לו נס ויצא לחרן, והתחיל לעמוד ולקרוא בקול גדול לכל העולם ולהודיעם שיש שם אלוהים אחד לכל העולם ולו ראוי לעבוד, והיה מהלך וקורא ומקבץ העם מעיר לעיר ומממלכה לממלכה עד שהגיע לארץ כנען והוא קורא שנאמר ויקרא שם בשם ה' אל עולם, וכיון שהיו העם מתקבצין אליו ושואלין לו על דבריו היה מודיע לכל אחד ואחד כפי דעתו עד שיחזירוהו לדרך האמת עד שנתקבצו אליו אלפים ורבבות והם אנשי בית אברהם ושתל בלבם העיקר הגדול הזה וחבר בו ספרים והודיעו ליצחק בנו, וישב יצחק מלמד ומזהיר, ויצחק הודיע ליעקב ומינהו ללמד וישב מלמד ומחזיק כל הנלוים אליו, ויעקב אבינו למד בניו כולם והבדיל לוי ומינהו ראש והושיבו בשיבה ללמד דרך השם ולשמור מצות אברהם, וצוה את בניו שלא יפסיקו מבני לוי ממונה אחר ממונה כדי שלא תשכח הלמוד, והיה הדבר הולך ומתגבר בבני יעקב ובנלוים עליהם ונעשית בעולם אומה שהיא יודעת את ה', עד שארכו הימים לישראל במצרים וחזרו ללמוד מעשיהן ולעבוד כוכבים כמותן חוץ משבט לוי שעמד במצות אבות, ומעולם לא עבד שבט לוי עבודת כוכבים, וכמעט קט היה העיקר ששתל אברהם נעקרו וחוזרין בני יעקב לטעות העולם ותעיותן, ומאהבת ה' אותנו ומשמרו את השבועה לאברהם אבינו עשה משה רבינו רבן של כל הנביאים ושלחו, כיון שנתנבא משה רבינו ובוחר ה' ישראל לנחלה הכתירן במצות והודיעם דרך עבודתו ומה יהיה משפט עבודת כוכבים וכל הטועים אחריה.

When אברהם was around, monotheism was being re-invigorated. He led the revolution. People would get together and ask him all their theological questions. He was “Mr. אברהם”. Mr. אברהם passed this tradition on to יצחק to teach and warn the people about G-d. This continued to the next generation as well. The movement grew and grew and a nation developed. This was the בית אברהם. בית אברהם, preparing to pass the baton on, appointed לוי to lead the movement forward. Then something happened. The Jews went down to מצרים and everyone, except for שבט לוי who kept the tradition going, reverted to paganism. Do the math. Out of the entire nation, שבט לוי was a total of .96% of the Jewish population, and that was only a small percentage of the 20% of the people who left Egypt. Convert that fivefold and you’ll find an even smaller percent of Jews who

actually believed in monotheism while in Egypt, around .007% of Jews! The loss to monotheism was immense. There was mass assimilation going on in מצרים. It was a חורבן. We fell to the point that our people and the local Egyptian peasantry were the same. They served idols. We served idols. The Rambam writes that if G-d didn't take the Jews out then, it would have been too late to get them out. Monotheism would have died then. It was *that* close. That's the מצב of ישראל before יציאת מצרים. The world, after so much upward progress, was about to plunge back into paganism. The revolution of אברהם אבינו was over. Thankfully, הקב"ה took us out via משה רבנו. Through him we were redeemed.

The Jew of Egypt was pagan. Why do you think over 80% of the population didn't make it out? Four-fifths died there because they were not even redeemable. They didn't even have their ethnic identity. They simply forgot they were Jewish. In other words, the fifth who left Egypt were in fact pagan. But their redeeming factor was their adherence to their ethnic identity. They didn't change their names, dress etc. It's like someone still calling himself Mr. Goldberg or still eating knishes at the kosher stand. They spoke their home tongue and not Egyptian, speaking mainly Hebrew, a Canaanite dialect. They also liked the Canaanite fashion styles over that of the Egyptian style. Though there was no religious identity, at least there was an ethnic one. At this point, G-d had the ability to end it. He could've said, "OK, I experimented with homo sapiens and he failed. Let's close shop." For whatever reason, He didn't. I'd like to understand why did He want us to survive?

These aspects of the story of the Jews in Egypt is highlighted by פרק כ in יחזקאל. He writes:

(א) וַיְהִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׂבִיעִית בַּחֲמִשִּׁי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ בָּאוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדֹרֶשׁ אֶת ה' וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לִפְנֵי: (ב) וַיְהִי דְבַר־ה' אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: (ג) בְּנ־אָדָם דִּבֶּר אֶת־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה אָמַר יי אֱלֹקִים הַלְדֹרֶשׁ אֶתְּם בָּאִים חַי־אֲנִי אִם־אֲדֹרֶשׁ לָכֶם נָא יי ה': (ד) הִתְשַׁפֵּט אֶתְּם הִתְשַׁפֹּט בְּנ־אָדָם אֶת־תּוֹעֵבַת אֲבוֹתְּם הוֹדִיעֶם: (ה) וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲד' ה' בְּיוֹם בְּחֹרֵי בִישְׂרָאֵל וְאָשָׂא יָדִי לְזַרְע־בֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְאוֹדַע לָהֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאָשָׂא יָדִי לָהֶם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם: (ו) בְּיוֹם הַהוּא נִשְׂאָתִי יָדִי לָהֶם לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶל־אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּתְּנִי לָהֶם זִבְתַּחֲלָב וּדְבַשׁ צִבִּי הִיא לְכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת: (ז) וְאָמַר אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ שְׁקוּצָי עֵינָיו הִשְׁלִיכוּ וּבִגְלוֹלֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶל־תִּטְמְאוּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם: (ח) וַיִּמְרוּ־בִי וְלֹא אָבוּ לִשְׁמָע אֵלַי אִישׁ אֶת־שְׁקוּצָי עֵינֵיהֶם לֹא הִשְׁלִיכוּ וְאֶת־גִּלּוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם לֹא עָזְבוּ וְאָמַר לִשְׁפֹךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם לְכַלּוֹת אֶפְלֵי־בָהֶם בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (ט) וְאָעֵשׂ לְמַעַן שְׁמִי לְבַלְתִּי הַחֵל לַעֲיֹגִי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־הִנֵּמָה

בתוכם אשר נודעתי אליהם לעיניהם להוציאם מארץ מצרים: (י) ואוציאם מארץ מצרים ואבאם אל-המדבר: (יא)
 ואתן להם את-חקותי ואת-משפטי הודעתי אותם אשר יעשה אותם האדם ותי בהם: (יב) וגם את-שבתותי ונתתי
 להם להיות לאות ביני וביניהם לדעת כי אני ה' מקדשם: (יג) וימרו-בי בית-ישראל במדבר בחקותי לא-הלכו ואת-
 משפטי מאסו אשר יעשה אותם האדם ותי בהם ואת-שבתותי חללו מאד ואמר לשפר חמתי עליהם במדבר
 לכלותם: (יד) ואעשה למען שמי לבלתי החל לעיני הגוים אשר הוצאתים לעיניהם: (טו) וגם-אני נשאתי ידי להם
 במדבר לבלתי הביא אותם אל-הארץ אשר-נתתי זבת חלב ודבש צבי היא לכל-הארצות: (טז) וען במשפטי מאסו
 ואת-חקותי לא-הלכו בהם ואת-שבתותי חללו כי אחרי גלוליהם לבם הלך: (יז) ותחס עיני עליהם משחתם ולא-
 עשיתי ואתם כלה במדבר: (יח) ואמר אל-בניהם במדבר בחוקי אבותיכם אל-תלכו ואת-משפטיהם אל-תשמו
 ובגלוליהם אל-תטמאו: (יט) אני ה' אלקיכם בחקותי לכו ואת-משפטי שמו ועשו אותם: (כ) ואת-שבתותי קדשו
 והיו לאות ביני וביניכם לדעת כי אני ה' אלקיכם: (כא) וימרו-בי הבנים בחקותי לא-הלכו ואת-משפטי לא-שמרו
 לעשות אותם אשר יעשה אותם האדם ותי בהם את-שבתותי חללו ואמר לשפר חמתי עליהם לכלות אפי בם
 במדבר: (כב) והשבתי את-ידי ואעש למען שמי לבלתי החל לעיני הגוים אשר-הוצאתי אותם לעיניהם: (כג) גם-
 אני נשאתי את-ידי להם במדבר להפיץ אתם בגוים ולזרות אותם בארצות: (כד) וען משפטי לא-עשו וחקותי
 מאסו ואת-שבתותי חללו ואחרי גלולי אבותם היו עיניהם: (כה) וגם-אני נתתי להם חקים לא טובים ומשפטים
 לא יחיו בהם: (כו) ואטמא אותם במתנותם בהעביר כל-פטר רחם למען אשמו למען אשר ידעו אשר אני ה': (כז)
 לכן דבר אל-בית ישראל בן-אדם ואמרת אליהם כה אמר יי אלוקים עוד זאת גדפו אותי אבותיכם במעלם בי מעל:
 (כח) ואביאם אל-הארץ אשר נשאתי את-ידי לתת אותה להם ויראו כל-גבעה רמה וכל-עץ עבות ויזבחו-שם את-
 זבחיהם ויתנו-שם כעס קרבנם וישומו שם ריח ניתוחיהם ויסיכו שם את-נספיהם: (כט) ואמר אליהם מה הבמה
 אשר-אתם הבאים שם ויקרא שמה במה עד היום הזה: (ל) לכן אמר אל-בית ישראל כה אמר יי אלוקים הבדור
 אבותיכם אתם נטמאים ואחרי שקוציהם אתם זנים: (לא) ובשאת מתנתיכם בהעביר בניכם באש אתם נטמאים
 לכל-גלוליתם עד-היום ואני אדרש לכם בית ישראל חיי-אני נאם יי אלוקים אם-אדרש לכם: (לב) והעלה-על-
 רוחכם היו לא תהיה אשר אתם אמרים נהיה כגוים כמשפחות הארצות לשרת עץ ואבן: (לג) חיי-אני נאם יי
 אלוקים אם-לא ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובחמה שפוכה אמלוד עליכם: (לד) והוצאתי אתכם מן-העמים וקבצתי
 אתכם מן-הארצות אשר נפוצתם בם ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובחמה שפוכה: (לה) והבאתי אתכם אל-מדבר
 העמים ונשפטי אתכם שם פנים אל-פנים: (לו) כאשר נשפטי את-אבותיכם במדבר ארץ מצרים כן אשפט
 אתכם נאם יי ה': (לז) והעברתי אתכם תחת השבט והבאתי אתכם במסרת הברית: (לח) וברותי מכם המודים
 והפושעים בי מארץ מגוריהם אוציא אותם ולא-אדמת ישראל לא יבוא וידעתם כי-אני ה': (לט) ואתם בית-ישראל
 כה-אמר יי אלוקים איש גלוליו לכו עבדו ואחר אם-אינכם שמעים אלי ואת-שם קדשי לא תחללו-עוד
 במתנותיכם ובגלוליתם: (מ) כי בהר-קדש בהר מרום ישראל נאם יי אלוקים שם יעבדני כל-בית ישראל כלה
 בארץ שם ארצם ושם אדרוש את-תרומתיכם ואת-ראשית משאותיכם בכל-קדשיכם: (מא) בריח ניחח ארצה

אַתֶּכֶם בְּהוֹצִיאִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָעַמִּים וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִפְצַתֶם בָּם וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְכֶם לְעִינֵי הַגּוֹיִם: (מב)
וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי ה' בְּהִבִּיאִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֶדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדִי לָתֵת אוֹתָהּ לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם: (מג)
וּזְכַרְתֶּם־שֵׁם אֶת־דְּרֹכֵיכֶם וְאֵת כָּל־עֲלִילוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר נִטְמַאתֶם בָּם וְנִקְטַתֶם בְּפִנְיֶיכֶם בְּכָל־רְעוּתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם:
(מד) וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי־אֲנִי ה' בַּעֲשׂוֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמִי לֹא־כִדְרֹכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וְכַעֲלִילוֹתֵיכֶם הַנִּשְׁחָתוֹת בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל נָאֻם
יְיָ ה':

says to “ let My Self known prior to יחזקאל “ the kab”ה
G-d wanted us out of Egypt and bring us “ G-d wanted us out of Egypt and bring us
to ארץ ישראל. But there was one caveat. Drop the idols. Don’t pollute yourself with the ע”ז of
מצרים. It is I Who is your G-d. But they didn’t listen to Him. They still wanted to be pagan. “We’re
Egyptian, weren’t not interested in changing our religion. We’re not interested in leaving the
country. ”

Now this is really interesting because, after all, they were slaves. Why would they want
to stay? You have to understand what life was in Egypt for the Israelite then. The first society
which introduced the feudal system to humanity was Egypt. This was actually initiated by non-
other than Yosef. Basically, the crown owned all the lands except for the church. Everyone else
became a serf to the state. You worked for the Pharaoh. You didn’t own your land. Yosef even
moved everyone around to create an environment of servitude. Most of Egypt was in this
situation. The typical Egyptian was poor. Think of serfdom in Europe. The typical Egyptian was a
nebach. His friend, the Hebrew, who probably intermarried and attended the same house of
worship his Egyptian counterpart, lived adjacent to him. The Hebrew slave was in so many ways
exactly like his friend, the Egyptian. The only difference was that some of them retained an
antiquated, ethnic identity. So, when G-d tells the Jews, “I’m going to take you out and you’re
going to serve Me believe in monotheism,” they just ignored it. The Americans tried to do this as
well a century ago. Wanting to rectify the acts of kidnapping African slaves to the colonies to be
sold as slaves for so many years, the government wanted to send them back. They actually
created a country called Liberia for them. It didn’t work. They would rather be slaves in Virginia
than go back there. The African American said, “I live here. I grew up here. This is ‘I culture. *mym*
an American. This is who I am. ”That’s the same reaction the Jews had to G-d. How could You tell

us to drop everything? No way! Unfortunately, that was the reality for many Jews. If you look at it carefully, the typical Jew was Egyptian. 4/5th of the them were totally assimilated. The rest at least kept some remnant of Jewish culture. But no one was monotheistic except for לוי. If you want to understand מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו this פרק in יחזקאל is cardinal.

G-d responds, 'I'm going to destroy you. "Why? It's simple. G-d created a world for a purpose. He wants man to recognize Him and submit to Him. If it wasn't going to work, it's not worth it. I don't need it. The לשם underlines this is the crisis of the time. לכאורה, the test of man succeeding through free will has failed.

So, why didn't He do it? ועשת למען שמי. It would have been bad for G-d's PR. The world was created for man to recognize G-d and if the Jews would have been killed, the Egyptians would say that G-d, ח"ו, can't take the Jews out. He destroyed them because He couldn't do it. This is exactly what משה רבנו tells after the הוציאתם ברעה from מצרים. עגל. It would have been a חילול ה' to kill the Jews. The רמב"ן expands this exact point. The point of creation is to create *Homo Sapien* who, through rising through challenges and free will, will encounter, engage, and accept monotheism. He will live, breathe, and talk its values. All of תורה ומצוות and overall creation is made for man to לדעת אותו and be מודה to Him. הודאה is not just saying thank you. It means admission, as in the term מודה במקצת. When you thank someone you admit that you are dependent on them. When you are מודה to G-d, you are acknowledging that you are totally living with the understanding that you are the created form of the Infinite Creator. You are dependent on Him. You are nothing without Him. That's the goal of humanity and creation. It's this recognition. So, the רמב"ן says, humanity failed. אברהם, all by himself, brought humanity back on its feet and started to create a revolution known as monotheism. Then it tanked again. We were in Egypt. Then He reintroduced Himself. G-d wants a means to facilitate His agenda of creating a reality of a society, a world who leads, breathes, walks and talks a life of G-d awareness. He needs a nation which embodies all those values. He needs a people who live the story of Egypt and the story of Sinai. Without a body like this, Sinai will be relegated to the halls of mythology. Then, nothing will happen. Do you think Roman mythology really influenced mankind? You think Homer's *Iliad* changed society? No, it didn't. The same thing would've happened to the story of the Israelites if a nation was not made. The story would stop impacting humanity and humanity

will not have the chance to actualize the goal of לו בוראו ויודה G-d. That's the point of having a nation like 'It ככלל ישראל. an extremely powerful source of ריבוי כבוד שמים on this planet. Destroying them would be a חילול ה'. G-d tells Moshe " לסלחתי כדבריך, "forgive them exactly like you argued. You're right. I want them to facilitate My agenda. "They're worth total annihilation. But if it's an option of closing the door on history or continuing with them with the chance of attaining this goal, let them live on. That's why we're here today. That's really the essence of what תשובה is. That's ועשת למען שמי. The reason I didn't destroy them in Egypt was because I did it for My name.

The פרק continues with G-d telling the prophet about how He took us out of מצרים and educated us. "Not only did I give them the laws of Sinai, I gave them the laws of שבת as a sign to know that I am G-d. "Out of all the מצוות given to us, שבת is the unique אות of our covenantal relationship with G-d. We are connected to the monotheistic G-d who sanctified us. After this event, they still didn't listen. They violated Shabbos. Of the major violations mentioned here, it's interestingly that we don't find חילול שבת ועבודה זרה mentioned. G-d again wanted to destroy them. But again, He spared them למען שמו. When you learn the פרשת מרגלים, don't think it's just those few who were bad. יחזקאל fills in some more details for us. A lot of the Jews were still not such great צדיקים. It was עבודה זרה and חילול שבת which were the real issues and this happens after מתן תורה. 40 years later, G-d tells the next generation, 'Don't act like your fathers have. Don't perform idol worshipping as they have. "These Jews were still attached to their Egyptian culture. This continues throughout the period of the Jewish settlement of the land. Finally, after hundreds of years of sinning, G-d sends the Jews into גלות. You still acted like the Egyptians. G-d did everything for them, but nothing changed. They didn't want to keep שבת because it was a symbol of walking away from paganism, having a covenantal relationship with G-d. They were not interested in it. גילולי מצרים בלבם. This went on for a long time, just read ספר מלכים. The battle for monotheism was and is very much an uphill battle. However, the כלל is that ultimately it works. It took a lot to extract them, theologically and culturally, from Egypt. But it worked. It's very clear that in this context, the מכות played a major role in taking us out, not just physically, but also theologically from this paganist culture. The אברבנאל points out that the מכות are divided into three parts:

1. The first three are a basic introduction. ותדע כי אני ה'.
2. The second set represents G-d בקרב הארץ. It's not just that "I'm here." It's more than that; He interacts with us.
3. The third set represents אין כמוני בכל הארץ. I am the Source of all therefore I can combine elements which look contradictory. Fire and water don't work together. But because אין כמוני בכל הארץ, I make it happen. You look carefully at the פסוקים, the מכות are really an educational tool to teach the Jews and the civilized world about monotheism.

This is the reintroduction to the G-d Who we today know and serve. It's all from מצרים. This is the goal of the night. The מצות הלילה is to do what I do whenever a child asks. מה העדות. What's the purpose of religion? And we tell him about the story of Egypt because it's where everything started. Whatever we know about G-d was from there. We don't know Him from ברא. We weren't there. But we did see Him take us out of Egypt to then meet up at Sinai. That's what's your sharing with your child on 'It פסח. the G-d Who you live and die for. It למען ה'. תדעו כי אני ה'. We take the theological discourse, going through the progression and transformation of a nation from paganism back to monotheism, and see those ideas and values in the story of יציאת מצרים. But it's critical to realize that He's not just a G-d Who performs miracles for us. Remember G-d performed more נפלאות than נסים in Egypt. There is a reason for that. Understand G-d through nature. See Him through your telescope and microscope and understand that all the laws of the natural world are His decree and He can manipulate them as He pleases. That is something else. That's what נפלאות teaches us. נפלאות teach us that what you take as a given doesn't have to be. The סדר היום is His will. You take for granted gravity. Gravity is רצון הבורא and it can stop today. Understand that what you call "laws" are nothing more than an accumulation of recorded human observations of a mere 5,000 years. You have no clue what happened before or what will happen after. If you think about it, you have a pretty weak חזקה of what's going to happen tomorrow. It's all 'Don't רצון ה'. take *anything* for granted. Don't take for granted your alive. Don't take your health for granted. Don't take for granted your Jewish. That's what יציאת מצרים taught me. Everything is רצון ה'. Everything is because G-d wants it to happen. When I say מחדש בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית this is *exactly* what I mean. It's simple.

The בית יעקב builds off this idea. We say that מצה is eaten because we didn't have time to let it rise. That means to say that all the Jews left within 18 minutes. How is this possible? Try doing this with a small class of yeshiva students! This is quite the miracle. The only way this could be done is if the Jews were manipulated and seduced to leave. That's exactly what was going on when we left בחיפזון. The Jews were exposed to something which allowed them, in a very short amount of time, to free them from all the things which they identified with. Somehow, their paganism and culture, which they were so enthralled with, was gone. Now, they were leaving. No questions asked.

We celebrate חיפזון for this reason. The (ספר הזמנים ע' כ-כא ד"ה מצה זו) בית יעקב explains that when we ate the מצה in Egypt; it wasn't really us. We were glassy-eyed. There was an end product though. That was the 38 years of quiet in the desert. **That** was the real success. הר סיני wasn't enough. That was the *beginning* of the process. It was the 38 years of silence where success was seen. To take those 38 years in the desert and try to taste freedom *without* being glassy-eyed and really understand in a deep way, by *ourselves* and without a jolt from G-d, that it was the right thing to do. This is the meaning of the פסוק שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל-עֲלֶיךָ מִצֹּת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בַחֲפֹזֶן יֵצְאֲתָּ מִצֵּרֶיךָ. We eat the מצה **because** of the חיפזון experience. In Egypt, we listened to Him without any personal reckoning and thought; in חיפזון we just followed Him. We recreate that experience today when we eat the מצה. The only difference is that now we don't *need* to be jump-started. When we left Egypt, we didn't know if it was the right thing to do. We just did it. We were manipulated. G-d did it, and for His purpose, 'I'm gonna take them out and I'm gonna bring them where they should be.' It was His decision, not ours. We didn't leave because we wanted to. We didn't even accept the תורה because we wanted to. We were just glassy-eyed. We were manipulated to say נעשה ונשמע. Now, we've developed and learnt to recognize Him and follow Him totally without that added boost.

How did this happen? G-d revealed Himself at that time. That sudden injection of G-d awareness gave them the capability of a total divorce from everything they identified with. Egypt was a great place. It was like גן ה'. Some of these Jews were best friends with their Egyptian counterparts. Why not? Some of them were slaves too! There were some Jews who were wealthy too. Not all the Jews were slaves. There's the way the social hierarchy works. Not everyone was

schlepping stones. Some of them actually liked it there. How could they leave all that? It reminds me of the Jews of Germany. They didn't want to leave either. Their lives were there. The only way out was with ה' revealing Himself. They left, but it wasn't out of their own volition. They didn't want to leave their homeland. But G-d wanted it and they followed Him. They negated themselves and followed G-d. G-d infused them with a certain profound awareness of truth and they couldn't walk away from it. This is פיתוי קטנה אונס. He blew their minds with a revelation way beyond their level. They listened to the pied piper. They didn't go with their own דעת. It was total manipulation.

That's why it was בחיפזון. When you're glassy-eyed and your mind is blown, you can move under 18 minutes because you're not in control. And this is exactly what G-d did for the next two years in the desert. The מדרש writes that once the Jews saw the Egyptians dead at ים סוף קריעת ים סוף they wanted to make an עבודה זרה. Moshe had to coerce the people to keep going forward into the desert. They wanted to go back. The taskmasters are dead, our discomfort is over, so let's go back. We repeated this again at הר סיני when we made the עגל. This went on and on for the next two years. There was a lot of struggle, but in the end, it worked. G-d manipulated us, jump starting out religious battery and we started to move. For the rest of the 40 years in the desert we learnt the תורה and internalized monotheism.

All these things are celebrations of G-d manipulating us and it's very nice that He did. All that investment for those 38 years. The most beautiful part of the Bible is the Bible that doesn't talk. The silent Bible, that's the success of the story. The two years before, that's the candy, the carrot, and the whip (every so often). And it worked. Once they came to Israel, they had trials, they had tribulations and they failed. But you know what? There were always things happening and always things coming up and they thrived. You know how I know it worked? Because throughout all the ניסיונות of history, we are a nation which is still alive still breathing monotheism. We are a nation which has impacted humanity. All other religions which preach monotheism came to be because of us, the nation who experienced Sinai. The world is moving towards monotheism. It's all because these pagan slaves were taken out, seduced, to be re-educated, and He did it.

ליל פסח is a very important night. Yes, you must tell the story of Egypt, but not as a story, but, rather, as a platform for your religious beliefs. You should be learning הלכות יסודי התורה between the courses in 'It. It's a night of theological discourse. It's a great evening for each person on his or her level. When מרחיב you re' your discussion you should be focusing on these themes. אמונה is the name of the game. To be more specific, ידיעה s'. That's the ultimate purpose why we're here.

This commandment is not remembering a past event. It's implanting it in your mind to remember it. Live with it consciously enough that it will govern you. By עמלק there is an expression of this זכירה, because of an extra פסוק. But בלב is סתם זכירה. The רא"ש in a תשובה writes that the reason we don't make a ברכה on סיפור is because mitzvah בלב a s'. If there is a child, then you have to teach him. If not, the רא"ש holds that you can just think about it. The מהר"ל (סוף) says the same idea and builds off of it. He believes that if you say it without the intent to implant it in your mind you're not מקיים anything. Just reading things without creating a זכר is *not* the commandment. The מצוה is the perception created *through* the 'It. שמחה like אמירה. The goal is to attain a certain emotion. That's why that mitzvah too doesn't have a ברכה. There is no act there. The goal is an internalization of a certain perception.

Why would I think those who know כל התורה כולה would be exempt from סיפור? What does knowing קדשים וטהרות have anything to do with this? How does גיטין aid in the סיפור of קיום which I would have thought פטורה s'? It seems that one who knows כל התורה כולה has a deeper and profounder understanding. You could say because he knows "למדות" he can understand all the סברות about מצוה ופסח. In the end of the day, you don't need מסכת ערלה to have an understanding of מסכת גיטין. Definitely not for יציאת מצרים. What does this mean? The answer is quite simple. It's only if after you understand the question to be a theological question does this make sense. To understand מעשי ה' means you know His Torah, what His mindset is, and His values. As the רמב"ן writes knowing כל התורה כולה allows one to distill those laws into values which הקב"ה wants you to do and live by. The focus of the night is not just saying the story, but it's also using ידיעה, as a platform for theological discourse, ידיעה. So, I would think that one who already

has this perception, this ידיעת ה' is exempt. The תורה says nevertheless, one is obligated as the סיפור enhances that already existing level of ידיעה even more.

Our primary understanding of הקב"ה, our אמונה וידיעה of Him, comes from this episode. אנכי ה'... אשר הוצאתך מארץ מצרים. Everything we know is basically from there. It's the platform of my relationship with *all* s't Period. הקב"ה from there. Before I left Egypt, I knew nothing. So, יכול, you don't discuss theology with him until he asks, קמ"ל you teach him before he asks. והגדת לבנך means that you are teaching the foundations of faith. You're not telling him an interesting epic of the ancient Israelite tribes. It's a story to explain profound, religious values today. This is what משה tells the הקב"ה. The point of the מכות is וידעתם... במצרים. ולמען תספר באזני בנך ובן בנך את אשר התעללתי במצרים... וידעתם. The goal is ידיעת האלוקות. The whole purpose of the מופתים was to get to an awareness of ה'. אנכי ה'.