

VAYOMER ELIYAHU

Inspiration and Encouragement on Topics of Trust and Faith in Hashem Yisborach
Based on the Weekly Torah Portion

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In English



בס"ד

The Arousal of Emunah of the Seder Night Can Last All Year Long!

» Contemplating the Reasons We Do Mitzvos!

The Gemara (Pesachim 116A) states: "Raban Gamliel said that one who does not say these three things on Pesach does not fulfill his obligation. They are: Pesach, matzoh and maror. Pesach is because Hashem passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt, as is stated (Shemos 12:27): 'And you shall say that this is a sacrifice of Pesach to Hashem who passed over...' Matzoh is because our fathers were redeemed from Egypt, as is stated (ibid:39): 'And they baked the dough that they brought out from Egypt...' Maror is because the Egyptians embittered (mararu) the lives of our fathers in Egypt, as is stated (ibid:14): 'And they embittered their lives...'"

The Meir (Bais Habechira, introduction to Shas) explains the verse in Tehillim (119:126): "A time to do for Hashem; they have made void Your Torah" by saying that if one does mitzvos merely because it is the proper time to do them, without thinking about the reasons for the mitzvos, he is considered as if he "made void the Torah". Hashem does not want us to serve Him unthinkingly. Rather, He wants us to try to understand what we are doing and why. If we contemplate the mitzvos and take out the important lessons we are meant to learn from them, we have benefited from their fulfillment. However, if we merely do them without thinking, there is no long-term benefit that remains with us once the mitzvah is completed.

No one should think that this does not apply to him because he considers himself a simple man who could never understand the lofty intentions of the Torah. This is an incorrect mindset. In truth, everyone is obligated to attempt to understand the reasons behind the mitzvos according to his level of comprehension. The Meiri states this explicitly by saying, "This applies even to the masses who cannot fully understand the concepts behind the mitzvos and what they are supposed to gain from doing them. Even if one only has a bit of understanding, he should think that he is fulfilling the decree given to him by Hashem, that he is doing it for His honor, and to fulfill His commandment."

It is possible for a person to thoroughly clean his home, checking every nook and cranny for traces of chametz, and to lead a

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Seder enthusiastically and spiritedly, but to still not fulfill the purpose of the mitzvah or the will of Hashem. This person has not experienced his personal exodus from Mitzrayim and is in danger of remaining enslaved in the spiritual servitude of Egypt because he focused on secondary matters, rather than on the main points.

The Chidushei Harim zt"l related a *moshol* in the name of Rav Bunim of Peshischa zt"l (quoted in Likutei Harim, Likutim Milchemes Hayeitzer) of a rich man who purchased a strong, powerful horse. He paid a small fortune for this impressive beast and to protect it from thieves, he had a barn erected where it was kept under lock and key.

Still and all, he was worried that thieves might find a way to break into the barn, so he hired a guard. He warned the guard that he must remain awake all night and that he must not fall asleep on the job. He advised him to think deep thoughts to keep him awake and alert.

In the middle of the night, the rich man went out to check on the watchman, and found him immersed in his thoughts. He asked him, "What are you thinking about?"

The watchman answered, "I'm contemplating a deep question. When they bang a nail into the wall, what happens to the piece of wood that used to be where the nail now is? Where does it go?"

The wealthy man told him, "You're doing very well. You're thinking very deep thoughts."

A few hours later, the owner returned and asked the watchman, "What are you thinking about now?"

The man answered, "I am thinking about another deep question. When a person eats a bagel, what happens to the hole in the middle? Where does it go?"

The rich man told him, "You're amazing! You have so many incredible thoughts."

An hour later, the rich man came back and found that the watchman was still immersed in his thoughts. He asked him, "What are you thinking about now?"

The man answered, "I am wondering how it is possible that the stable is locked and I am

sitting by the door wide awake but the horse is gone? Where did it go?"

The nimshol is that a person can be immersed in deep matters. He can even be awake all night thinking deep thoughts. Still and all, he might forget the main thing if he is too busy thinking about less important matters.

» The Seder Night is a Time For Emunah!

Rabenu Manoach (Hilchos Chametz U'Matzoh 7:5-6) explains Raban Gamliel's statement by saying that one must recite the three main points of the Seder – Pesach, matzoh and maror – and explain their reasons. He writes: "Every mitzvah has a reason and it is very important to know those reasons... It is all the more important to know the reasons for the mitzvos of Pesach because knowing them arouses a person to believe in Hashem with unquestioning, firm *emunah* that He redeemed all of Klal Yisroel and it was clearly seen by all the nations that only He rules the Heavens and earth."

He continues: "This is why it was decreed that 'every generation is obligated to view itself as if they left Egypt.' This remembrance will lead to *yiras Hashem* because when one thinks about how He guided the Jewish nation, this recognition will not leave his heart forever. If one reaches this recognition, he will trust in Hashem to save him from all tribulations. He will realize that just like the exile in Egypt was a means to provide goodness for the Jews, so too every form of suffering and exile are a means to save Klal Yisroel and provide eternal salvation."

Within these holy words, we see the entire essence of the yomtov of Pesach, and, especially, the essence of the night of the Seder. It is an exalted time, when the Shechinah is revealed to us and the pure light of *emunah* shines down upon us. On this night, we allow untainted *emunah* to be instilled within our hearts, and we can retain this *emunah* for the entire year.

This is the avodah of the Seder night and of the entire holiday of Pesach – to soak up *emunah* into our soul so that we can keep it within us for the months to come.

Furthermore, we have a special mitzvah on this night to relate the story of the exodus to our children. By doing so, we instill within their hearts as well a strong sense of *emunah* in Hashem. In this vein, the Ohev Yisroel *zt"l* writes that while it is true that there is a commandment all year to relate the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and if a son asks his father about it, he is obligated to explain it to him

and to teach him the fundamentals of *emunah*, there are times when the words may not make such a big impact on the child because he is not ready to accept them.

On the night of Pesach, however, a bright light shines into the children's hearts and enables them to receive the lessons of *emunah* transmitted by their fathers. On this night, a father can plant the concept of pure *emunah* into his children's hearts and minds, and they will become strongly etched within him.

The Nesivos Shalom *zt"l* (Chelek 2, page 284) uses this idea to explain the *pasuk* in Tehillim (92:3) that states: "To relate in the morning Your kindness and Your *emunah* in the evenings." He asks why the verse begins with the word "morning" in the singular tense but ends with the word "evenings" in the plural. He answers that this is a hint to two specific nights. These are the night of the Seder – the "*leil shimurim*" when Hashem passed through the land of Egypt and skipped over the Jewish home – and the night of the seventh day of Pesach – when the nation crossed through the Yam Suf.

On those nights, the Shechinah was revealed to Klal Yisroel and they became "the Rosh Hashanah for *emunah*". If one strengthens his *emunah* on these two nights, he will merit "relating His kindness in the morning", meaning that he will merit Hashem's Divine *chesed* for the rest of the year.

The Chida *zt"l* would relate the following incredible story every year on the night of the Seder: There once was a woman who became possessed by a dybbuk. She went to the Arizal and begged him to remove the soul from within her.

The Arizal ordered his student, Rav Chaim Vital *zt"l*, to find a *tikkun* for the lost soul. Rav Chaim went to see the woman but as soon as he saw her, she turned her face away, as the wicked soul was unable to look at the face of a *tzadik*.

Rav Chaim asked the dybbuk how it was able to enter the woman's body. It answered that this woman once took two stones and rubbed them together to make a fire. She was unsuccessful and the stones fell out of her hands, which caused her to get angry. This indiscretion allowed the dybbuk to gain access to her body.

Rav Chaim expressed surprise that such a small transgression deserved such a big punishment, and the soul explained that this was not the cause of the punishment. Rather, when a person becomes angry, the

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Satan is able to prosecute him for his sins. The real sin that she was punished for was that she had heretical thoughts. On the night of the Seder, when everyone was relating the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, she had doubts in her heart. Since her *emunah* was weak, she was deserving of a severe punishment.

The woman immediately began to cry and express remorse for entertaining heretical thoughts and questioning the story of the exodus. She promised to do teshuva and to increase her *emunah*. Rav Chaim asked her if she now believed the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and she said that she did. Immediately, the dybbuk left her.

» The Main Mitzvah is Done in the Heart!

The Rishonim ask why Chazal did not institute a *bracha* to be said on the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, considering that we recite a *bracha* on other mitzvos.

The Maharal (Sefer Gevuras Hashem, Perek 62) answers that the main mitzvah is done in one's heart, as one must understand what he is saying when he reads the Haggadah or else his recitation of the words is meaningless. He says that *brachos* are only recited on mitzvos that one does through an action, not on mitzvos that are done with one's heart.

The Maharal is siding with the Poskim who rule that no *bracha* is recited on mitzvos done with one's heart (see Bais Yosef, Orech Chaim Siman 432); therefore, no blessing is recited on the Haggadah since the main mitzvah is in one's heart.

The Maharal's words need some explanation. We fulfill the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* with our mouths – by reciting the words – as is stated (Shemos 13:8): “And you shall relate it to your sons.” Furthermore, the Chasam Sofer (Shu”t, Chelek Aleph, Siman 15) clearly rules that one must say the words of the Haggadah, and if one merely thinks them, he does not fulfill the commandment. If so, why does he say that the mitzvah is mostly only done in the heart?

However, a glance at the Minchas Chinuch (Mitzvah 21) reveals a deeper outlook regarding this mitzvah. He writes: “The mitzvah is to remember the miracles that occurred to our forefathers during the exodus from Egypt...Even if no one else is present one must say the words out loud in order to arouse the matter in one's heart because speaking arouses the heart.”

We see from his words that the main purpose of the mitzvah is to arouse one's heart through reciting the words with one's mouth. The main mitzvah is not the speaking; rather, the words spoken aloud are necessary in order to awaken the heart.

All of this is included in the avodah of the Seder night. The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 472:15) states that although the commandment of *chinuch*, to educate one's children, usually does not apply to daughters, on the

night of Pesach the commandment applies equally to sons and daughters. He states that the reason for this is because the main source of our *emunah* comes from the exodus from Egypt. We thus see that the purpose of the Haggadah is to strengthen the fundamentals of *emunah*.

This is also seen from the words of the Rishonim. On the verse (Devarim 6:2): “When your son asks tomorrow saying: What is this testimony and these laws and rules that Hashem commanded you...”, the Ramban writes that we see that the answer to this son's question is to relate to him the entire story of the exodus from Egypt.

He writes that with this answer we are explaining to the son that Hashem is the Creator of the world and He guides it at all times. We tell him that this what we witnessed when Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim.

The Ramban adds that this is the reason why part of the answer to the son's question is: “Hashem gave signs and wonders, great and terrible, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes.” We say that the miracles were done “before our eyes” to say that we witnessed these wonders with our own eyes that proved to us that Hashem is the only power in this world and He guides and controls everything that occurs at every time. We are teaching the son that all of this occurred during the exodus, and ingrained us with this *bitachon*.

From the Ramban's words, we see that the purpose of the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is to teach the next generation the fundamental aspects of *emunah*, which we acquired during the exodus from Egypt. Since this *emunah* is the foundation of all mitzvos, we are commanded to teach it to our sons and pass it down to all future generations.

The Netziv (He'emek Davar, Devarim 16:3) also explains the mitzvah of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* in a similar fashion. He says, “The main *sipur* on this night is meant to strengthen our *emunah* in His Divine guidance all year and how it relates to our daily lives. For this reason, the verse says, ‘So that you should remember.’ This is like when a father tells his son a long story and remind him about it every day with little hints, and then repeats it once every year in full so that it will become ingrained in his heart. So too, we are commanded to say the entire story at length on this night and to remind ourselves of it in short every day of the year.”

He also says that the purpose of the mitzvah is to instill us with *emunah*, and he adds that the remembrance of the exodus every day is a continuation of the same mitzvah. On Pesach night, we recite the entire story at length in order to ingrain it into our hearts and instill us with this *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem's Divine guidance. During the rest of the year, small hints are sufficient to maintain the lessons that were rooted in us from the night of Pesach.