

# HAGADAH INSIGHTS

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

[This essay begins with #4, continuation from last week's three observations]

- 4) Parents who have a child who tends to be in his own (rebellious) world regarding steadfast observance of yiddishkeit, must become psychologically patient, in order to (eventually) bring him back. The Hagadah deals with this problem, as already mentioned (first essay) (one of the four sons, the Hagadah refers to is identified as a Rosho.) Very often the problem is caused by close association with rebellious friends. The task at hand, therefore, is to "cool" that friendship.

When this (so called) Rosho hears the passage "בעבור זה עשה ה' לי", the word "לי" (for me), to the exclusion of another, this son is not excluded. The Hagada does not say לי ולא לך (not you), but לי ולא לו (not for him). It refers to the son's rebellious friend who is excluded from the blessings of the Torah. The loving father suggests this son should dissociate from rebels, ostracize them completely. You, my child, are part of the "לי", you are the major part of the "לי". The parent himself can daven with more fervor in the morning Shachris, וְהִרְחִיקֵנוּ מִחֵבֵר רַע, with the special reference to his sons's spiritual safety.

- 5) An interesting thought connects Purim to Pesach. The Talmudic requirement to begin learning about Pesach thirty days before the holiday is found in tract Megila (29b). It is logical to assume that there is a connection. One such connection may be the following: The Mishloach Monos Mitzva can be fulfilled only if the receiver knows who the sender is. Similarly, the extraordinary gifts of the Exodus, becoming Hashem's beloved people should be acknowledged Whom it is coming from. The Shabos, the Yom Tov, all the mitzvohs, are meaningful when mindful of the Giver of those gifts, and offer thanks to Him with every fibre in the body and depth of the Neshomo. On Shabos this recognition is expressed in our appreciation in Mincha "כי אתה בחרתנו, ותתן לנו באהבה מאתך היא מנוחתם". The Yom Tov gift is pronounced in

This is what the Pesach Seder is all about; except that for the children's sake, and ourselves, the Seder seeks to relate the "whole" story. באזני בנך ובן בנך in all detail ולמען תספר.

- 6) It is for this reason, (the appreciation of the outcome) that the Hagadah begins with the earlier destitute, מתחיל בגנות, both in the physical sense, and in the spiritual sense. The physical sad beginning is the very start of the Hagadah, עבדים היינו; we do not forget the tortured slavery we suffered under the Egyptian task masters. The Hagada is also clear on our pitiful spiritual beginnings מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו (idol worshippers). And now we have become Hashem's beloved people, with Torah and Mitzvoths, raising our existence to astronomic heights.
- 7) No wonder children and adults explode in joyous singing Da Dayainu. This is the chapter in which every detail, yes every detail, of Hashem's loving gift for His beloved people, deserves a song and dance in profoundest gratitude.
- 8) Commentators discuss the difference between the questions asked by the Chochom and the Rosho. Superficially read, the Chochom's אתכם (you) is equivalent to the Rosho's לכם (you), which in the Rosho's case is interpreted as excluding himself of Torah's obligations.

The answer is the distinction is clear. Once the Chochom recognizes there is a Giver, a Commander, he wishes to learn the laws and ordinances אשר צוה ה' אלקינו which Hashem our G-d commanded. Once that recognition clearly expressed, the word אתכם does not indicate exclusiveness. The contrary, the Chochom seeks to be a very major part of it. The אתכם is a desire to hear from his father, in the case of a father who is in a position to reply.

In the reply the Hagada precedes ואף אתה אמור לו, also you should offer a reply. What does this mean "also" you? Who else should reply? The child, even the Chochom, asks his father. This is what the Chochom meant with the word "אתכם". The chochom son may be on the level of learning gemoroh on his own. He possesses seforim for depth in understanding. He can even visit the Yeshiva library for more research. However, the chochom has a need to know his father's

particular nuance, received from his parents. Did grandpa sit or stand for the Kidush? Did he don Rabeinu Tam Tefilin? A VORT of Torah from his father this Chochom son will cherish more than what he hears from the גדול הדור. It will remain with him forever; forever like the אפיקומן, the taste of which remains, because אחר הפסח אפיקומן. This might be indicated in the reply to the חכם, no food following אפיקומן so its taste remains for a long time.

- 9) The fourth son is referred to as שאינו יודע לשאל, not old enough, or not knowledgeable enough, to ask. The reply to him must first open the door of his mind את פתח לו, something that will capture his mind. The Sanzer Rov, Divrei Chaim, interprets את פתח לו, from the aleph first letter, to the ה' last letter. Recognizing the wisdom in even one letter will eventually sharpen the mind for more.

The Talmud (Kidushin 30b) discusses parental obligation to teach Torah to the children; in this context, the Talmud discusses the middle of all sentences of the Torah, the middle in words, and the middle in OSIYOS (letters). The letter ווא in גחון (Vayikro 11:22) is the middle of the Torah, counting letters. One wonders what connects the discussion about letters (אותיות) of the Torah with the previous discussion about parents teaching children. The clue may be the Sanzer Rav's observation in א-ת of aleph to tov having impact upon children.

- 10) In relating the tragic beginning מתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה, the Hagada concludes עכשו קרבנו, and now Hashem brought us to His avodah. The spiritual redemption actually occurred 3600 years ago on Mt. Sinai, when the Torah was given. Why ועכשו, and now? Apparently the Seder night is more than relating the history, the transmission to a Sinai-Torah people. It is an עת רצון, monumental in the double sense, 1) importance; 2) opportunity of the moment to come closer to the ideals of Torah. It is in this context that the Hagadah mentions "atonement", לכפר על עוונותנו, forgiveness for the past mistakes, and עכשו, now, a fresh start in Torah observance.

[To be continued אי"ה]

