

Parshat Tazria 5776 Shabbat Hachodesh

Rav (Pesachim, 116b) says the obligation of the *Haggada* of recalling and retelling the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is not an end in itself but a means of strengthening one's own spiritual connection with the Almighty. This is surmised in the paragraph ... מתחלה ... ועכשיו ... "From the beginning our father [Terrach] was an idol worshipper. But now" [Nissan 5776, that we are revisiting and retelling the episode of Yetzias Mitzrayim] "we are drawn closer to HKBH". It is the retelling the story of the *Haggada* itself which draws us closer to Hashem. I will attempt to interpret the opening paragraphs of Maggid from what I understand to be Rav's perspective:

... ואילו לא הוציא ... "And if He would not have taken us out of Egypt, us and our children would be servants" [read: worshippers] "of Paroh in Egypt". If *Kriyas Yam Suf* had not happened, we would have believed that *Paroh* was the deity which took us out of Egypt - as we can see in *Shemot* (13:17) ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם, "And it was when Paroh sent the people" - *Kriyas Yam Suf* itself was a multifaceted event that punished the Egyptians and demonstrated unequivocally that *Hashem* was the sole Power who took us out of Egypt. Only after *Kriyas Yam Suf* was it said regarding the *Bnei Yisrael* that ויאמינו ביקוק ובמשה עבדו "They believed in Hashem and Moshe his servant" (ibid, 14:31). Reviewing these events can scarcely fail to impress on us the Power who protects us.

... ואפילו כולנו חכמים ... "even though we are all wise ... we are obligated to retell the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and all who exceed are praiseworthy". One would think that the wise might not need to discuss the details of our more sordid beginnings. However, it is by the telling itself that brings us closer, just like one tells again and again a story of personal salvation or a seemingly miraculous recovery from illness. The very process of telling the story is what serves to bring a renewed appreciation of Hashem's power and is a *Chiyuv M'Doraita* for everyone however observant or wise.

... מעשה ברבי אליעזר ו..... בבני ברק ... We know this took place approximately 70 years after *Churban Bayit Sheni*, during the Roman Occupation of Israel. These were Rabonim for whom *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* as a celebration would appear to be inappropriate. However, they spoke 'אותו הלילה' "all that night" or during those dark times when all seemed lost – the telling of the previous salvation was a beacon of hope for those for whom salvation seemed so far away. *Rebbi Elazar Ben Azariya* felt the grief and pain of the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* so deeply. He comments that he is like a 70 year old -who actually would have lived

during the existence of the *Beis Hamikdash*- and was struggling with fulfilling the mitzva in the form of celebrating *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, as the grief was so raw. But he was reminded by *Ben Zoma's* deduction, by which the obligation remains in place, and may be even stronger through 'הלילות' or the nights of Jewish history.

The four sons: These are 4 generations who demonstrate the distance from Hashem that grows so rapidly from not retelling the Pesach story and relying on Seder night. The *Chacham* is asking "why do I need to do Pesach, I know the story of *Mitzrayim*?". If this is not addressed, the following generation takes a step back from that relationship with Hashem, and on seeing *Pesach*, will ask "what is all this hard work for you? Why do we turn our lives upside down simply to retell our long past historical origins?" If this generation can't be drawn closer, the following generation will be so far removed that they will only be able to ask "what is this?". And if that generation is not *m'kareved*, the following generation will not even be aware there is a question to be asked.

... ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל ... "Blessed is He who kept His promise with Yisarel " This is a seemingly incongruous phrase – we know Hashem keeps His promises. In fact, we are blessing HKBH for having חשב את הקץ "planned the future". The *Haggada* cites the *pesukim* from *Lech Lecha* that the Jewish people will be strangers in a strange land and concludes: ויבאו ברכש גדול "..... after that they shall leave with great wealth"(Bereishis, 15:13 & 14). But Avraham was scarcely concerned about the volume of silver, gold or jewellery his descendents would carry out of Egypt, was he? One interpretation of this רכש גדול which Avraham was told his offspring would receive on leaving Egypt, was the annual festival of Pesach, which we can now understand as being a mechanism by which we can grow closer to Hashem. But why is this mechanism for the persistence of preservation of Faith in Hashem so essential, even in times like now when it appears that we are an established religion? ... שבכל דור ודור "for in every generation there are those who seek to destroy us [to distract us from our faith]"

From this understanding of Rav's haggadic obligation, and the *pesukim* from *Lech Lecha*, we come to the conclusion that *Pesach* is far more than just a recollection. It is a current mechanism that is essential for the continuation of Judaism. Only by preserving Judaism, is it possible for Avraham's descendants - for all time to come – to merit to inherit the Land of Israel, as was promised to Avraham, back in *Lech Lecha* (13:15)