



GROWTH

At The

YOM TOV TABLE

PESACH

Double-Sided!

Implications of the Exodus

A central theme of Pesach is remembering that we left Egypt. But what exactly are we meant to remember when we mention Yetziat Mitzrayim?

The Gemara in Bava Metzia notes that several mitzvot in the Torah are connected to the phrase, "I am Hashem who took you out of Egypt." Examples include the prohibition of ribit (charging interest), the mitzvah of tzitzit, and the prohibition of dishonesty in business with weights and measures.

The Gemara asks why Yetziat Mitzrayim is specifically mentioned in connection with these commandments. It answers that a person might think he can deceive others and get away with it. For example, someone might sell fake blue threads claiming they are techelet, or lend money with interest while claiming the loan actually belongs to a non-Jew. Since these acts are difficult for others to detect, a person might believe he can avoid responsibility.

The Torah therefore reminds us of the exodus. Just as Hashem was able to distinguish during the Plague of the Firstborn between the firstborn of each household, so too Hashem can distinguish between honest and dishonest actions — even when human beings cannot.

This appears difficult. Obviously, Hashem already knows everything. If so, why do we need the reminder of Yetziat Mitzrayim specifically in these mitzvot? Isn't this the same as any other private sin that Hashem sees?

To answer this, we must first understand a fundamental concept. There are two primary ways of serving Hashem: fear and love.

Many people misunderstand what it means to fear Hashem. They imagine it simply as being afraid that Hashem will punish them if they sin and reward them if they do good. However R' Simanov, explained that this is a mistaken view.

The Torah teaches that we are children of Hashem. When a child is young, he may fear his father in a simple way — because he worries about punishment. But as he grows older, his relationship changes. His respect becomes deeper and stems from appreciation and an understanding of everything his father has done for him.

If your father were a king, you would also respect him for the

enormous responsibility he carries in guiding and protecting the country. All the more so when we realize that our Father is Hashem, who gives us everything we have. Out of appreciation and awe, we would not want to act against Him.

The Chovot HaLevavot, in Sha'ar HaBechinah, explains that we have an obligation to study the wonders and structure of the world. By observing the wisdom and miracles present in nature, we come to recognize Hashem's greatness. When a person truly understands this greatness, it becomes natural for him to praise and serve Hashem with enthusiasm.

Now we can return to our original question: why does the Torah mention Yetziat Mitzrayim specifically regarding these mitzvot?

These commandments often involve situations where a person might justify dishonest behavior. He might tell himself that no one will ever know the difference. The blue dye might look identical to techelet, or the financial arrangement might be impossible for others to detect.

If a person relies only on the technical obligation of the mitzvah, resisting such temptation can be very difficult. But when he reflects on Yetziat Mitzrayim, he remembers something deeper: Hashem is personally involved in every aspect of the world and in every detail of our lives.

There is a story told about a rabbi who was once sitting in court to judge a case. As the proceedings were about to begin, he suddenly felt that his mind was not completely clear. He was concerned that he might be slightly distracted or even unintentionally biased.

Before the court began, he asked for a moment. He put his head down and quietly began repeating to himself, "Yetziat Mitzrayim, Yetziat Mitzrayim..."

The people in the courtroom were puzzled. Why was the rabbi repeating these words before judging the case?

After a few moments, he lifted his head and explained. When a person truly brings Yetziat Mitzrayim into his mind, he remembers that Hashem watches every detail and is involved in every action. When someone internalizes that awareness, it becomes almost impossible for him to sin, because he has attained a true fear of Heaven.

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At first, this idea might seem frightening. One might think: if Hashem pays attention to every action I take, I have no space to breathe.

But there is also a beautiful way to understand it. Hashem does not simply create a person and leave him alone. Instead, He takes an interest in every action we perform. He rejoices when we do good, and when we stumble, He helps us stand up again.

Therefore, when we face a challenge, we should remember that Hashem cares deeply about every choice we make. Our motivation is not simply fear of punishment, but awe and appreciation for the constant care and attention Hashem gives us.

In this sense, true yirat Hashem means being filled with awe at the personal interest Hashem takes in our lives.

So the next time you stand in Shemoneh Esrei and feel distracted or uninterested in praying, try to remember something powerful: Hashem is listening. He is opening His ears and giving His full attention to your words.

When we realize that the Creator of the world is personally listening to us, we should feel a sense of awe and gratitude for the opportunity to speak with Him.

By (my dear friend) Ovdia Babekov

The Message to the 'Wicked Son'

In recounting the famous tale of the "4 sons," we read something astonishing in the hagadah. The *rasha* (wicked son) takes issue with the traditional practices, and after he finishes scorning and belittling, we tell him: "The verse states: *because of this Hashem did [all these miracles] for me in Egypt* – implying for me and not for you [the wicked son]! If you would've been there [in Egypt], you never would have been redeemed."

What exactly is the message behind this sharp, stinging response that the hagadah has for the wicked son? Are we really just communicating: "You're a terrible child, and you never should have left Egypt. Having you was a mistake from the start." This sounds absurd. Is this really the wisest approach? Such a method of rebuke is inevitably bound to fail; what is this trying to accomplish?

R' YY Jacobson once shared a gem of an insight from R' Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin. This passage of the Haggadah actually contains an empowering and uplifting sentiment, and a mere superficial reading will lend itself to complete and utter misinterpretation. To think we're scolding the *rasha* with such a scathing tone is to completely misunderstand the point. We're not placing emphasis on, "If YOU would've been there, you never would have been redeemed." Instead, we are highlighting, "If you would've been THERE, you never would have been redeemed."

At the Seder table sits the *rasha* alongside the other 3 metaphoric sons, with deep pain, anger, and resentment in his eyes. We're addressing a man who thinks he can try disowning his soul and throwing away his Jewishness. He may have sunken very low, yet his view of a Jew's essence is sadly distorted. Irrespective of how far gone a Jew may be, he can never fully detach himself from his

Judaism or become a *goy*. Ever since the exodus and Matan Torah, Judaism is not simply a religion, where there are those who practice it and those who don't, the latter being disconnected from it. Judaism is the color of your soul. Just like a person can't change the color of his eyes, one cannot alter the DNA of his soul. There could be a person who's more religious and another who's less religious; one who's more knowledgeable and another who's less knowledgeable; one who's more in touch with their essence and another less so. That may be entirely possible. Notwithstanding, at the core, each is a Divine fragment of G-d.

The Haggadah is not outlining a religious form of attack against the *rasha*; we're merely attempting to give him a sense of reality. We're telling him: "There, in Egypt, you may have had a choice of whether or not to be saved and join the Jewish Nation. But after G-d took us all out of Egypt – including you – and you stood by Matan Torah, you are holy forever and ever. You just are. You can scream and be defiant. You can yell that you don't believe in anything and claim that you're the worst Jew to ever live, but it doesn't matter. 'Over there' you may have chosen not to have been redeemed, but once you're here, it's all over. Of course you're going to be redeemed once more – because at your intrinsic core, you are a Jew. It's not a question of whether you want it or not; it's a question of who you really are."

The message is groundbreaking yet so simple. The moment each and every one of us faces our own truth with authenticity and candidness – the moment we stop deluding ourselves to think we need to distract ourselves from our own essence – we will immediately redeem ourselves to see that we have always been, and will always be, divine.

The Simple Son says: מה זאת (what is this)

Rearrange the letters and it spells: זה אמת (this is the truth)

Sometimes the ones we perceive as "simple" actually understand the truth much farther than we even imagine.

(Shared with me by R' Shaul Wertheimer, quoting the Aruch L'Ner)

"Never regret a day in your life: good days give happiness, bad days give experience, worst days give lessons, and best days give memories."