

THE FARAH FAMILY EDITION

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

THE FOUR SONS

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

אַרְבַּעַת בְּנֵי דְבָרָה תּוֹרָה



לְכֹחַת יוֹסֵף אֲדוּר' בֶּן שֵׁרָה חוּ' וּכְלִי מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ
לְעֵינֵי ר' יִצְחָק מְרַדְכֵי בֶן ר' מֹשֶׁה אֱלִיהוּ עִי"ה
וְלְעֵינֵי מֵרַח כְּלוּמָא עִי"ה בַת יִבְרָחֵם" אַ הָרֹב חַיִּים שְׁמַעְיָן שְׁלִישׁ" א



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“Baruch Hashem, we are humbled and honored to be given the opportunity to help spread the amazing message of “The Four Sons.”

After reading it, we wanted to jump at the opportunity to help spread this message all over the world, for all of Klal Yisroel.

The Torah teaches that the survival of our people depends on one great mission: “V’higadeta l’vincha” — to teach our children, to shape their minds, and to hand over the eternal mesorah of Torah from generation to generation.

In a world that has become careless and distracted about the education of its children, these teachings remind us that nothing is more important. A child is not raised by accident. A Jewish mind must be built deliberately, with effort, wisdom, and constant attention.

We dedicate this sefer, to our children: Yosef Avraham, Lielle D’Vorah, Eliana and B’ezrat Hashem our newest addition who is due the last days of Pesach. We will continue to dedicate our lives to leading our children to walk in the path of Torah with Ahavat Hashem and Yirat Shamayim.

The words of Rav Miller transformed the way we view our responsibility to our children and to ourselves. It is our sincere hope that this sefer will inspire others as well, and help strengthen the eternal chain of Torah for generations to come.



TANYA AND MICHAEL FARAH



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בת מאטיל

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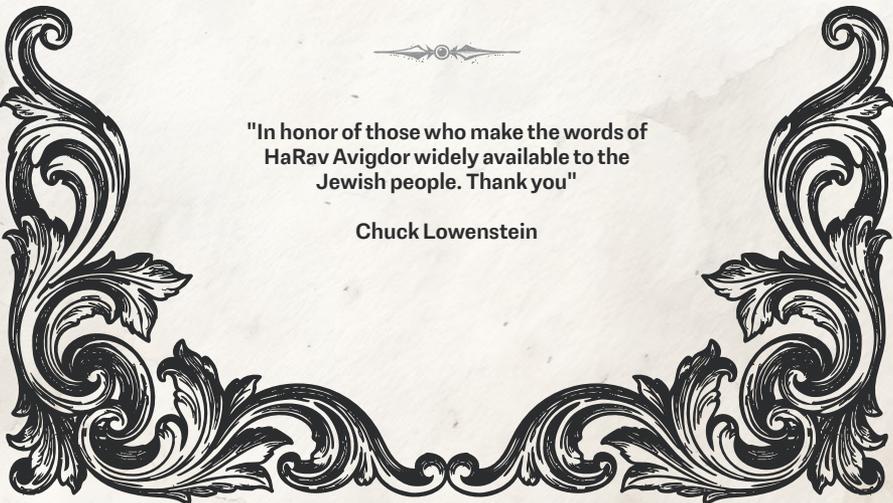
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Jewish people. Thank you"

Chuck Lowenstein



PESACH

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

THE FOUR SONS

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Part I. Telling the Children

Seder Night Traditions

There's a very good reason why the scene of the Seder night, the father at the head of the table and the little boy asking his father the age-old Mah Nishtana questions, is something that the painters have tried to capture on canvas again and again. I'm not so fond of paintings in general, of art, but there's no question that this scene stirs the emotions of any Jew with even a little bit of warmth in his heart. The great function of **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ**, the handing over of the Torah traditions to our children, is so vital for our nation that it touches the heart of every Jew.

Even the Jews who *nebach* have strayed away and gone lost, they still feel the importance, the vitality, of that moment. Very many people come

back home just for the Seder because they understand the holiness of that night. I remember I was standing once on Utica Avenue and Eastern Parkway many years ago, way back when it was a Jewish neighborhood. It was *erev Pesach* and it was remarkable what I saw. It was still early in the day but the subway was already unloading Jews onto Eastern Parkway. It looked like an exodus; everybody was coming back to Brooklyn.

That's how it was in those days, before the Jews became very much Americanized. Today already the new generation is *nebach* lost, but in the old times, thirty years ago (1950), people poured out of Manhattan and came to Brooklyn. They were coming home, back to the old folks, for the Sedorim. Back to East New York, back to Brownsville, back to Crown Heights, from all over people were streaming. Because the call of the Seder, the function of **וְהִגֵּרְתָּ לְבִנְךָ**, was felt in their bones!

We have to realize, however, that this function occupies a central place not only at the Seder but in the entire destiny of the Jewish people. The Seder night, the function of **וְהִגֵּרְתָּ לְבִנְךָ**, is actually a microcosm of the function of the nation all the time. And I'll explain that now.

Chosen for Tradition

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu was talking about why He established a forever covenant with our first father, Avraham, He said about him as follows: “I’m doing this **כִּי יָדַעְתִּיו** – *because I know him*.” It means I’m interested in him; he’s the one I’m thinking about.” And He goes on and explains why: “I’m interested most in him, **וְאֵת בְּנָיו וְאֵת בֵּיתוֹ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֵת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו** – *because I know that he is going to command his children and his household after him*.”

It doesn't mean ‘command’, that he'll just give them orders. No, that's not enough. It means he's going to exert the greatest efforts to see that his children will carry out the traditions. He'll go to extremes and do everything with that in mind, with the utmost stubbornness, like a man who does something because his life depends on it. And because he'll put all of his heart into carrying this out, **וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָךְ הַשֵּׁם** – *that's why his descendants will guard the way of Hashem*. That's why I love this man.

The National Function

So you see how serious is the responsibility of a father and mother to inculcate into their children all the idealism that they're able to. *That's what makes Hakadosh Baruch Hu interested in a man! That's what makes*

a man chosen by Him! If you are going to hand over the great ideals of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the great authentic traditions of the Am Yisroel to your children, that's the way to make Hashem love you.

All of Judaism stands on tradition. Like Josephus says — it's interesting; Josephus was a politician, not a Torah sage, but he said, "We consider it the most important duty in our lives to teach the Torah to our children." It's a remarkable statement by a 'secular' man. He was a general, a politician, but in those days, everybody understood that's our big job in life! Every father and mother has to be concerned about handing over the traditions to the children.

Now a lot of you people here will think that it's not so important. You think that if we do things rationally by argument, by conviction, by philosophizing, that's all that's important. No! It's a wonderful thing to do things out of conviction but if you're committed to the Torah because that's your family's way — my father was like that and his father was like that and all the way back, then you're walking on a bridge that's built by the generations. Psychologically, it's one of the most powerful ingredients in making a Jew eternally loyal to the Torah.

Hashem in the Library

Of course, there are people who had good families but broke away. There are always weaklings. And there's the opposite too. There are people whose parents never taught them anything and they became very good. Sometimes it even happens that a child will find Hashem in the library. A boy told me that story. He came from an ignorant home, a home with nothing and one day he went to the library and he discovered on a shelf a Cambridge Bible. It's a Bible, it's a *Tanach*. That boy had no instruction except in the library, so he read it.

And he was amazed! He never heard such great things before. He had a forefather Avraham, a great great grandfather who discovered Hakadosh Baruch Hu and loved Him. And now he's hearing for the first time what Avraham his father did to sacrifice himself for the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

And so he goes back to the library every day after public school to read more and one day he turns to Shemos and he's reading about his ancestors as slaves in Egypt and how Hashem did miracles for them, ten plagues, and He took them out of bondage to be His people.

A flame was kindled in this boy. He became a good boy, a *ben Torah*! It's a tremendous accomplishment! A lot of boys have become *frum* on their own; a lot of lost Jews have surprised us and come back on their own. It's a great thing! But you have to know that it's even a greater thing when the father hands it over. The best thing, the strongest thing, is when it's **דָּוָר לְרוּר יִשְׁבֵּחַ מִמְעֻקֶּיךָ**; when an idealist has a family behind him. There's nothing like an unbroken chain of tradition because then it's part of your nature, it's part of your blood.

My Father's Father's Father's Father...

It has a tremendous impact when you hear it from your father because you realize that *he* heard it from *his* father. And all the way back, across the ocean, in Europe, fathers were telling their sons. In Germany before they came to Poland, and in Spain before they came to Germany. And in Bavel before they came to Spain, and in Eretz Yisroel before they came to Bavel, and in the Midbar for forty years before they came into Eretz Yisroel and Mitzrayim on the first Seder night in history before they went out into the Midbar! And you understand that the truth of our history stands on solid foundations, and it becomes part of your being.

All of Judaism stands on the great process of *mesorah*, handing over from father to son. We have a powerful and sober tradition. In the entire *Tanach* there's nothing of superstition. The entire *Tanach* is so open, so perspicuous; the clear and true waters of our tradition flow like a river, from the beginning of the world down until today. It's so clear and so convincing.

And when it comes by means of an unbroken tradition there's nothing like it. We don't need any arguments because our forefathers were present and everybody saw. Everybody was a witness. And that's why the whole Torah – everything we keep today – is based on the fact that we were in Mitzrayim and Hashem redeemed us from there.

Introduction to Torah

The Kuzari says that. He says that Matan Torah on Har Sinai began with the words “אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים – Who am I? Who is this talking to you now and giving you the Torah? I am the One Who took you out of Egypt.” It doesn't say, “אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּרָאתִי,” “שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ – I am the One Who created the world.” It could have said that. “I created the universe, out of nothing!” That's even bigger! But nobody

was present to see that. At Yetzias Mitzrayim however, everybody, the whole Klal Yisroel, saw how Hakadosh Baruch Hu took over all the forces of nature and demonstrated His Presence in the most stunning and astonishing manner, one *nes* after the other.

You know, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu caused the river to turn into blood, you have to know it was an explosion. Not an atomic bomb; it was a super atomic bomb that exploded the laws of nature in such a way that it was an extremely great disturbance in the world. And Hashem doesn't tamper with the laws of nature unless the greatest results come out of it.

And the great result was something that today many people don't appreciate. Because when Hakadosh Baruch Hu was about to perform all these acts that were in contravention to His regular laws in order to do things in Mitzrayim against Pharaoh, He gave a reason for it. Why am I doing this? In order to take you out of Mitzrayim? No. It's **לְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶךָ וּבְזֵן בְנֶךָ** – *in order that you should relate this in the ears of your son, and your grandchildren.*

Slavery With a Purpose

You understand now one of the reasons why they had to be in Mitzrayim. Let's say they would have remained in Eretz Canaan always and finally they would have increased and multiplied and became a big nation in Eretz Canaan; if they never were enslaved in Mitzrayim then the whole opportunity for **וְהַגִּירָת לְבְנֶךָ**, for giving over the remarkable story of the birth of our nation, would be missing.

Just think; you'd be missing a Seder night, a Seder night where the fathers are telling over the story to the children, talking about the wonders of Mitzrayim, how Hakadosh Baruch Hu demonstrated His *yad hachazakah* to us, how with our own eyes we saw Him abrogating all the laws of nature for us. It would be missing! Pesach would be missing! The whole Torah would stand without that foundation.

And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu based Matan Torah – all of our obligations, our entire purpose of living – on the fact that everybody already saw who Hakadosh Baruch Hu was. They knew it before too, but now they saw with their eyes. **אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם** – *I'm the One Who took you out of Mitzrayim.* And the Kuzari explains, the taking out of Mitzrayim that was the most startling and open demonstration! When Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "I'm the One," everybody knew Who was talking. And so our entire history stands on what we tell our children

on Pesach. Our traditions are the backbone of everything, and there's nothing more of a ramrod backbone than Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Rehearsing for History

And that's why the whole Haggada is given that name; because **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ**, that's the crux of everything. You have to tell it to your children! And so this sacred scene where the little boy or the little girl turns to the father is so important. Of course it's been rehearsed – the little boy has been saying it in his *yeshiva ketana* for months already and the little girl in the Beis Yaakov – but who doesn't rehearse for something so important? Maybe they don't understand what's taking place, but they are actors in a vital scene, the most vital scene in our history.

Certainly, if you say it's for a ceremony that's impressive and helps people think Judaism is a beautiful religion, that it has charisma and color. Ok, why not? That would be a purpose, why not? Even if you say it's for a good time, families get together and enjoy the children, we can understand that.

But that's nothing yet. It's infinitely more than that. **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ** is everything! When the father and mother transmit all the traditions, all the Torah ideology to their children, they become part of that eternal chain that spans the generations.

Part II. Creating Children

Building a Child

Now when you're telling your son the story of Pesach or any of the Torah teachings that every child must hear from his parents you're actually doing more than you imagine. Because not only are you adding him onto this chain of the Am Yisroel, but you're creating him; you're making a new person from him. And I'll explain that.

Everyone knows that a physical son inherits from his parents his body and he inherits certain physical and mental characteristics; the parents pool their various characteristics and it's transmitted to the children. And so, a mother and father, they fulfill the great obligation of having children, of building up the Am Yisroel, by creating a Jewish body.

But that's only the beginning because now the parents have a new obligation, a bigger obligation, to make this child all over again. And that's by putting into his mind a set of ideas and ideals. That's the real relationship of a parent to a child, when you create his mind and his ideals.

Because giving a person a body, although that's a very important creation, but now the Torah says you have an obligation to recreate your son all over again. Because what makes somebody a son? בן is from the word בנין, building, like we know אבנה ממנה. You have to build him up. You have a job now to take your son and you have to beget him all over again by giving him a mind.

Building a Mind

And so what is it that makes your child your child? Not only the fact that he's born to you. It's the fact that you build him, you hand over to him the Torah traditions, that's called a child. You must give him ideas. You must give him ideals. You must teach him how to look at the world. You must teach him about Hakadosh Baruch Hu and all the fundamentals connected with the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu; how to live with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, how to live with his fellow man. It's a whole set of thoughts that you have to put into his brain. It's like putting a new brain into him.

And when you create in a child's mind a set of ideas, that's when you become a real parent. Because what's more important, the mind or the body? People, when they go to the employment agency, they're not judged on how much weight their body has. The personnel director won't say, "Hop on the scale and let's see what you're worth." That's not the point in employment. The question is what do you have up here. Experience? Ability? Do you have good sense? Do you have knowledge, training? It's the mind that makes you valuable.

And therefore, when you create a child, even though you pour a lot of *koach* into him — raising a little child is a load of work — and afterwards, you pour into him vitamins and all kinds of food and he grows up big and healthy, you haven't done the job yet. A big healthy boy or a big healthy girl is a failure, unless you have put into that head something that makes them your real child. וְשִׁנְנֶתֶם לְבַנְיָדָאֵלֹהֵי הַתְּלִמִּידִים – When you create their minds that's when they become real children.

Avraham's Creations

That's why Avraham Avinu is credited with **אֶת הַנְּפֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן**, with making men in Charan. To make a man?! How did he make men? If all the scientists of the world came together, they couldn't create even a wing of one flea. Let's say the scientists came together, biometricians and embryologists and biologists, for an International Congress of Scientists and they were puzzling over a problem: There's a flea here that's missing a wing. How can we supply that wing? They won't be able to do it. They can take off wings, yes. They can subject fleas and flies to various ordeals, irradiation, so that their eyes will turn pink and wings will drop off and legs drop off, but to create a wing? Nobody ever put a wing on when there wasn't a wing.

So how is it possible that Avraham created a man? It says **אֶת הַנְּפֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן** – *the souls that he made in Charan!* And so our Sages say that it means he gave them new minds (Avos D'Rabi Nosson 12:8). Avraham gave the men new minds and Sarah gave the women new minds; they taught them new ideas and that was a creation of a new being. Because the mind, that's the most important; you're creating something that's eternal. The mind is forever. Your mind doesn't die. When a man is put into the grave his mind keeps on marching on; that's the part of him that exists forever. That's what you take along. Everything else, not.

That's why it's so important to build up the mind of your children. That's the best investment you can make for them because it'll be forever. Of course, if you feed poison into their minds, you're corrupting them forever. If you let them watch the television you're teaching them the worst things and it leaves stains on their souls. It's better to feed your children *chazir* than to feed them television, because the *chazir* goes only into his stomach; the pervert on the television tells him things, shows him things, that goes into his *neshamah*. A parent has to be vigilant! What am I giving over to my child? What am I doing to create him?

Your Favorite Child

Now before we go on and talk more about giving over to your children, and recreating them again and again, I want to make sure that *everybody* is interested. Because some people don't have any children to train – they never had any children or some are already past the age of training their children; whatever they did they did and their children

are out of the house already. And so, you have to understand that this is a subject that pertains to every person because we are all children of ourselves.

I always say the same *maamar*, אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ – *These are the children of Noach: Noach*. Which means Noach was Noach's best child. Noach had other children. He had a beautiful son, Shem. He had a very fine son Yefes. But the best son that Noach had was Noach himself. And it's not a *drash* that I invented. It's a *Medrash*. אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ תּוֹלְדוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁל צְדִיקִים מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם וְהִגֵּרַת לְבָבָהּ. It means that the most important function of לְבָבָהּ is what you tell yourself, what you accomplish with yourself.

The Selfish Seder

That's why we read in the Haggada that מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר וְרַבֵּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְרַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּנֵי עֲזַרְיָה וְרַבֵּי עֲקִיבָא וְרַבֵּי טַרְפוֹן, these great men were conducting the Seder together on Pesach night in a place called Bnei Brak. But nothing is mentioned about their children, their families. Isn't it a remarkable thing? Were they in another room? It doesn't mention it. And even in another room, they were deprived of the company of their fathers.

The answer is that these Chachomim understood that they are their own best children. They knew the secret that the best way to serve Hashem is to teach *yourself*, to make yourself better and better. That's what He wants of you most. "I've given you a certain amount of protoplasm and your job is to make the very best you can out of it." Of course included in that is raising a family, teaching others, yes. But your most important function is to take that body of yours and build a mind on top of it.

And so I suspect that one year they made the Seder on their own. Maybe their children were grown already and they had their own families. And if their children will be there, their grandchildren or maybe great grandchildren, so there might be joking around – when there's children there's always joking around, playing around – and the story will be interrupted. They wanted this one time to focus on creating themselves.

What did they do? They told some of their sons to manage the Seder for the family somewhere else and these great men got together for the purpose of improving themselves by coming closer to Hashem. You hear such a thing? On that beautiful, noble, festive night they forsook their families in order to become greater because כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה – *the more you accomplish*, וְהַרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּה – *the more valuable you become*. And so that's

what these *roshei yeshiva* did. As great as they were in giving over to the generations – they had big families and *yeshivos* too – but they knew that building themselves was the number one job.

Talking to Yourself

Of course we can't do that. The *roshei yeshivah* won't let you come and sit with them, and they're probably sitting with their families anyway. So you're out of luck but at least you should understand how important it is to speak to yourself too. Whatever you're saying at the Seder, or even all year long to your children, you make sure to be your best listener.

As much as you accomplish with others, you're your own child too. **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ** means you too. Even if you're a man of seventy, you can still do a big job on yourself. You're your own child and you have to prepare yourself to live successfully for the next years, however many they're going to be, a career of utilizing the days that still remain for you in order to prepare for the Next World.

And therefore whatever we're going to say here about parents training children is just as true for any person training himself. Life is precious, every minute of it, and it's a good idea to make yourself the recipient of all your instruction. You can even chastise yourself. You can even hit yourself. Of course there are more effective things than hitting yourself, but there are ways of training yourself. And the first thing is to understand that you're a child too and you have to listen, to listen to all good instruction.

Four Children, One Mission

Now, because the giving over of our traditions and creating future generations is of the utmost importance – our great job in this world is what's stated in the Haggada; to see that the Torah is handed down from generation to generation, to give over and create children – therefore it can't be done superficially, without attention to details.

And that's why Chazal tell us that **בְּנֵי אַרְבָּעָה בְּנֵי תוֹרָה** – the Torah spoke about four different kinds of children. Children means the generation that's going to be taught or that has to be taught and four children means there are four general classes of people: the *chacham*, the *rasha*, the *tam* and the *eino yodeia lish'ol*. And we cannot ignore any

listening, he gives away his years for that. He spends all of his spare time pursuing knowledge of the Torah because that's his greatest desire.

Developing the Chacham

Now, if you have a son who is a *chacham* — let's say he has an interest in learning and in addition to that, he has a good head too — so you have to thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu every day, day and night. You're a fortunate man! You have the best material to work with!

That's why when you get married, don't marry a dumb blonde just because she's good looking. Who knows what her children are going to be? It's good to marry a smart girl. Marry a good *frum* girl who's also smart and *daven* that your children should get your wife's genes.

And if you're fortunate enough to be *zocheh* to have a good son who wants to learn and he has a good head too, then you have a *beis kibul*; you have a receptacle in which you could pour in all of your idealism. And if you yourself are too busy to do that or maybe you don't have enough to pour in, so you hire the right teachers. You put him in the good *yeshivos* where experts are going to pour into him all the good things, all the Torah and Torah ideology.

Living With Purpose

Now, it doesn't mean that we don't want our children to be established as professionals, as big money earners. Why not? Nothing wrong. But that's not our first job. Our prime purpose in life is to have children and to hand over our tradition to our children. And so if you choose the best *yeshivah* and you encourage him to study, you're fulfilling your purpose in this world. While you're standing in the factory and you're working or you're standing in your store and you're trying to earn a livelihood, you have to know you're living for a purpose.

Of course, it doesn't mean you can rely on that. Don't just put your children in a Torah institution and think they're being taken care of. This function of handing over is too big for that. Every so often you should slip the *rebbe* some money to make sure he's thinking a little more about your child. You must check every week to see if your child is keeping up with the class or not. If he's not, it's a danger sign.

Sometimes, boys go very bad because they're discouraged and disillusioned. And so it's very important to spend a lot of time with them. Some mothers with little boys sometimes spend evenings teaching them

Chumash; idealistic women do that and it's a very good investment. You have to check constantly and make sure that the child is succeeding in the yeshiva. That's included in this great function of teaching your sons.

Answering the Chacham

But now it's Pesach night and you're sitting with your son and you have to answer him something. There's something that you must tell him now, a general principle that every *chacham* needs to hear. And the Haggadah tells you what to say: **אֵין מִפִּטְרִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח אֲפִיקוֹמָן** – After you finish the *korban Pesach*, you shouldn't eat any dessert. Now that doesn't mean it's the only thing. It says **בְּהִלְכוֹת פֶּסַח** – like the laws of Pesach. And so we tell him everything. There's very much to talk about on Pesach. There's a *Mesichta Pesachim*, all the laws of *korban pesach* and *chometz* and *matzah* and *marror*. Pesach is a very big subject, but of all the examples, the Baal Haggadah chose this one example, that in the olden days, after they ate of the Pesach lamb, there should be no desert. It's a remarkable thing. Out of thousands of possible laws the Haggadah could have cited, he just quoted this one.

The reason is: he's telling us something here. “You proud father, you fortunate parent that has a *ben chacham*. Whether it's an eight year old *chacham* who is bubbling over with enthusiasm for his Torah studies or whether he's eighteen and he's ready to go to the *kollel* soon, he's a successful yeshiva man – the same is a daughter too, if she's a successful Beis Yaakov girl – you're having *nachas* from your children. But there's something now you must tell them.” Even a *chacham* needs guidance and admonition, and a father has to know how to talk to a *chacham*.

And so the father is told to say to the son, “My *nachas*, my *chacham* son, you're asking now avidly. You want to hear all the things about the Torah. I'm going to tell you one thing, a symbol for everything else. Tonight if we were *zocheh* to be in the Beis Hamikdash days, we'd eat the *korban Pesach*. And the last thing we would eat at the *seder* would be a piece of meat of the *korban Pesach*. Suppose after that you would have a desire to eat some cooked prunes, or a piece of *pesachdige* cake. Nothing doing! **אֵין מִפִּטְרִין אַחַר הַפֶּסַח** – After that great feast of the *korban pesach*, after we experience the great exhilaration of performing that important mitzvah, don't eat anything else.

“Don't eat anything, because you want to remember **יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם**. You want the taste of the mitzvah to be in your mouth **מִצְרַיִם בֶּל יָמִי חִיָּה**.”

forever. That's the principle involved here, that the taste of the mitzvah should linger in your mouth as long as possible. We want that when you go to bed, it's with the taste of the *korban Pesach*; and maybe when you get up in the morning you might even still feel that mitzvah taste of last night, that little piece of broiled meat."

The Taste of Idealism

It means, never let the desert of Olam Hazeh, of success in this world, drive away the taste of the love of Torah and *mitzvos* from you. "My son, don't drive out your idealism. The *chochma* of your young days, the desire to become greater and greater, should endure forever and ever." That's what the father is saying to this son! *That's what we're saying to ourselves too!* "My son, now you're a *chacham*; you're asking, you want *eidos*, you want *chukim*, you want *mishpatim*, you want Shas, you want *meforshim*, you want everything. See to it, my son, that this should be what you *always* want.

"And even if you'll be the owner of a big department store one day, you'll be sitting in your office with a Rabbi Akiva Eiger and you're making notes in the margin. That's your life! And if the secretary comes in and brings a sheath of orders, you'll say, 'Put it down. I'll deal with them soon.' Because *this* — the Torah — is your business and the orders are only incidental. When you come home, you're not taking your business with you home. When you come home, you get back to your *seforim*. That's your first love and your last love. Forever and ever, your head should be in the Torah."

Investments Gone Sour

Haven't we seen examples again and again — we shouldn't see — of good boys who eventually cooled off. They didn't become *apikorsim*, *chas v'shalom*; we're not talking about that. But they got older and went into a profession and they lost their taste for the Gemara. They lost their taste for *mussar*, for *avodas Hashem*.

Yes, from time to time they learn, but now they're head over heels in the practical world and as they look back, it's with a little bit of amusement that they view their former enthusiasm. In the olden days, their greatest pleasure was to say a *chiddush*, to learn the *sugya* and ask a lot of *kashes* on it and understand it and add some ideas of their own. But then subsequently because of the exigencies of life — you have

to support a wife and children — so they went into some profession or business and then they became busy with the great task of making money in this world. And now they have a taste for other things.

So one day you'll say, "Oh, my son learned well in the yeshiva, a *lamdan* he was, and now he made it; he's successful and he has a comfortable income and a big beautiful home." That means a failure! It's a tragedy! That's what you raise your *chacham* son to become? An Orthodox money grubber? A *shomer mitzvos* materialist?

Investment Protection

And so it's a great piece of property to have a *ben chacham*, but even with the best son, you have to know what to do about it. It's a mistake for a father to think, "My son has a good head and he wants to learn, he's accomplishing, so now I am *patur*. I don't have to worry about it." No! You can't be satisfied. You have to watch your investment; you have to see to it that it always remains that way.

You know, if you have an expensive property, a high class apartment house, and you have the best tenants and they're paying the biggest rents, you have to put in a lot of effort and planning that it shouldn't get rundown. You have to maintain your investment. You can't just say, "Look, way up on Ocean Parkway there's a fancy apartment house and it's worth so many hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe a million dollars, and there's a manager and I have nothing to worry about. He collects all the rent and I'll just forget about it." Oh no! You have to put a lot of thought into how to protect your investment, your rights. Maybe someday you might wake up and discover that the manager proclaimed himself the new owner of the place. He has obliterated all records that you are the original owner and he's collecting all the rents.

No, no. Don't waste that gift of a son. **יָהֵב הַחֲכָמָה לְחֹכְמִין** – To wise ones You give *chochma*. Our best investments should be in the good ones. Don't be satisfied; put all you have into his head. It doesn't mean we neglect the others, but the good ones should get most of our efforts. That's the one who will get you the biggest return on your investment.

The Old Chacham

Now how to do it? You don't do it merely by saying these words at the Seder. If necessary, the father should put the son into a *kollel*. He should marry him off and support him. The father should look for ways

and means to enable the son to continue always. And if the son goes into business or a profession, as much as possible, the father should stand over him and admonish him, “Don’t become a businessman! Do it for your livelihood, but make sure that in your soul you’re still a man who loves the Torah with all your heart!”

We have to constantly remind him, and ourselves, of this great ideal, that all the days of his life he should never let the deserts of Olam Hazeah wash down the taste of his idealism.

I once visited an old age home in Baltimore — many years ago. I saw the old people sitting there dejected, downcast, depressed. But there was one old man with a white beard sitting by the table by himself and he was learning Gemara. He was reviewing what he once learned and he was shaking; aaah, *geshmak!* He was saying it with pleasure; what he once learnt, he was learning it over again. Aah! **כָּל יְמֵי חַיֵּיךְ** — *All the days of your life*. He was still feeling the ‘taste of the *afikoman*’ in his mouth in his old age!

That’s what we beg of our son the *chacham*, and our daughter too — and remember what we said earlier, that we’re talking to ourselves too — “My son, please I beg of you; you’re an idealist. I love you. Hashem loves you. But make sure you remain that way forever. You only have one chance in this world — make sure to utilize it!”

Part IV. The Wicked Children

Investing in the Rasha

And now we come to the not-so-good son, the *rasha*. A bad son means that everything breaks down. It’s a bitter feeling, a hole in the heart. All your hopes now seem ruined; it looks like your life is purposeless. “I lived for that? A son who’s a *rasha*?!”

So the Haggada tells us what to do in a case like that. You don’t throw up your hands and just surrender. It’s a problem to be dealt with! Every child is a wealth of opportunity and a *ben rasha*, no less than the good son, is like an apartment house that you’ll own forever and ever. But sometimes an apartment house has leaks in the roof, sometimes the tenants set fires in the halls. It doesn’t mean that you just abandon it.

You can still save the property. You just have to know what to do to salvage your investment.

Haven't we seen that again and again? I have seen in my short time tremendous surprises in life! I have seen boys who were *mammesh* the worst – it doesn't mean the worst always turn out the best, but I have seen some who were actually the worst. It was a hopeless situation and in the course of years, they turned out to be so good that they really are stunning in their excellence! Stunning in their love of Torah, stunning in their *yiras Shamayim*!

Benny and the Rav

I remember a story when I was a boy, I went out to the hall to take a drink in the yeshiva and I saw a boy there. He was playing in the hallway, being wild.

I said, "Benny, what are you doing here? Why aren't you sitting and learning?" That's all I said.

Years later, I'm in a yeshiva *gedolah*, a big yeshiva in New York, and who comes in? Benny.

I said, "What are you doing here?"

He said he joined the yeshiva. Benny joined this big yeshiva! How did that happen?

He said, "You remember when I was in the hall and you spoke to me; you said I shouldn't run around?"

"From *that* it happened?!"

He said, "From that day on, I changed."

It's a true story. Benny went on and he became a rabbi later. He was *nifter* already – a long time ago – but he was a diamond. All he needed was some polishing, some sharpening of the rough edges.

I can tell you stories upon stories, but I am afraid to because some people might recognize themselves when they hear this tape and they would feel hurt because they forgot their past. But I've seen enough cases like that to know that it's wrong for any parent to give up on a son who's a *rasha*. You can never tell what will happen.

Of course, if you'll do something about it, then it's more plausible that something will happen. There are certain things you should do, you

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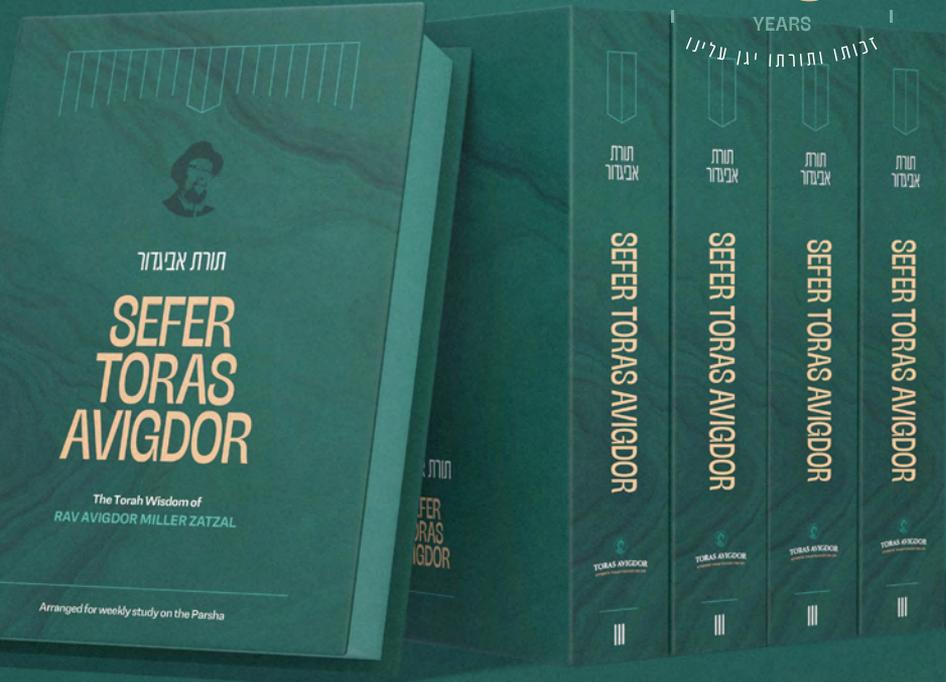
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should try to do. Sometimes the surprise comes despite your inactivity, but there are things to do.

Talking Turkey at Home

First of all, sometimes you have to talk turkey to a son. In Yiddish you say, “Talk with *baktzeiner*.” Not merely with your front teeth; with your back teeth, you have to talk to him, forcefully. A father shouldn’t back down and be gentle and make concessions.

Not only with children, by the way; we have to tell all Jews that they must toe the line. There are no concessions. One of the great troubles by some of the Jewish people is when they’re too weak in dealing with *reshaim*. And *reshaim* take over the synagogues, take over the institutions and there are concessions and concessions and that’s how they finally arrive at nothing. And so אַתְּ שְׂנֵי הַקְּהִלָּה means everybody must keep the Torah. You have to adhere to our laws.

Turkey With Trimmings

But your son, he’s your especial responsibility. And if it’s required, you have to be tough with him. It means you have to take a son that doesn’t want to go to yeshiva, and you have to yank him out of bed. You have to make sure he’s always in the yeshiva. Of course, that’s not to say you shouldn’t give him inducements. You should give him bribes too; certainly. Whatever you can use, methods, inducements, to make him happy with his learning, certainly you should do, but the first thing is not to yield to your children. That’s how a father has to be. He has to be tough. No concessions! A Jew has to toe the line!

Sometimes you might even have to take the *rasha* and give him a slap. In the good old days, to make a person good, you gave a slap, even a big boy. Don’t do it today, by the way, but in the good old days, even big children you made better by giving them a *potch*. Girls too; I once worked in a Beis Yaakov and the *menahel* told me that. He said, “You think it’s not a good thing to punish girls? Girls should be punished too. It’s very good for them.” Punishment is a great thing. Only today you have to be careful, that’s all.

And you’ll have *nachas*. Even the son whom we don’t have so much *nachas* from right now, we’re happy to have him with us anyhow at the Seder because we know there’s a lot of potential there. And the end he might become a *chacham* too. But you must teach him to toe the line;

הַקְהָה אֶת שְׂפִינֵי. A lot of boys who bummed around, but they had strict fathers, sometimes strict mothers too, and they turned into *chachamim* in the end.

The Better Rasha

But I'm going to tell you something now that it could be you won't hear in other places. I think that the *rasha* child in the Haggadah is not what we think. You know in some Haggadas there's a picture of the *rasha* as a man with a Roman uniform or a boy wearing boxing gloves. *Chas v'shalom*. In the old Jewish home there wasn't any *rasha* like that. The *ben rasha* was a *frum* boy actually – only he wasn't good enough.

What does he say, this *frum rasha*? מָה הָעֲבֹרָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם – “What's this *avodah* for you that we're busy with here at the Seder?” And the *mefarshim* say that when he opened his mouth he let the cat out of the bag; he showed that there's a problem here.

Now, the fact that he said *lachem*, to you, isn't what makes him a *rasha*. After all, the *chacham* also said a similar word; *eschem* – you. But the Yerushalmi explains that the father smells something here from before the word *lachem*. מָה הָעֲבֹרָה הַזֹּאת – What is this *avodah* that you're doing? The father is listening carefully and he's thinking, “Something is rotten here. My *chacham* son didn't say the word *avodah*. This one says *avodah*.”

What's the Avoidah?

Now, *avodah* is a *frum* word; *avodas Hashem*! The service of Hashem. Ay yah yay, that's a wonderful *avodah*! But the word *avodah*, it means work. And even though he's asking honestly, “What does all this symbolize? What is the purpose?”, but he slipped in this word ‘*avodah*’, work, because he senses the work in it! He feels that it's *work* to keep the Torah. “We have to keep everything, surely! But you don't have to go overboard for it. You have to make yourself crazy for the Torah? You have to kill yourself for it?” Because he senses it as work.

That's what the Yerushalmi says, that the *rasha* slipped in a word that gave him away, and the father sees now that the word *lachem* also means something. He realizes now that there's more to his *lachem* than we first thought. *Lachem* means לָכֶם וְלֹא לִי; “My *frum* brother is going overboard. He's a fanatic. It's good, but it's too much, it's *avodah*. Such fanaticism is *lachem*, for you, not for me.”

Now, the *rasha* son didn't mean any harm, he didn't say those words, but the father is listening carefully and he reads between the lines that *es felt ehm hislahavus*, that his son is lacking a little bit in his enthusiasm. And he has to put his foot down now before it gets worse. "Oh, my son! I am afraid what's going to happen. If you start cooling off in your youth already, you become a piece of ice in your later days!"

You have to stand up to your son and אָת שְׂפִינִי הִקְהֵה. Say to him, "My son, you call it work?! You have to know that we were taken out of Egypt because when He gave us a few difficult *mitzvos*, *milah* and *korban pesach*, we were happy with *avodas Hashem*; we were proud to be chosen for *avodah*. And the ones who weren't they didn't come out."

Hashem Needs Every Yid?

You know, a lot of people didn't go out of Mitzrayim. Many Jews remained in Mitzrayim. The Chachomim say that only one out of five went out. Four out of five remained! You know that? Four out of five remained!

Now those Jews who didn't go out of Mitzrayim, what do you think they were, wicked people? No! They were decent Jews. But they sensed that it's work, that it's *shver tzu zein a Yid*. And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "If that's the case it's *shver* for Me to take you out. You're not what I'm looking for. I'm taking My children now to Har Sinai where I'm going to offer them the Torah, and I need them to all shout together, '*Naaseh v'nishma!*' But if these people will come along, they'll have to think it over for a minute and they'll spoil the chorus."

And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "Better you remain here. You're a little bit cooled off and I want hot Jews, not lukewarm Jews." They were good people! But lukewarm Jews are not what Hashem wants. He wants Jews who are burning with enthusiasm!

And that's why when they came to Har Sinai, only the very best came along. They were all *chachomim*, בְּלִנְיָ הַכְּמִים, and that's why all of them *k'ish echad* shouted *naaseh v'nishma*. It was the most successful Kabolas HaTorah. Do you know why it was successful? Because all those who wouldn't say so, were left out. That's why we were successful. Because Hakadosh Baruch Hu left out all those who wouldn't chime in with the chorus.

Warning the Cool Ones

And so we have to warn this child, “My son, right now you look like a *frum* fellow, but in your heart, I'm afraid you're lacking a little bit of *hislahavus*. And if you cool off too much, you won't be able to go with us to our great future. We're a nation that's headed for a great future. And I'm afraid you might drop by the wayside and you'll get lost.”

And that's what happened. Look what happened in our history. Didn't the Aseres Hashevatim go lost? Yes, they went lost. Didn't the Misyavnim go lost? Didn't the Tzedukim go lost? Didn't the Kara'im go lost? Didn't the Reformers go lost? And their children are going lost. The irreligious Jews are going lost because they cooled off and now they became ice altogether.

But we're marching ahead without them! Only those who have a fire in their heart, *they're* going to march ahead till the end of our history. *They'll* be present when Hashem will finally say, אָנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ אָנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ once more. היא ישמענו שְׁנִיחָה – He will let us hear once more His Voice, אָנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

Hashem Wants Every Yid!

And so we say to our children and to ourselves as well, “My child! My child that I care so much about! You'd better warm up now. You better recharge your batteries because אֱלוֹהֵי הָיָה שָׁם לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל. Otherwise you're not going to go to the future with us. The future, to which the Jewish nation is headed, won't be for you. So right now, before it's too late, let's warm up again.”

Of course you have to use words that are suitable to the son, but in general that's what we say. The Jewish nation says to all the dissidents, “You want to be liberals? You want to be different from Klal Yisroel? You want to be more modern? So we're telling you right now you're not going to be together with us when the great final redemption takes place.”

And that's what the father says to his son. It means, “We're not giving up on you. You're a good boy and we want you to come along with us as we fulfill our destiny as the Am Hashem.” Only that sometimes, to get someone on board, to wake him up to his destiny, we have to blunt his teeth a little bit.

Part V. The Simple Children

Simple, Sensible and Straight

And now, the *tam*, the simple son, comes onto the stage. *Tam* means that he's a straight boy; he doesn't have any crookedness in him. He might not know much, but he's a sensible boy, and he says, "מה זאת – what's this?" He wants to know. He's not so eager like the *ben chacham* to know *eidos*, *chukim*, and *mishpatim*. He's not learning Yevomos or Zevochim. But he's a straightforward fellow who's willing to listen.

There are a lot of straightforward Jews like that; children, adults, others, who are excellent material, but if you don't work on them, nothing comes of them. They are good people but they have to be shaped. In the Gemara language, it's called a *goilem*. A *goilem* means an unshaped mass; like a plain block of wood or a lump of clay. You can do anything with it if you have the right kind of craftsman to handle it. But if you don't handle it, it remains a shapeless mass.

And that's the class of people called *tam*. Sometimes they may look to us like a *rasha*, but we are classifying them in the wrong category. Sometimes he might wear blue jeans and long hair, so we jump to conclusions, but it's not so. Actually, he's a *tam* because he knows nothing. And so there are a lot of people in the world who can be made into very good, very big personalities, only you have to know what to say to them.

The Strong Hand

What do you tell them? So the Baal Haggadah says to tell them as follows: בְּרוּךְ יְד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים – *With a strong Hand Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim*. What are we telling him?

You're saying as follows: "My son, do you understand what nation you are part of?! Do you realize what a remarkable lot you fell into?! You must know that what happened to us never happened to any nation before. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu demonstrated His Presence in the events of Yetzias Mitzrayim, it was something that never took place before and would never occur again."

And why did He do it? For all future history. Like He said, "I'm doing this for the purpose לְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶךָ, that you should talk about it to your children." The reason for the miracles in Mitzrayim was *not* because

they were necessary. We didn't need miracles to go out of Mitzrayim. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to save the Am Yisroel from Pharaoh, He could have made them go out in much less spectacular ways.

No Dreaming at the Seder

He could have sent a dream to Pharaoh like He sent a dream to *Lavan Ha'arami* or to the old Pharaoh when Avraham was there. And Pharaoh would've gotten up in the morning and he would have called together his counselors and he would have said, "Look people, I decided to let the Bnei Yisroel go." Although Pharaoh himself wouldn't do it, Hakadosh Baruch Hu could have moved his heart. He could have caused Pharaoh to change his mind and he would have sent them out. They would have marched out and finished.

Had we been delivered from Mitzrayim because Pharaoh had a dream and we would have marched out in an ordinary way, what would there be to talk about? We'd sit down at the table with a dream? Now, did we see the dream? Pharaoh had a dream at night. He came out and told people that he had a dream. And that's the end of it, nothing to talk about.

And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu did something out of the ordinary; He made Pharaoh's heart hard. A very unusual case; He took away Pharaoh's free will and He didn't let him send them out. Because He wanted to forge a nation by means of seeing His strong Hand and so וַיִּצְאֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה.

Creating a Nation

"And therefore my son, you're asking *מה זאת*? It's because He wants you to remember Him forever! He took us out with a Powerful Hand in order to make such a supernatural demonstration, once and forever, for all the generations to talk about. Hakadosh Baruch Hu demonstrated that He was in control, that nature — not only nature but nations — will always yield to His Will. That's what the *nissim* of Mitzrayim tell us. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the Author of nature and he turned it upside down to demonstrate that we are His beloved people.

"And that my son, you should know, is the entire reason for our being Jews. The entire Torah stands on that greatness that Hashem showed us at that time. The foundation for the entire Jewish people is to know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed the most extraordinary deeds to

show that we are *the* one nation. מי כְּעַמּוֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל – Who is like Your people Yisroel, גוי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ – one nation in the world.”

I had a *rebbe* in Slabodka who used to say “*goy echaaaaaad bo'oretz*”. Like you say “*Hashem echaaaaaad*”; it's the same. We are ooooooone nation in the world. Because just like the *emunah* of the Torah requires you to think of *achdus Hashem*, that He's Echad, the Only One, the same *emunah* requires you with all your heart to say *goy echaaaaaad*. We are one nation in the world. Not we are a *good* nation. Not we are a *fine* nation. We are *the* nation. There is nobody like us!

Jewish Pride

“And so my son the *tam*, not only you have to be proud you're a Jew. The blacks are also proud they're black; *Rachmona litzlan*. But when we say we're proud, we mean something else. We're proud of Hashem, Who created heaven and earth, Who created the universe. We're proud of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. We're proud that *Hashem echad* is ours, and that at Yetzias Mitzrayim He said בְּנֵי בְּבָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, that we are the one nation in the world forever and ever.

“My son, the entire Torah is only about that. Did you ever pass a church and hear a loudspeaker saying – he's reading from the bible – “And the Lord spoke to Patrick”? No, it doesn't say that. “The L-rd spoke to Moshe”; it says. Even the priest says that; even Christians say the L-rd spoke to Moshe. Mohammedans also say that. So now there are millions of Mohammedans and millions of Christians, *lehavdil*, besides Jews, who admit this. So why shouldn't we be proud of it?”

And therefore we should know that Hashem says, הֵן גּוֹיִם כְּמַר מִדְּלִי, *“The nations are nothing but like a drop in a bucket.* כְּאֶפֶס וְתוֹהוּ נִחְשְׁבוּ לִי – In My eyes they are like zero and nothing.”

Oh, you can't say that. America is zero? Russia is zero? Japan is zero?

Yes. Everybody together is zero! And it's not just talk. It's Torah. And if you don't feel it in your bones, then you're still a *tam*. You have a lot to study yet, to understand that principle. The *tam* in every one of us has to know כִּי בְּחֻזֶק יָד, that Hashem demonstrated who we are and that we therefore are dedicated to Him because He dedicated everything in the world to us.

The Bracha for Tam-Tams

And that's the way to deal with all of the *tams* in our nation. Let them know what they're missing! We have a Hashem Who took us out of Mitzrayim and made us His people forever. And we'll think about Him and thank Him and speak about Him forever just because of that.

And so how much should you do to answer the *tam*? As much as you can. If you can take a grandchild on your knee or if he's too big, put him on the chair near you and tell him to make a *bracha*. Let's say your daughter, your spoiled daughter is visiting you from California and she brought along a big strapping bum with long hair, her son. A *tam*, an ignorant fellow. But he has an open ear. He's looking around, "מַה זֶה?" – What's this? We don't do this in San Francisco."

So sit him next to you and take a glass of soda or an apple and tell him to take it in his hand and let him say, "*Baruch*," with you. You don't know what you're accomplishing. Tell him, "You know Whom you're thanking now? You know Whom you're speaking to? To Hashem Who took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong Hand. The One Who is giving you this apple right now is the One Who turned over nature to make us His people. So let's say a *bracha* to Him together."

You're changing that man's soul. Once in his life he said a *bracha*! Of course he's only doing it because the old man is going to give him something; he knows that. His mother told him that he's lousy with money and so he wants to be on the good side of his grandfather. It makes no difference. If you can pass on to a grandchild even one time saying a *bracha*!

Of course if you have something better to do, let's say you can sit down with your grandson and learn with him a piece of *Shev Shmaatsa*, excellent. That's the best way to transmit the tradition. But suppose he's very far away from *Shev Shmaatsa*, then that's an excellent thing to do.

Feeding the Tams

And once you start, keep at it. טָפְי לֵה כְּתוּרָא – You should stuff him like an ox, the Gemara says. You know in the olden days when you wanted to have a fat ox, so you used to have somebody hold him and you stuffed down his throat a lot of food, even when he didn't want to eat, but you

wanted him to become fat. So you take a boy, a not so interested boy, a not so interested girl even, and you stuff Yiddishkeit down their throats.

Of course, you put a little flavor on it to make it more appetizing, ten dollars here, twenty dollars there, and it helps it go down more smoothly. **סְפִי לֵא כְתוּרָא** – You have to find ways of stuffing your children and grandchildren. Eventually they'll become something.

We shouldn't waste their material because Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us this material to make something out of them. Even the most plain Jews can become recipients and transmitters of our great tradition. Even if they won't become big teachers, even if they won't represent the ideals of the Torah on the highest level, still, it is remarkable how great they can become.

The Goldmines

Especially the women of our nation. Although they may be very intelligent, their path to greatness is not by becoming great teachers of Torah. She won't say a *shiur* in the Lakewood Yeshiva. But in her own home, to her children she can be a very great teacher – *toras imecha* – no question about it! And so, girls too, must be filled with Torah idealism. Every girl is a goldmine because she's the one who molds the *tams* of our nation! She is going to be the one who'll produce and train the children in the early years. She will see to it that they make *brachos* and think about Hashem always and thank Him always and go to the *beis hamedrash* to learn. She becomes one of our greatest assets because it's the *frum* women of the Am Yisroel who cause their children to become *bnei Torah*.

Again and again we have examples in our history. A *rav* once told me – the *rav* passed away already. He said, “How did I come to be a *rav*?” He was a big *talmid chacham*. But he was a poor boy and he had no father. And his mother wanted him to go to a yeshiva, but the yeshiva was far away and they couldn't afford to pay the fare. In those days you had to pay a wagon driver to let you on the wagon. She couldn't afford it. So his poor mother took him on her back. He was a boy about seven. He couldn't walk that far. And she trudged with him on her back for miles and miles on the country road until she brought him to the yeshiva and she deposited him in the yeshiva. And he repeated that story to me with tears, what his mother did for him.

Carrying the Nation

Now to carry a boy on your back, you don't have to be a Torah giant, but she had the spirit. And these women of spirit, again and again, are the authors of our greatest men. There's no question, many of them were *tams* and they became the biggest assets that our nation ever acquired. And so, if we know how to transmit to the girls of our nation all of our ideals, we are creating the future of our people.

Every *tam* can be built up and made great. You'll whisper into his ear whenever you get a chance. "Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong Hand to make us His people, and just because of that alone, my son, you should be able to appreciate your proud function as a servant of Hashem. *Hashem Echad* chose us to be His *goy echad!*" Stuff him more and more with Torah ideals and Torah idealism and little by little it'll have an effect. You're creating a future! You're creating a nation!

Part VI. The Uninquisitive Children

Opening the Door

And we come finally, last but not least, to the **שְׂאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לְשַׁאֵל**, the one who doesn't know how to ask. It means he's either too young or too obtuse; whatever it is, he's not asking. And so the Haggadah tells us **פְּתַח לוֹ**; you have to be the one to initiate.

They're not asking? That's not an excuse. Of course, the best thing is when children ask. When the children show that they want to know, aah, how fortunate is that father. But in case they don't so **אֵת פְּתַח לוֹ**; you have to open up.

And you have to do it right away. In order to get there first, you must start talking to your child as soon as possible. Before someone tells him 'Jack and Jill went up a hill to fetch a pail of water,' or other Mother Goose rhymes; the first thing has to be **תּוֹרָה צְנָה לָנוּ מִשָּׁה**, that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim to receive the Torah. And no time should be lost; otherwise Mickey Mouse gets there first. What will he get out of stupid books that make it that mice are talking? And there are worse things. Disney has much worse things. And once they get in, it's difficult to introduce Moshe Rabbeinu.

And so you *must* get the opening salvo in! Even before they are able to ask you must start telling them the Torah viewpoint. If you don't tell them that Hakadosh Baruch Hu took us out of Mitzrayim to be His people, to serve Him, and that this is the purpose of life, then other ideas about the purpose of life will come in. If you don't tell them that when Hakadosh Baruch Hu took us out of Mitzrayim, He showed us that He is in charge of everything, then they're going to get the idea that the laws of nature are in charge of everything, that accidents are in charge of everything.

Home Schooling

And so from the beginning **אֶת פְּתוּחַ לֹ**. It requires some forethought, some cunning, how to bring it up, but the general rule is **וְשִׁנְתֶם לְבַבְכֶם** וְדַבַּרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְכֶם – Talk to them all the time about Hashem, about Torah, about Torah ideology. Talk about Gan Eden and Gehinom. Both of them! You have talk *sechar v'onesh* from the beginning so that these fundamentals get settled in. Find a way to make that your table talk.

Speak about Hakadosh Baruch Hu and about the wonders of Creation and the miracles you can see in nature. Tell them that rain is fun, that a rainy day is wonderful; and do it before they learn to say, “Rain, rain, go away...”. I don't know about today, but I remember that's how they used to teach in the schools. It was a song; when we saw rain coming down so that's what we sang. It was in the public school but I'm afraid that it's sung in the yeshivahs and Beis Yaakovs too. And so you have to get to first base with your child before someone else does!

Don't wait for the child to ask. You open up the door in his mind and start bringing material in before somebody else does. The boy next door will talk to him, the people on the street will talk to him, and he'll hear foolishness, wickedness. And therefore you have to start talking to your little boy, your little girl, as soon as possible. That's our big job in this world to transmit our traditions even to the little children, to take whatever Torah ideology you heard or whatever you discovered and hand it over to the next generation.

Pesach Parties

And Pesach especially. Sit down on Chol Hamoed, and make a little *mesibah*; even a five minute *mesibah* to fulfill this command of the Baal Haggadah, **אֶת פְּתוּחַ לֹ**. A little gathering, Wednesday afternoon, Thursday

morning. They didn't ask for it but take out some *pesach'dig* cake, some matzah and sit down and talk for a couple of minutes about how Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim. "*Kinderlach*, aren't we lucky that Hashem brought ten *makkos* on the Mitzrim and saved us?"

"Yes."

"Can you imagine an entire nation walking out together out of slavery?"

And they all chime in, "Yes. But can we go to the park now?" *That* question they do ask. "Can we go to the zoo?"

But you did what you have to do and now you can take them out to the zoo.

And when you're at the zoo or the park, you can still talk to them. It's not only for the Seder night the mitzvah of talking to your children. **וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ** – So you're walking by the elephants or the monkeys, and you're thinking about what the Baal Haggadah recommends. **אֶת פֶּתַח לוֹ** – *What do you say to them?* **בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם** – *Tell them that Hashem took us out of Egypt so that we should do the mitzvos.*" You see, children? We're going to eat *matzah* for lunch. That's why Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim."

Isn't that a nice thing? A father and mother walking with their children in the park on Chol Hamoed, and they're talking about doing mitzvos all of our lives because of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Exodus Into Mitzvos

Of course, you yourself have to understand that first. It says **בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה**, that we were taken out of Mitzrayim in order that we should eat *matzah* and *maror*. We were taken out of Mitzrayim in order we should do *mitzvos*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't take us out of Mitzrayim because He couldn't bear to see His people being oppressed. That wasn't the reason. He took us out of Mitzrayim that we should be His people, and His people means, *only to do mitzvos*.

If you don't do *mitzvos* then you're not the Am Hashem. Hakadosh Baruch Hu has no interest in Jews who stop doing *mitzvos*. You could be a Zionist and a big patriot for Israel, but if you're a man who doesn't do all the *mitzvos* then you don't belong to the Jewish people and you deserve to get lost in the maelstrom of history. It's only **בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה** because

of *matzah* and *maror*, because of *mitzvos*, that we were taken out of Mitzrayim, that we were plucked out of history to be His people.

Yetzias Mitzrayim requires a Jew to devote himself to *avodas Hashem*. Otherwise, if he'll speak about going out of Mitzrayim and not do anything so it's nothing at all. It's only **רְבִירִים בְּעֵלְמָא**.

Living Yetzias Mitzrayim

And therefore when a Jew performs *mitzvos*, he is fulfilling Yetzias Mitzrayim. Every man and every woman, every boy and every girl should live lives of Yetzias Mizrayim. Which means, it's hard to do this? You have to think, was it easier when we were under Pharaoh? It costs too much money to do this? Well, did we have any money under Pharaoh? You have to sacrifice certain conveniences to be a good Jew? What conveniences did we have under Pharaoh? And therefore nothing should be too difficult for a Jew because that's his way of fulfilling Yetzias Mitzrayim.

And so when a Jew says, "I want to live in a comfortable neighborhood far away. I want to live where there are a lot of trees, in the suburbs, even though it's not as *frum* as Flatbush," so we say, "Did the Jews live where they wanted under Pharaoh in Mitzrayim?" The Jews would have been happy to live in Brownsville if they could leave Egypt. He didn't take you out of Egypt to run away from the Jewish people and to get lost among *apikorsim* or among gentiles.

So therefore a Jew has no excuse. We're not in this world to become citizens of some far out town in New Jersey. We're not in this world to become citizens of some rural community in the South or in Florida. We're in this world to serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu!

Teaching by Example

And if you understand that, if you taught yourself the principle of **בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה**, so you'll be able to give it over to your family too. Because you'll live that way! A Jew who wants to teach his children what it means Yetzias Mitzrayim, he demonstrates it by not sacrificing his accomplishments in *avodas Hashem* for the sake for some superficial material conveniences. As much as possible, he demonstrates to his children that his life is just one goal, to show that he remembers the One Who took us out of Mitzrayim. "My children," the father says, "because of that, because He took us out **בְּאֹתוֹת וּבְמוֹפְתִים**, nothing should be too difficult for us.

We shouldn't settle for 50% or 75%! We are all His, like we were all the possession of Pharaoh.”

And just like Pharaoh took our children and threw them into the Nile to destroy them or he immured them in the walls, so now that Hashem saved them we take them and give them to the *roshei yeshivah*. We say, “Take our children! They're yours. Make them great in Torah! We don't want any *nachas* except Torah *nachas*. We want nothing from our children except they should be devoted to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.”

And when our children, even the ones who don't ask or can't ask, see that this is our way of appreciating Yetzias Mitzrayim, that's the best answer we can give them. They have to be trained to the idea that the preservation of our people depends on keeping the word of Hashem.

Open the Door for Strangers

Now, it's important to note that included in this category today are very many Jews; there are a lot of Jews who don't know, and they don't ask anything. So don't wait for them to ask; אַתָּה פִּתַּח לוֹ. And it's possible to train a generation of אֵינוּ יוֹדְעֵי לְשׂאוֹל who don't even know how to ask, to understand this great principle that the safety of our nation depends on our loyalty to the Torah. That's our lifeline — to keep the Torah.

They didn't ring your bell and ask you? Start telling them anyhow. That's part of your business in life, to go out to the ignorant Jews who know nothing at all; don't give up on them. There are Jewish children, very many of them, even in this neighborhood who are like wooden dumbbells when it comes to Judaism.

And I want to tell you people that there are so many good ways you can help; it's remarkable that it's not being done. Suppose you pay three dollars to the Lubavitcher for a subscription to “Talks and Tales.” It costs three dollars a year. Every month they send a little magazine in English with stories and some admonitions. It's a good influence. It talks about the wonders of Hashem in nature; other things. Every month it comes.

Now it could be they'll throw it in the wastebasket the first time, but if it's a printed thing, sooner or later they'll pick it up in an idle moment and read it. It may have an effect. It comes every month by the mailman, and in the course of time, it piles up. Children might read it. Parents might read it. Who knows what it could do? It might make a revolution!

Sometimes it's so easy to put your foot in the doorway and it's a pity that people don't even think of these methods.

Adopt-a-House

Not only children. Why don't you adopt an apartment house? Adopt a big apartment house on Ocean Avenue and say this house is mine. Find out who lives there. You could find out. You could walk through it and write down the names until the janitor kicks you out. Give him \$10; he'll let you walk around. Take down all the names. I once did that. You can take the name of everybody in the apartment house. Adopt it. Make it your project. And send printed information, flyers.

How much does that cost already? We did that in East Flatbush. Before we moved the shul here we used to do that. In the tens of thousands, we distributed flyers about Hakadosh Baruch Hu, about Shabbos, about sending children to yeshiva instead of public school. We called it 'The Traditional Observance Organization.' We had big propaganda coming out of our little shul.

Propagandizing for Hashem

If you can't afford it all at once, little by little. There's work to be done and we're not even beginning to do anything at all. Lubavitcher are doing something but otherwise what's being done with the general public? Choose a family or two and send them a subscription to the Jewish Press. Have it mailed to a few families who don't know anything. I don't say a yeshiva man should read the Jewish Press but for some people it's the biggest thing you can do. A Jewish newspaper in English, for some people is an eye-opener! Buy them a subscription and every week the mailman brings in a package of propaganda; propaganda about *kashrus* and about Shabbos and about supporting yeshivas. So you are sleeping, but your money is working for you.

It's a tremendous thing. People don't realize what they can avail themselves of. They'll be working in the Jewish Press, let's say, or in whatever newspaper it is, producing the propaganda, and the mailman will be delivering it and you have the *zechus* of transmitting the traditions.

You cannot tell, sometimes, they will listen to something and they will change their lives – it's happened again and again. Once you open the door you can accomplish very much. Even people without ability are able to receive the traditions and to hand them over to their children.

And sometimes their children become so great that you see that this link was worth forging. They're the link to excellent children.

And so we have to know that even the **אֵינו יוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׂאוֹל** they are a great opportunity. And therefore that's the principle the Baal Haggadah is telling us: Don't wait for him to ask! **אַתָּה פִּתַּח לוֹ**. Go out and spread the word!

Part VII. A Final Word to the Children

A Personal Redemption

And so we see that all of our children, all of the Am Yisroel, have great potential. Whatever category they're in – and everyone is a little bit of something – everyone is part of our nation, part of the chain of our *mesorah*, and everyone can become great. Now, it doesn't mean that everyone will be a great *chacham* one day; even if you'll study Torah, it doesn't mean you'll sit next to the Steipler and talk in learning. But every Jew can fulfill his or her potential and be great in Olam Haba forever.

That's why we say **בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם** – *Because of what Hashem did for me when I went out of Mitzrayim*" (Shemos 13:8). For me! Yetzias Mitzrayim, that tremendous event, full of *nissim v'niflaos* that was the birth of our nation, was made for every individual. The Torah Jew is expected to appreciate the entire panorama of Yetzias Mitzrayim – all the upheavals, all the *makkos*, the great victory, the great *mapalah*, the downfall of the enemy – as if it was done only for him. "Everything He did, He did it for me!"

Poshut Pshat in Pesach

Now, I know most people don't begin to grasp that. You think it's just *drush*, just some words meant to inspire. No, we don't say *drush* here. It's the plain truth, *pshuto shel mikra*. **לִי** – *It was done for me*. And that's because each individual, whatever you are, wherever you are, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is thinking about you. He's waiting to see what you can accomplish in this one chance you have in this world.

That's included in what we say, **חִיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ בְּאֵלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם** – *every person should regard himself as if he personally went out of Egypt* (Pesachim 10:5). It's not just something we say at the Seder on Pesach, something we try to imagine. It's the true *hashkafas hachaim*.

The *esser makkos*? It was for me. *Kriyas Yam Suf*? He did it for me. We became a nation? That was for me. That's how you should think, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu intended it for every person individually, so that each one should gain the maximum. That's how important every Yisroel is!

Pesach Gaavah

The Chovos Halevavos says that when a person considers himself or herself unworthy of greatness, that's a wrong humility. Actually it's not humility at all. It's an inferiority complex, a weakness, not a virtue. And if a person won't accomplish things because of that weakness, it's a tragedy. Everyone has an obligation to recognize his self-worth and live up to his potential greatness which Yetzias Mitzrayim created for him.

All of our responsibilities and obligations are traced back to that great event when we heard the tremendous words of Hakadosh Baruch Hu that shook the world: **בְּהָאָמַר ה' בְּנִי בְּכוֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל** – Hashem says, “My son, My firstborn is Yisroel.” All the rest of Pesach is just a commentary on these words. These words are so important that if we stopped here and didn't hear anything else, it would be enough for us to study forever. The promise that we'll be His forever, that we'll serve Him forever, it all comes from then.

And it means each one of us individually. That's how important we are! And in order to appreciate how much is expected from you, the Torah says **עָשָׂה ה' לִי**. You're important enough that all of Yetzias Mitzrayim was for you. Hakadosh Baruch Hu made the whole Yetzias Mitzrayim three thousand years ago so that you should come along one time in history and make yourself as great as you can in *avodas Hashem*.

The Greatness of Others

And that's why every Jew no matter what category he finds himself in – the *chacham* or the *rasha* or the *tam* or the *eino yodeia lish'ol* – has to realize that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is looking down at him. He's looking and waiting, “When will you live up to all of the greatness that I prepared for you by means of Yetzias Mitzrayim?”

Of course, we don't lose sight of the fact that at the same time that it was done for you, it was done for him and for him and for him and for him too. Just like it was done for you to give you that once in history opportunity to be an *eved Hashem*, same thing everyone else.

And therefore everyone else too, all four classes, have to be dealt with properly in order to achieve this noble purpose of the Jewish people, of והגדרת לבנה.

No matter what we say we cannot overemphasize this great aspect of the function of והגדרת, of appreciating the differences between one child and another, between one Jew and another, and teaching everyone, including ourselves, כפי מה שהוא, according to the way he is. והגדרת לבנה! That's one of the most important functions of the Jew, and Pesach is the especial time when we all take part in participating in and fulfilling that great historical function of the Am Yisroel.

It's the motto of Pesach but actually it's the principle underlying everything we do, all year long. All year long you're still sitting around the table; on Purim and Shavuos and Chanukah. Every Shabbos, every day, is an opportunity to fulfill the great function of teaching and creating, teaching and creating, more and more. You should speak about Hashem and His Torah to everyone; your children, your students, your friends and neighbors, and especially to yourself. All year long we're continuing the Pesach Seder. *Ah gantz yur Pesach!*

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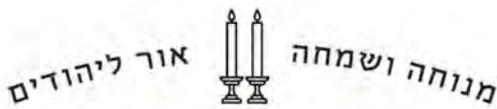

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"You Saw What I Did to Egypt"

The first time we met Hashem what message did He give us? When the Israelites left Egypt and came to Mount Sinai, the first thing Hashem said to Moshe was as follows: So shall you say to the House of Yaakov, and tell the Children of Israel: "You saw what I did to Egypt. And I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me." (Shemos 19:1-4)

What message does "You saw what I did to Egypt" convey? Hashem was saying to us: "In Egypt you saw harsh plagues that never happened to anyone in the history of the world. All the water turned to blood, frogs took over and were absolutely everywhere; all kinds of wild beasts roamed the streets and houses; there were locusts, hail, etc. "Why did all this happen? Why did I smite Egypt so fiercely? Because we were about to make a marriage covenant between us."

The most important thing a wife needs to know about her prospective husband is that he thinks of her and cares about what happens to her. Without this element, the whole relationship falls apart. Accordingly, Hashem was saying to us: "You saw what I did to Egypt -when the Egyptians afflicted you, it agitated Me greatly. I couldn't bear it, and I brought ferocious plagues upon them! I subjected them to punishments that had never been seen before."

What is the message here? That Hashem did not merely sign a legal contract with us: You do mitzvos, and I give you health; you keep Shabbos, and I give you good children. Hashem is not like an ATM machine, where you punch in the right code and get what you want. On the contrary, Hashem is saying to us, "This is not an automated service. We have a real, live relationship of love!" This real, live relationship of love is what Shabbos is all about. Shabbos is the key mitzvah whose purpose is to grant us a relationship with Hashem. *Shabbos Kodesh* creates a situation in which we can find Hashem and be with Him in a real, live way. Hashem gave us Shabbos so we could find Him.

This may be compared to a husband and wife. They sometimes fight or disagree, but this is not yet a reason for them to separate. Whereas if we could look inside their hearts and discover that there is no real connection between them, and in fact they hate each other, then there is no reason for them to stay together. Each goes his or her own way.

Shabbos Kodesh is that connection deep down in the heart. Here is where we can tell whether they love each other; whether they have a real, live relationship. This is the special importance of Shabbos. If a person keeps Shabbos, it means the basis of his marriage to Hashem is still intact. He yells, she yells, but they're still a married couple. But someone who desecrates Shabbos severs this connection. The basic love is lost, and the whole relationship is gone. This is where all of *Yiddishkeit* begins and ends.

In our generation we are very susceptible to ups and downs in our *ruchniyus*, and from time to time we need to be inspired anew, to bring Hashem back into our lives and our davening. And the very best way to do this is with *Shabbos Kodesh!*

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Adapted by R' Y. Levy from Nefesh Shimshon, Shabbos Kodesh, Rav Shimshon Pincus, Feldheim

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