

# Pesah In A Time of Crisis

## 1) The Four Children

The Torah refers to four children: One wise, one wicked, one simple and one who does not know how to ask a question.

What does the wise child say? "What are the testimonials, statutes and laws Adonai our God commanded you?" You should tell that child about the laws of *Pesah*, that one may eat no dessert after eating the *Pesah* offering.

What does the wicked son say? "What is the meaning of this service to **you**?" To **you** and not to the child. Since the child excludes themselves from the community, they have denied a basic principle of Judaism. You should blunt the child's teeth by saying: "It is for the sake of this that God did for **me** when I left Egypt. For **me** and not for that child. If the child was there they would not have been redeemed."

What does the simple child say? "What's this?" You should say to that child: "With a strong hand God took me out of Egypt, from the house of servitude."

And the one who does not know how to ask, you start for him, as the Torah says: "And you shall tell your child on that day, saying 'It is for the sake of this that God did for me when **I** left Egypt.'"

## 2) Exile

ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל. ברוך הוא. שהקדוש ברוך הוא חשב את-הקץ, לעשות כמה שאמר לאברהם אבינו בברית בין הבתרים, שאמר לאברהם ידע תדע, כיגר יהיה זרעך, בארץ לא להם, ועבדום וענו אתם ארבע מאות שנה: וגם את-הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי. ואחרי כן יצאי, ברכש גדול:

BLESSED is the One who keeps the Promise to *Yisrael*. The Holy One Blessed be God **calculated the end of our exile** and acted just as promised to *Avraham* our Father at the Covenant between the Pieces. (*Genesis 15:7-17*):

“And God said to Avram: You must know, that your seed will be strangers in a land not theirs; the people of that land will put them in servitude and afflict them for four hundred years. But as for the nation to which they are in servitude – I will bring judgment on them, and after that your seed will go out with great wealth” (*Genesis 15:13-14*). From *A Different Night* by Noam Zion and David Dishon

\* \* \*

It is said in the *Midrash* that one of the ministers of Egypt criticized Moshe saying, “Why didn’t the Egyptian bondage begin at the time that God first announced it, at the time of *Avraham*? The answer is that the Holy One, Blessed be God, proclaimed the Egyptian exile to the Patriarchs and the Patriarchs experienced great sadness when they imagined the future exile of their children. And this sadness was so great it made it as if all of *Yisrael* was already in exile.

This is, then, the true meaning of the phrase, “God calculated the end of our exile...”---Even though the Patriarchs were not actually physically part of the Egyptian exile, they were part of the exile in their thinking in that they experienced great sadness...*Kedushat Levi*

## Beth Meyer Synagogue

### C) God's Houses

טו וילאמר מלך מצרים למיילדות העברית אשר שם האחת שפירה ושם השנית פועה: טז וילאמר בילדך את העבריות וראיתן על האבנים אם בגו הוא והמתן אותו ואם בת הוא וחיה: יז ותיראו, המיילדות את האלהים ולא עשו כאשר דבר אליהן מלך מצרים ונתחיו, את הילדים: יח ויקרא מלך מצרים למיילדות וילאמר להן מדוע עשיתן הדבר הזה ונתחיו, את הילדים: יט ותאמרן, המיילדות אל פרעה כי לא כנשים המצרית העברית כי חיות הנה בטרם תבוא אליהן המיילדות וילדו: כ ויטב אלהים למיילדות וירב העם ויעצמו מאד: כא ויהי כי יראו המיילדות את האלהים ויעש להם בתים:

<sup>15</sup>The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shifrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup>saying, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live.” <sup>17</sup>the midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. <sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?” <sup>19</sup>The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth.” <sup>20</sup>And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly.

<sup>21</sup>And because the midwives feared God, God established houses for them.

*Exodus 1:15-21*

\* \* \*

ויעש להם בתים. בתי כהונה ולויה ומלכות שקרויין בתים, ויבן את בית ה' ואת בית המלך, כהונה ולויה מיוכד, ומלכות ממרים, כדאיתא במסכת סוטה.

God established houses for them: The houses of Priests, Levites and Kings are all called “houses”... In this case, because of the midwives' lifesaving actions, Moshe was saved. And Moshe was both a priest and a king-like figure for the Hebrews. Therefore, the midwives' built two “houses” by saving Moshe. *Rashi*

When one fears a person, one cannot remain calm, because fear is the opposite of being calm. However, fear of Heaven brings calm to the soul. Thus, because the midwives feared God, “God made them houses”; a house implies calm. As they were calm because of their fear of Heaven, they did not have any fear of Pharaoh's decrees. *Mei HaShiloah, Rebbe Mordechai Leiner of Izbica*