

Parsha Plug: Parshat Bo

| Shemot 13:6-16 | שמות יג:טז |
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| <p>6 For seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes, and on the seventh day, there is a festival for the Lord. 7 Unleavened cakes shall be eaten during the seven days, and no leaven shall be seen of yours [in your possession], and no leavening shall be seen of yours throughout all of your borders. 8 And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, “Because of this, the Lord did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt.” 9 And it shall be to you as a sign upon your hand and as a remembrance between your eyes, in order that the law of the Lord shall be in your mouth, for with a mighty hand the Lord took you out of Egypt. 10 And you shall keep this statute at its appointed time, from year to year. 11 And it will come to pass when the Lord will bring you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and to your forefathers, and He has given it to you, 12 that you shall give over to the Lord whatever opens the womb, and every miscarriage that opens the womb of an animal which will be yours, the males belong to the Lord. 13 And every firstborn donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, and if you do not redeem [it], you shall decapitate it, and every firstborn of man among your sons, you shall redeem. 14 And it will come to pass if your son asks you in the future, saying, “What is this?” you shall say to him, “With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 15 And it came to pass when Pharaoh was too stubborn to let us out, the Lord slew every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I slaughter [for a sacrifice] all males that open the womb, and every firstborn of my sons I will redeem”. 16 And it shall be for a sign upon your hand and for ornaments between your eyes, for with a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt.</p> | <p>ו שבעת ימים תאכל מצות וביום השביעי חג לה: ח והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים: ט והיה לך לאות עליך ולזכרון בין עיניך למען תהיה תורת ה' בפין פי ביד חזקה הוצאת ה' ממצרים: י ושמת את החקה הזאת למועדה מימים למימה: יא והיה פי יבאך ה' אל-ארץ הכנעני כאשר נשבע לך ולאבתך ונתנה לך: יב והעברת כל-פטר-רחם לה' וכל-פטר שגר בהמה אשר יהיה לך הזכרים לה: יג וכל-פטר חמר תפדה בשה ואם-לא תפדה וערפתו וכל בכור אדם בבניך תפדה: יד והיה פי-ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר מה זה את ואמרת אליו בת זק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים: טו והיה פי-הקשה פרעה לשלחנו ויהרג ה' כל-בכור בארץ מצרים מבכר אדם ועד-בכור בהמה על-פני אני זבח לה' כל-פטר רחם הזכרים וכל-בכור בני אפדה: טז והיה לאות עליך ולטופת בין עיניך פי בת זק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:</p> |

| Ibn Ezra Shemot 13:15 | אבן עזרא שמות יג:טו |
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| <p>What does it mean that God took us out of Egypt with a strong hand? It refers to the plague of the firstborns, for through it we went out from Egypt; not through the first plagues. So said the psalmist: “To Him Who smote the Egyptians with their firstborn, for His kindness is eternal” (Psalm 136:10).</p> | <p>ויהי החל לומר בחזק יד הוציאנו, ושב לפרש מה היתה היד החזקה, והיא מכת הבכורים, כי על יד זה יצאו ממצרים, ולא על יד מכות הראשונות. וככה אמר המשורר, למכה מצרים בבכוריהם כי לעולם חסדו (תהל' קלו, י).</p> |

| Rashi on Shemot 13:14 | רש"י שמות יג:יד |
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| <p>If your son asks you in the future: מחר sometimes means “now” and מחר sometimes means “at a later time,” such as it does here...What is this?: This is the question of the simple child, who does not know how to pose his question in depth, and asks a general question, “What is this?” Elsewhere it says: “What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments, etc.?” (Devarim 6: 20). This is the question of the wise son. The Torah spoke regarding four sons: the wicked one, who</p> | <p>כי ישאלך בנך מחר: יש מחר שהוא עכשיו, ויש מחר שהוא לאחר זמן, כגון זה...מה זאת: זה תינוק טפש שאינו יודע להעמיק שאלתו וסותם ושואל מה זאת, ובמקום אחר הוא אומר (דברים ו כ) מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים וגו',</p> |

asks "What is this service to you?" (Shemot 12:26), the one who does not understand to ask, "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'Because of this, the Lord did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt'" (Shemot 13:8), the one who asks a general question, and the one who asks in a wise manner.

הרי זאת שאלת בן חכם. דברה תורה כנגד ארבעה בנים, רשע ושאינו יודע לשאול והשואל דרך סתומה והשואל דרך חכמה:

Chovat HaTalmidim Introduction

חובת התלמידים תוכן הספר

Not all children are the same in learning. Rather it depends on each child's nature, mind, and character traits. And the teacher must recognize this...and what a teacher does for one student cannot be reproduced for another, but must be tailored to each child's nature, will, and traits. This what Shlomo HaMelech hinted at when he said, "Train a child according to his way", each according to his own way.

וכיון שכן, לא בכל הנערים שוה הוא החנוך, תלוי הוא בכל נער ונער כפי טבעו, דעתו, מדותיו וכו', ואותם על המחנך להכיר...ולא מה שיצוה ויחנך לזה יצוה ויחנך לתלמיד אחר השונה ממנו בטבע, רצון, מדות וכו'. וזה רמז לנו שלמה המלך "חנך לנער על פי דרכו", על פי דרכו של כל אחד ואחד.

Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, quoted from *The Educational Pedagogy of the Four Sons* by Russell Jay Hendel <https://www.lookstein.org/articles/4sons.pdf>

The Passover Haggadah speaks about the four sons. These four sons are normally translated into English as follows: The *wise* son, the *simple* son, the *wicked* son and the son *who can't ask*. I, however, would suggest the following translation: The *wise*, *simple*, *wicked* and *apathetic* son. The suggested translation of *apathetic* vs. *who can't ask* reflects the position that the four sons are really four typologies. That is, the four sons are not four real *people* but rather four *extremes* or *four ideals*. In the real world no particular child is ever exactly like one of these four sons. Rather, each child is a *mixture* of these four extremes; the individuality of the child lies in his/her unique mixture of the four typologies. If we accept this assumption—that the four sons are four ideals—then it follows that the traditional translation would render two of the sons—the *simple* and the *who-can't-ask*—as the same ideal. But these sons are distinct Biblical paragraphs and therefore should represent two different extremes of behavior. It follows that it would be preferable to select a translation where these four sons represent four *distinct* extremes. My suggested translation—*apathetic*—is also consistent with the Hebrew. In fact, the Hebrew root Yud-Dalet-Ayin can mean *care* as well as *know*. Thus the Hebrew phrase *sheayno yodaya lishol* could be translated as "Who doesn't care to ask" vs. "Who doesn't *know* how to ask."

Masechet Pesachim 116b

מסכת פסחים קט"ז:

The Lord did this for me: In every generation a person is obligated to view himself as if he went out of Egypt, as it is said, "Because of this, the Lord did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt".

עשה ה' לי: בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים, שנאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Spiritual Child* Bo 5776

[Moses] doesn't speak about tomorrow but about the distant future. He does not celebrate the moment of liberation. Instead he wants to ensure that it will form part of the people's memory until the end of time. He wants each generation to pass on the story to the next. He wants Jewish parents to become educators, and Jewish children to be guardians of

the past for the sake of the future. Inspired by God, Moses taught the Israelites the lesson arrived at via a different route by the Chinese: *If you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for a century, educate a child.* Jews became famous throughout the ages for putting education first. Where others built castles and palaces, Jews built schools and houses of study. From this flowed all the familiar achievements in which we take collective pride: the fact that Jews knew their texts even in ages of mass illiteracy; the record of Jewish scholarship and intellect; the astonishing over-representation of Jews among the shapers of the modern mind; the Jewish reputation, sometimes admired, sometimes feared, sometimes caricatured, for mental agility, argument, debate, and the ability to see all sides of a disagreement. But Moses' point wasn't simply this. God never commanded us: Thou shall win a Nobel Prize. What he wanted us to teach our children was a story. He wanted us to help our children understand who they are, where they came from, what happened to their ancestors to make them the distinctive people they became and what moments in their history shaped their lives and dreams. He wanted us to give our children an identity by turning history into memory, and memory itself into a sense of responsibility. Jews were not summoned to be a nation of intellectuals. They were called on to be actors in a drama of redemption, a people invited by God to bring blessings into the world by the way they lived and sanctified life... That is why Moses so often emphasises the role of the question in the process of education: "When your child asks you, saying..." – a feature ritualised at the Seder table in the form of the Mah nishtanah. Judaism is a questioning and argumentative faith, in which even the greatest ask questions of God, and in which the rabbis of the Mishnah and Midrash constantly disagree. Rigid doctrinal faith that discourages questions, calling instead for blind obedience and submission, is psychologically damaging and fails to prepare a child for the complexity of real life. What is more, the Torah is careful, in the first paragraph of the Shema, to say, "You shall love the Lord your God ..." before saying, "You shall teach these things diligently to your children." Parenthood works when your children see that you love what you want them to learn. The long walk to freedom, suggests this week's parsha, is not just a matter of history and politics, let alone miracles. It has to do with the relationship between parents and children. It is about telling the story and passing it on across the generations. It is about a sense of God's presence in our lives. It is about making space for transcendence, wonder, gratitude, humility, empathy, love, forgiveness and compassion, ornamented by ritual, song and prayer. These help to give a child confidence, trust and hope, along with a sense of identity, belonging and at-home-ness in the universe. You cannot build a healthy society out of emotionally unhealthy families and angry and conflicted children. Faith begins in families. Hope is born in the home.