

All the Days of Your Life



Ben Zoma understood that when the Torah says to remember the story of the exodus “all the days of your life” it means that you have to mention it at night, and not just in the morning. The rest of the sages disagree. They say you only have to mention it in the morning. The extra “all” in “all the days of your life” is to tell you that we’ll be telling this story even after the moshiach comes.

It turns out that the rabbis are also debating another important point: In the messianic era, will there be any point in recounting the miraculous story of how we left Egypt?

Ben Zoma would tell you, “No way! After seeing the entire world enter an era of wisdom and peace, we will tell that story instead. As for miracles—we will be ever-aware of all the amazing miracles constantly surrounding us!”

But the rest of the rabbis disagree. They say that even after all the incredible miracles when we leave this final exile—way beyond the miracles of Egypt—we will still make mention of the exodus from Egypt. Because that’s when it all began.

Which means that all the days since that first mass escape are really one long exodus. Every day, whatever we are doing, wherever we are doing it, is another step in leaving our personal exile, and the exile of the whole world. It’s just that leaving Egypt was the first leap forward, and ever since then, we’re running on that impetus.

All human freedom began with the exodus.

ביאורים בהגש"פ (קה"ת) ע' קלו

The Bright Child

What's inside this child's question? Here are some possibilities:

1. This child is really excited about learning. That's real wisdom. So you teach.

2. This child doesn't get why we have to do all these rituals. If G-d is spiritual, then why don't we just philosophize and meditate?

So you explain that G-d is beyond spiritual. You can't reach G-d with your mind, but you can be one with G-d by doing mitzvahs.

3. This child doesn't get how we could reach to a G-d who is way beyond any spiritual philosophizing or meditating. Why do we try to understand anything at all? Just do it!

So you explain that G-d wants us to connect to Him with every part of us, including our mind and heart. The ultimate point in the seder is the taste of a matzah lingering in your mouth, symbolizing the delicious flavor of knowing what can't be known.



מאמר ד"ה כימי צאתך תשי"ב

The Chilled Out Child

Kind of nasty, telling the kid off like that. I mean, at least he asked a question. And for that, he gets told this whole seder is irrelevant to him—because, if he had been there, he would have been left behind.



But maybe we're not reading that right. Maybe we should read that as, "If you had have been **there**, you would have been left behind. But, of course, this time around, you'll come with us. Nobody will be left behind, because the Torah has made us into an indivisible whole. Only then and there, before the Torah was given, would you have never been redeemed.

And maybe when this chilled-out child hears that, he'll get how amazing this Torah is—that it connects us together no matter what.

Maybe that's why we put him next to the bright child—because the bright child understands the true meaning of this answer, can teach his brother what it means, and illuminate his way to find meaning and belonging in his Jewishness.

ביאורים בהגש"פ (קה"ת) ע' קנ ואילך

The Simple Child

The simple child may not be too bright, but in a way, he's more in touch with G-d.

First of all, because G-d is simple. When you're complicated, you end up going in circles and you lose the simple point at the center, a.k.a. G-d. That's something bright people need to learn from simple people.

Secondly, because he's forever in wonder. As soon as you've lost touch with wonder, you've lost touch with truth.

It's been said that all the deepest ideas discussed by the greatest Jewish philosophers and mystics are really about one thing: Trying to understand the G-d to whom the simple child prays.

But we can't. As soon as our minds try to grasp anything at all, everything is gone.



The Inquisitively Challenged Child



If you're not inquisitively challenged, you're probably asking:
Where does the Torah speak about four children?

Well, it speaks about them by bringing up their questions. That is, three of their questions. There's one that child we know of from the absence of his question.

Perhaps that's because he's kind of absent himself. Yes, he's sitting there at the seder. He goes through all the motions. He does exactly what he's supposed to do.

But if he were really there, in mind, heart and soul, he would have questions.

ביאורים בהגש"פ (קה"ת) ע' קנה ואילך

The Fifth Child

You may have heard of the fifth child. That's the one who didn't turn up tonight. Probably not his fault. He might not even know it's Passover tonight.

There was a generation not long ago that was the wise child. They had learned much Torah and knew how to ask questions. Then there was a generation that learned Torah, but wanted out—the generation of the child-out child.

Next came a generation that learned only for the bar mitzvah, and could ask only simple questions. Then a generation that didn't even know that there was a question to ask.

And now, the fifth child. The child who doesn't even know that he or she is a Jew.

The seder is for the fifth child, as well. Because if we're inspired enough by this seder, we'll make sure that the fifth child will be at the next one.



Originally, Our Ancestors Were Idolaters

Abraham was the first iconoclast—meaning, an idol-smasher. Abraham saw that demagogues were abusing the natural awe and wonder of the human soul to establish their power over other society.

All on his own, he rediscovered a forgotten truth—that there's really only one source of all power and existence, and He has nothing to do with what these charlatans were preaching.

Most importantly, Abraham had a conviction that this all-powerful being is just and cares about what's going on down here with us little creatures. And so, he stood up for justice and compassion.

And that's how the Jewish People got started.

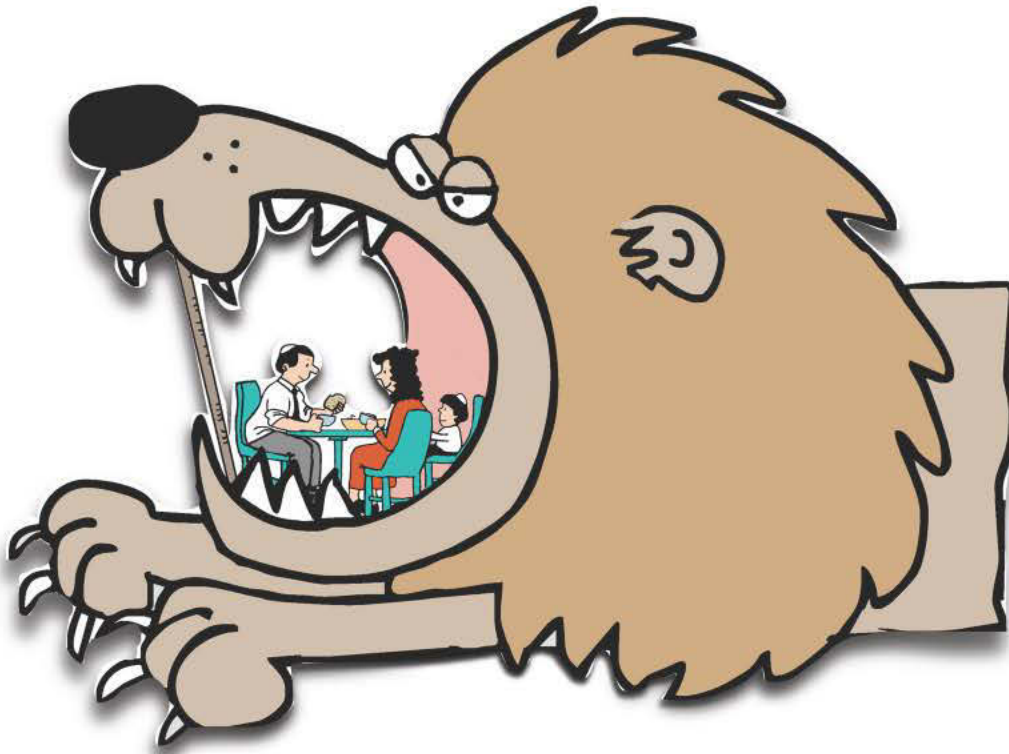


And This Is What Has Stood For Us...

People are looking for miracles. Why did they happen back then and not today?

But the fact that you are here today and you know you are a Jew is the greatest of miracles.

Just because we don't notice the miracles doesn't make them any less miraculous.



The Egyptians Treated Us Badly



If you're identifying with this story, that may be because it sums up the human condition. We're all slaves of Pharaoh.

We're enslaved by our positions in life, by our everyday tasks, and just by having physical bodies. That's our Egypt.

We feel that way because we don't really belong where we are. Because we're all G-d's children. Within each one of us breathes a spark of the divine.

So here's this divine spark sent to earth on a mission to heal and transform the world, and instead it's sitting in some cubicle creating dumb ads to convince people to buy stuff they don't need. Or some other form of building storehouses for Pharaoh.

There's a key difference, however. In Egypt, we could only wait for G-d to take us out from there with miracles and wonders. In our case, G-d is also waiting for us to do some miracles and wonders.

That's why He gave us a Torah, to show us how to make miracles. To take the mud of a mundane world and transform it into the building bricks of a beautiful world.

We do our miracle, and He does the rest.

And G-d Knew

Wait a minute! What's this "And G-d knew" business? Doesn't G-d always know? Isn't that part of His job description as omniscient G-d?

But knowing, in Hebrew, means a lot more than awareness. It means engaging yourself with something. As in "Adam knew Eve." When really know something when you engage yourself with it.

So, yes, G-d is aware of everything happening in His world. The world only happens because He's aware of it. But the point here is that bad stuff was happening that got the Creator of the Universe re-engaged with His universe.

And that re-engagement brought about miracles and liberation.



Has any god ever tried...

Hey, that's a good point, isn't it?
Why does no one else have a story
about their people being
miraculously redeemed from
slavery?

It seems it never occurred
anywhere else. And it's not
something you can make up and
convince people it happened to
them.

Meaning that with these miracles
and wonders, the Creator was
bringing something new into His
universe: The idea of human freedom—that we really have no limits.

The exodus was the beginning of the flattening of the Egyptian pyramid. It
meant that even the guy at the bottom of society can talk with the Ultimate
Boss of All Things, and his cry will be heard.



Counting the Plagues

—A Five Step Detox Program

It seems these rabbis understood the plagues as a sort of detox program for Egypt. People's behavior, words and thoughts leave negative energy in the environment. The plagues of blood, lice, etc. were the effects of that negativity being released. That bad energy wasn't letting us leave. But once it was cleaned up, we could get released too.

All matter is composed of four qualities that the ancients called fire, wind, water and earth. We would probably call them positive, negative, matter and anti-matter. And then there's the quintessence of everything, the very fabric of existence.

If the human being is only capable of effecting the outer layer of reality, then each plague was one detox. But if we effect the basic elements of reality, then a quadruple detox was needed. And if human behavior effects the core substance of reality, then each plague had to be a five-step program.

The need for such a great number of plagues is an indication of how deeply we were held captive by the bad energy of Egypt. All of that had to be flushed out by these plagues before we could be torn out of there.

The need for more plagues, then, means we have more to be grateful for.

Which explains why this leads into Dayenu.



Matzah

We ran out of Egypt. Because we were liberated by an outside force it was only a partial liberation. You're only really free when you achieve freedom from within.



But in messianic times, we won't have to run. That liberation will be achieved by our own hard work and suffering over these many years of exile.

So it will be real, through and through. There will be nothing left from which to run. Everything of this world will remain, and it will all be good.

Because everything G-d made is inherently good. It's just that it's up to us to reveal that good.

Rabban Gamliel Says...

What is the most important thing to have at a Seder? A Jew.

The matzah didn't leave Egypt. Neither did the wine or the bitter herbs. The lamb isn't even here. The Jew is the only thing here that's real. The Jew actually left Egypt.

Once he is here, the matzah is the matzah that he took with him from Egypt, the bitter herbs are the bitterness of his slavery, the wine is the taste of freedom, and the lamb—we'll have that soon, also.



In Every Generation

The Egyptians ruled over our bodies and our spirits. When we left Egypt, our spirits were eternally liberated. Whatever others may inflict upon us, we retain the power at any moment to connect to the Infinite and be free.

That is a mitzvah—a connection to the Infinite, available at all times, in all places.

