

THAT YOU MAY TELL YOUR SON

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

In the parshiot that begin Sefer Shemot (Shemot, Va'eira, Bo, whose initials spell shuv), Moshe again (shuv) and again asks Pharaoh to release the Children of Israel from slavery, to remove the yoke of Egypt from them, the forced labors to which they were subjected. Thus chapter after chapter, verse after verse, Scripture is filled with subjects regarding faith and confidence in G-d, sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit, and little by little we begin to see the amazing story of our deliverance from Egypt, one of the foundations of our faith in the Creator of the universe.

Between the lines of this incredible story, and by the plagues that fall one by one on Pharaoh and his people, we also witness the discussion between the Holy One, blessed be He, and Pharaoh through the intermediary of Moshe and Aaron. Not only that, but the Torah also shows us the twists and turns of Pharaoh's heart, along with the magnitude of his evil. King Solomon, the wisest of all men, said: "The heart of kings is unsearchable" (Mishlei 25:3), and the Sages have explained: "Rabba bar Mehasia also said in the name of Rabbi Chama bar Gorias in Rav's name: 'If all seas were ink, reeds pens, the heavens parchment, and all men writers, they would not suffice to write down the intricacies of government.' Rav Mesharshia said: 'What verse [teaches this]? 'The heaven for height, the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable' [Mishlei 25:3]' " (Shabbat 11a). On Sefer Mishlei, Rashi explains: "The heart of kings is unsearchable – they must judge, wage war, and pay attention to everyone. Even if they speak all languages and write all laws, this they cannot write." If this applies to all kings, how much more does it apply to Pharaoh, who ruled Egypt and dominated most of the nations of the world at the time, as we read in books. It is clear that he possessed great wisdom, and yet he was completely wicked, denying the essential truth and making himself into a god.

Despite Pharaoh's tremendous wisdom, the hearts of kings and princes are in the hands of Hashem, as King Solomon says: "Like streams of water is the heart of a king in the hand of Hashem. Wherever He wishes, so He directs it" (Mishlei 21:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, prevented Pharaoh from repenting, as Scripture testifies by stating: "For I have hardened his heart" (Shemot 10:1), all in order "that you may tell in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have made a mockery of Egypt, and My signs that I placed among them – that you may know that I am Hashem" (v.2). Here the Torah is telling us that the entire goal behind the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, all the incessant demands of Moshe ("send out the people, that they may serve Me"), was to increase the glory of Heaven in order for faith in the Creator

to be strengthened for all the generations, the goal being "that you may tell in the ears of your son... that you may know that I am Hashem."

Let us think for a moment: A Jew is learning the parsha, reading it twice in Hebrew and once in Aramaic, but does not stop to think about the marvels of faith that it reveals. Can we really say that he has fulfilled the Creator's will?

Another Jew is sitting down, surrounded by his family, relatives, and friends, to celebrate the Passover Seder. He drinks four cups of wine, eats matza, and reads the entire Haggadah. Yet during all the mitzvot that he performs, he doesn't stop for a moment to reflect upon the significance of each miracle surrounding the exodus from Egypt. He fails to reflect upon the fact that there is One Who creates and guides everything, the One Who sent us into this world, nor does he think about faith for a single instant. Can we say that this Jew has fulfilled the objective behind the mitzvot of Passover and the Seder?

It is clear that these two Jews – as honorable as they may be, and although meriting a reward – have not succeeded in performing the will of the Creator. In fact they have missed the point. True, one has read the parsha, and true, the other has read the Haggadah. Yet they resemble a body without a soul, for the main purpose of these parshiot and the whole story of the exodus from Egypt is to strengthen our faith, "That you may know that I am Hashem." This is the goal, and whoever has not attained it has missed the mark. He has missed the essence, the whole reason for why the exodus from Egypt was necessary, the reason why there were ten plagues, and for which the Children of Israel waited in Egypt during all that time: "That you may know that I am Hashem."

In fact it is clear that G-d could have struck the Egyptians with a single, powerful blow that would have defeated them, at which point they would have agreed to liberate the Children of Israel. Furthermore, it is clear that if G-d had not hardened Pharaoh's heart, there would not have been a need for the ten plagues. Yet in that case, there also would not have been an opportunity to derive the greatest benefit from the Exodus and its recounting. Hence G-d made the Egyptians, with Pharaoh at their head, go through the crucible of faith step by step, one plague after another. Each plague had its own particular objective, each containing a specific teaching. First the destruction of Egypt's idols, then the revelation of an outstretched arm, then more and more, everything that the Creator did for our sake. We have a duty to draw the greatest lesson from these miracles, to use this incredible opportunity which we have in order to attain faith and confidence in G-d. We must implant these in our heart in order for them to grow there, that they may push us towards a love for the Creator.



Publication of
HEVRAT PINTO

Under the Direction of
**Rabbi David Hanania
Pinto Shlita**

CHEVRAT PINTO

207 West 78th Street
New York - NY 10024

Tel: 1 212 721 0230

www.hevratpinto.org
hevratpinto@aol.com

Editor-in-Chief:
Hanania Soussan

Drawing Others Closer

It is written, “In one house shall it be eaten. You shall not remove any of the meat from the house to the outside, and you shall not break a bone of it” (Shemot 12:46).

We learn these specific laws starting from those which deal with the consumption of offerings in the Temple. The Torah thus establishes that the sanctity of the Jewish home is equal to that of the Temple, for just as it was forbidden to remove meat from the Temple, it was also forbidden to remove the Passover offering from the home. In fact the mitzvah of the Passover offering brought sanctity to the Jewish home.

This idea illustrates the way in which the dwellings of Israel differed from those of the Egyptians, and the way in which the Jewish people as a whole was built. It was upon the foundations of holiness and purity, which protected the dwellings of Israel, the home, and the family.

Working for Peace in the Home

A profound and extremely important concept is mentioned in the marvelous book *Barchi Nafshi*:

We must attribute tremendous importance to peace in the home. By doing so, we will avoid creating (G-d forbid) a situation in which the atmosphere of peace and joy is diminished in the slightest way. Each of us must work to ensure that harmony in the home is maintained, and that it can grow and blossom.

A historic question was put before the great men of Israel. It was brought by a member of *Lev L’Achim*, a Torah outreach organization, who had visited a man’s home and realized that he wanted to return to G-d with all his heart. However the issue was dividing the man and his wife, who was threatening to divorce him if he drew closer to Judaism.

The man’s wife violently argued with him and explicitly said that if she ever saw him going to Torah classes or doing anything to show that he was interested in teshuvah, she would leave him in a heartbeat and thus destroy their home.

The question was raised: What should be done in such a case, when the man wanted to draw closer to Judaism and his wife was preventing him? Should he choose the path of teshuvah and abandon his home?

To answer this question, the gaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv cited the words of the Gemara: “Why was our father Abraham punished and his children doomed to Egyptian servitude for 210 years?” (Nedarim 32a). One answer was provided by Rabbi Yochanan: “Because he prevented men from coming beneath the wings of the Shechinah” (ibid.).

Now these were evil and perverted men, and yet Abraham incurred responsibility for them. As a result, his children were severely punished by being enslaved in Egypt.

We therefore see that the obligation to draw individuals closer to G-d applies to all categories of people.

He Can and Should Draw His Wife Closer

The Midrash recounts the story of how an 80-year-old man went to see Abraham, who offered him something to eat and drink, but only if he blessed G-d beforehand. The old man refused, even taking his own idol out of his pocket and blessing it.

Abraham continued to ask him to bless G-d, but the old man stubbornly refused.

At the end of the day, Abraham’s throat was parched due to his supplications and requests for this old man to bless G-d. He therefore gave up, asked the man to pay him, and sent him away in peace.

During the night, says the Midrash, G-d appeared to Abraham and said: “Abraham, Abraham, I have been waiting for this man to repent for 80 years, and I have not lost hope. Yet you, in a single day, have already given up?” Abraham then went to look for him in the desert of Beersheba, where he found him and brought him back. He spoke to him once more, until he was finally able to lead him to repentance.

From here we learn that the obligation to draw those who have erred closer to Torah also applies to individuals who are extremely far from it. That being the case, is it conceivable that a man should not try to draw his own wife closer to Torah?

In other words, the previous question – whether coming closer to G-d should occur to the detriment of the family unit – has no reason to be asked.

Since Abraham was taken to account because he did not lead an old man to repentance, how much more can – and indeed, should – a man lead his wife closer to Torah? He can certainly do so!

G-d help us to avoid the fate of one who, in order to draw closer to G-d, must break up his home. Apart from everything else that he is taught on Judaism, he must also be taught to sensitize his wife to mitzvot. Sometimes he must invest a great deal of wisdom in this area and “lose” hours, days, and even months in order for his wife to follow this path. A man is nevertheless obligated to do this for his wife, and if he commits himself to the right path and arms himself with patience, with G-d’s help his efforts will succeed.

Upon Arriving at the Sanctuary

In this context, there is good reason to cite what the Rashbam says on the teaching of the Sages: “Do not enter your own house suddenly” (Pesachim 112a). He writes extraordinary things that place the Jewish home on par with the Sanctuary!

The Rashbam cites the Midrash, “When Rabbi Yochanan went to enquire after the welfare of Rabbi Chanina, he would knock at the door in conformity with the text: ‘His sound shall be heard when he goes in’ [Shemot 28:35]” (Vayikra Rabba 21:8).

Similar to the Kohen Gadol, whom the Torah commanded to sew golden bells around the hem of his robe in order to give meaning to the verse, “His sound shall be heard when he goes in,” likewise Rabbi Yochanan made his sound heard before entering his home, for he felt that he was entering the Sanctuary.

How appealing are the words of the Sage!

Not the Egyptian New Year

It is written, “This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first of the months of the year” (Shemot 12:2).

The gaon Rabbi Zeev Ya’avetz Zatzal is surprised by this: Why is this mitzvah the very first which the Children of Israel received upon leaving Egypt?

He responds that, as we know, it was the Egyptians who invented the calendar. They were the ones who instituted the calculation of the year according to the sun, not the moon, as was the norm among the other nations at the time. This is because calculating the months of the year was connected to the time when the Nile overflowed its banks to irrigate the earth. Hence for them, the Egyptian new year began on the day when the Nile arose to irrigate the land of Egypt.

Because the invention of the calendar was considered one of the great successes of Egyptian culture, the first mitzvah given to the Children of Israel was: “This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first of the months of the year.” This told us: Above all, do not celebrate the Egyptian new year, but calculate the Jewish months according to your way.

No Vengeance

It is written, “You shall not leave the entrance of the house until morning” (Shemot 12:22).

In reality, why did the Torah command the Jewish people not to leave their homes for that entire night, until the morning light?

The book Mussar HaYahadut provides us with an explanation:

The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded the Children of Israel that no one should leave his home on the night that the firstborn were being struck for a very simple reason: In order for them not to see the misfortune of their enemies, and thus be filled with the shameful feeling of vengeance.

Pharaoh’s Audacity

It is written, “Pharaoh arose at midnight, he and all his servants” (Shemot 12:30).

We find an explanation for this remark in the book Siftei Tzaddik by Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Elazar Zatzal:

“This teaches us just how brazen Pharaoh was. He had already seen how everything that Moshe said took place. He had heard from his sanctified mouth that the firstborn would be struck in the middle of the night, and yet he had the audacity to go to sleep!”

Included in the Count

It is written, “About 600,000 men on foot, aside from children” (Shemot 12:37).

Rabbeinu Bechaye notes that the expression, “About 600,000” teaches us that there were not exactly 600,000 men. Since the Torah does not give an exact number, nor how many were missing from 600,000, we may say that just one man was missing, and the Torah did not want to give the exact number by mentioning this lack.

We find the following in Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer: “When the Children of Israel left Egypt, all the men numbered 600,000 less one. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He included Himself in the count along with them so they could reach 600,000, as it is written: ‘I will also surely bring you up again’ [Bereshith 46:4].”

Storytelling as an Educational Tool

It is written, “That you may tell in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt, and My signs that I placed among them – that you may know that I am Hashem” (Shemot 10:2).

“That you may tell in the ears of your son” does not mean that the goal of the plagues and all that happened at the time was that they should be recounted to children as a nice story. Rather, it was all meant to implant faith in our children, that the “you may know” should occur through the story of the exodus from Egypt.

The Torah reveals to us that the best way of infusing faith in our children – the proper way to fulfill the mitzvah of educating a child – is “according to his way” [Mishlei 22:6] through storytelling, “that you may tell” precisely in this way. It does not say, “that you may teach,” or “that you may announce” and the like, but “that you may tell” by telling a story that captivates the heart, in order for children to feel and identify with what happened in Egypt. They must literally feel it, as if they had been the ones who left Egypt. In that case, “even when he grows old, he will not depart from it” (ibid.), for there is nothing better than a story about a powerful and strong people – far from faith and the fear of G-d, and forced to acknowledge the existence of the Creator and submit to His demands – to make a child detest Pharaoh and love Moshe, Aaron, and the Children of Israel. It is only in this way that a father can instill in his son, from his earliest years, a complete and upright faith in the Creator of the world.

We may add that telling a story is the best way of transmitting crucial messages to a child, for in this way we can awaken a child’s imagination and familiarize his tender ears to Torah verses. (Note: As we know, the Ba’alei HaMussar have said that the difference between a tzaddik and a rasha is the power of imagination, which can draw a person close to a concrete faith in the Creator of the world.) Now when a child’s ear is sensitized and his imagination is perfected, he can truly feel the story that he hears, and thus automatically understand the lesson it contains in a vivid and expressive way.

For example, if we wish to transmit a message to our children about a certain Torah luminary, it can best be done with a remarkable story that concretizes for the child, as best he can understand, the greatness of that particular Rav. The same applies when we recount the story of the exodus from Egypt, for as we have said: “Train a child according to his way.” Each age corresponds to a particular path, and at every age “that you may tell.” These are straightforward things.

Guard Your Tongue

The “Dust” of Rechilut

Suppose that an individual finds himself among a group of people, and one of these people implies something negative about another person. If that individual then goes and tells the subject that something negative was implied about him, this would constitute the “dust” of Rechilut.

Similarly, if we praise someone in the presence of others, this may lead to resentment, and some harm may result. This is the “dust” of Rechilut.

– Chafetz Chaim

Examine and Verify

It seems that public awareness and understanding of the problem of insects in food increases from day to day and year to year. As early as the month of Shevat, sidewalks in Israel are inundated with a great assortment of stalls selling dried fruits, of which a large number fall under the definition of “infested food.” Scrupulous consumers are careful to examine and verify food before eating it, as well as to properly store food in such a way as to avoid the presence of various insects.

This great increase in vigilance can be attributed to kashrut organizations that have established special training programs and seminars for Mashgichim who work in food production facilities, as well as rabbis who travel from city to city to give presentations on the subject, their goal being to strengthen vigilance among the public so that people can avoid eating anything that contains insects or worms, all while teaching them ways to protect themselves from insects in various food components.

Before all else, we must first cite the Pri Chadash on the laws regarding insects: “I cannot stop myself from reminding Hashem’s people of the grave prohibition against eating insects, for it holds minor importance in public opinion, and when someone commits a sin and repeats it, he thinks that it is permitted. Even Torah scholars and very pious individuals do not pay enough attention to this. Yet each time that a person eats a worm or ant, he transgresses five prohibitions that render him liable to the punishment of malkut, and if he eats flies or mosquitoes, it becomes six malkut. We often encounter this prohibition in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and all kinds of food, and it is impossible to avoid them unless one exercises extreme caution. Hence Scripture multiplied prohibitions in order to encourage us to be very attentive to this mitzvah” (Yoreh Deah 84).

The following is written in Tanna D’vei Rabbi Yishmael: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said: ‘If I had brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt only so they would not render themselves impure through insects, it would have been enough.’” The Ohr HaChaim writes that “one who eats insects, his very soul becomes repugnant.”

Barely Noticeable

The grave findings published in the media during this time, regarding the high percentage of insects found in dried fruits (and who doesn’t eat dried fruits at this time) sometimes falls on deaf ears. Go and try proving to someone who doesn’t actually “see” with his own eyes that a dried apricot or fig is infested with insects and other unwanted things!

Various wild berries, as well as cultivated fruit, represent a virtual greenhouse for gnats and fruit-flies seeking a warm and accommodating shelter to build their “home.” Guavas, for example, are naturally very attractive to fruit-flies, whose eggs can barely be seen on such fruit. The larvae that hatch from these eggs are very tiny and extremely similar in color to that of a guava, and are barely noticeable.

Let us briefly specify the fruits and vegetables that do not have to be verified (according to the book *Bedikat Mazon MiTolaim* by Rav Moshe Veye Shlita):

Fruits: Pineapples, avocados, bananas, canned apricots, canned peaches, fresh dates (frozen), pomegranates (commercially grown), kiwis, mangos, melons, coconuts, pecans, watermelons, pears, and apples.

Vegetables: Carrots, cinnamon, celery root, kohlrabi, canned green peas and potatoes, zucchini, oatmeal (in metallic tins), rice cakes, pumpkin seeds, kernels of corn (canned and frozen), sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.

We Did Not Drink His Tea

In the last decade, leaf vegetables have become increasingly important in regards to insect-free food. Initial credit for this goes to the inhabitants of Gush Katif, who committed themselves to protecting the table of Jews by promoting and putting on the market vegetables that are guaranteed insect-free, food produced at a very high professional and halachic level. They began with lettuce, then moved on to parsley, coriander, and mint, and eventually came upon the novel idea of growing khat.

In his wonderful book entitled *HaKashrut Kahalacha*, Rav Amram Edhery Shlita cites a letter from Rav Yossef Messas Zatzal, who was once asked why the Jews of Morocco drink tea with mint leaves, given that they can harbor insects.

He responded as follows: “Among us, women examine mint leaf by leaf, and then wash the leaves in water and put them into tea. This is what the Halachah says, that they must be checked and then they can be used. Some find it difficult to check them, and so they put the mint into another container to wash it in water, and then they spill hot water over it. They leave it soaking for a few moments to give it time to flavor the water, which they then filter with a thick cloth. The water is then used for tea. This also conforms to the Halachah: We first filter it and then we can drink. However if a person did not verify or filter, then we did not drink his tea, and we reprimanded him for it.”

One way or another, it seems that anyone with good sense should follow the friendly advice of the Chochmat Adam, namely that it is highly recommended, as he himself writes, to “check what we eat, for in this way we will avoid insects. I can personal state that, on several occasions, I have been saved by doing this.”

By Allusion

Tamim

It is written, “When I see the blood and I will pass over you” (Shemot 12:13).

We know that the ram was worshipped by the Egyptians, and that the Children of Israel required tremendous devotion in order to purchase and slaughter the god of their enemies before their very eyes. Nevertheless, they did not delay or hesitate, but did everything wholeheartedly, not weighing the pros and cons.

In the expression *et hadam ufasacht alechem* (“the blood, and I will pass over you”), the last letter of each word forms the term *tamim* (“wholehearted”). This tells us that by the merit of having performed this mitzvah wholeheartedly, Hashem passed over them.

– Maskil el Dal

Hamilah

It is written, “That you may tell in the ears of your son and your son’s son” (Shemot 10:2).

We may explain this according to a teaching of our Sages, namely that the Children of Israel left Egypt before the set time on account of the mitzvah of circumcision.

The numerical value of the expression *vincha uven vincha* (“your son and your son’s son”) is equal to that of *hamilah* (“the circumcision”).

– Bnei Issachar