

And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, “It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt.” (13:8)

As presented in the *Haggadah*, this *pasuk* is both the response to the *ben rasha*, wicked son, and to the lack of questioning by the *she'eino yodea lishol*, child who does not realize or know that there is much to question concerning the *Pesach* observance. The parents of such a child must endeavor to pique his curiosity. They have an obligation to guide and teach him that he is not like everyone else. He has a destiny, a historic mission, to carry on the legacy of the Exodus and its seminal standing as the critical commencement of our becoming a nation. Our children must know that they are part of a historical continuance, a nation whose mission in life supersedes that of all others.

Interestingly, the response -- or lesson in Jewish history which we convey to the *she'eino yodea lishol* -- is similar to the one which we give to the *rasha*, wicked son. We tell him that had he been in Egypt and scoffed at the commandments, he would have had no part in the Exodus. Why do the son who knows nothing and the one who cares about nothing receive the same response? Simply, the *Baal Haggadah* is intimating to us that, if we have a child who is uninitiated in Torah, who is unschooled and unsophisticated in the Jewish religion, we must open up to him and teach him. Otherwise, he will end up on a downward spiral and end up being a *rasha*. One either rejects, or one never learns. In any event, his lack of knowledge can be spiritually devastating.

In the sequence presented by the *Baal Haggadah*, the wicked son, due to his spiritual alienation, should have been the last son, following after the son who knows not what to ask; surprisingly, instead, he follows immediately after the wise son. Why are they together? Why grant the wicked son such a prominent position?

Apparently, the *chacham*, wise son, belongs next to his errant brother who now carries the title of wicked son. A wise man is one who cares about others. He who hoards his wisdom and refuses to share it with those who are not as fortunate is no different than a wealthy miser who benefits from his wealth.

The *Tzadik*, Horav Mendel, zl, m'Vorka teaches, “When does one know that he is close to Hashem? When you see that, you are close to people! Go out to the street and see if you feel close to every person you see. If you care about them all, then you are close to Hashem. If, however, when you walk the streets, you cast a jaundiced eye on every person, or you have something negative to say about every other fellow, then you are not secure in your relationship with Hashem.”

When Bisyah, Pharaoh's daughter, saw an infant in a basket within the reeds, she remarked to his cries, *Mi'yaldei ha'Ivrim zeh*, “He is from the Jewish infants.” Why did the Torah not simply write:

“This is a Jewish child”? Why did the Torah include all the Jewish infants in the phrase? Possibly, it is because when one Jew cries, they all cry. We care for one another. Caring about our fellow Jew is (or should be) an inherently Jewish character trait.

A distraught father came to *Horav Yitzchak m’Vorka* and cried, “*Rebbe*, I cannot take it any longer. My son is gravely ill. For all I know, by now he could be on his death bed. Please *Rebbe*, pray that he recuperates and lives.”

The *Vorkar* (as he was reverently called) closed his eyes and began to sway back and forth. A few minutes went by; the *Rebbe* opened up his eyes, looked at the father and said, “I regret that I was unsuccessful in my entreaty. I tried, but the Heavenly gates are sealed. My prayers were unable to penetrate the Heavens. Quickly, return home. You are needed there.” The father bowed his head and began to weep profusely, but what more could he do? He had prayed; he had gone to the holy *Vorkar Rebbe*, who had also prayed. Heaven had more or less given its response. He returned to his coach and left for home. A half hour went by, and he heard the sound of a wagon quickly approaching. He turned around to see the holy *Vorkar* coming up behind him. He stopped his coach, allowing the *Rebbe* to catch up. The *Rebbe* alighted from his wagon and said, “Wait here; I have something to say to you.”

The *Rebbe* motioned the man to sit down with him on the side of the road. The *Rebbe* looked at the man and said, “When you left, I was engulfed with sadness. It broke my heart that I was unable to help you, to in some way ease your plight. I then realized that while I could not affect a cure for your son’s illness, I could at least cry together with you! This is why I came.” The *Rebbe* proceeded to weep incessantly.

The scene was heart rending: the holy *Rebbe* sitting on the ground next to the distraught father, sitting together crying mournfully. Ironically, the father realized that the *Rebbe* was crying with greater intensity than even he was crying. This motivated the father to cry even harder. A short while went by, and the *Rebbe* motioned to the father to stop crying. “Go home. Your son has been cured. The illness has turned around. Your son will live.”

“What happened?” asked the father. “The Heavens opened up to our tears.”