

"You shall tell your son on that day saying, 'It is because of this that Hashem did for me when I went out of Egypt.'" (13:8)

The *Talmud* in *Pesachim* 116b states, "In every generation it is one's duty to regard himself as though he personally had gone out of Egypt. As it is written in *Shemos* 13:8, 'You shall tell your son on that day, saying, It is because of this that Hashem did for "me" when I went out of Egypt.'" In the *Haggadah*, *Chazal* expound upon these words, emphasizing the idea of a personal liberation.

A question immediately comes to mind upon reading this *pasuk*. How can one feel that he went out of Egypt, if he was not actually there? Can we really sensitize ourselves to an experience which happened thousands of years previously? Furthermore, the author of the *Haggadah* emphasizes this sensitivity further by saying, "It was not only our fathers whom Hashem redeemed from slavery, (but) we, too, were redeemed with them." We should certainly aspire to sensitize ourselves to the Exodus. But how can we say that we were redeemed from Egypt when we clearly were not present?

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., offers a pragmatic response. He draws the following analogy to demonstrate that we actually did leave Egypt. If we were to examine a human being, for instance, we would note that his entire body -- flesh, bones and various organs -- is composed of tiny particles of matter which constantly change as he ages. Nonetheless, an adult can still say, "See this hand; I broke it when I was a little child." Although it looks entirely different now that he has aged, it is undoubtedly the same hand. This idea applies to all living creatures. Although they change over time, they still ultimately remain the same.

This concept can be similarly applied to *Klal Yisrael*, which represents a living entity encompassing **all** generations. Consequently, today we can say, "We went out of Egypt." That group of Jews which was liberated from Egypt is still "alive" and represented by its present-day descendants. We can understand the importance of being a "part" of *Klal Yisrael* if one is to succeed in relating personally to the Exodus. Indeed, that is why the "wicked son" questions the entire service. He has "*excluded himself from the congregation*." He is no longer a part of the great continuum known as *Klal Yisrael*. To share in the experience of the Exodus, one must perceive himself as an inherent part of the Jewish congregation in body and soul.

Horav Simcha Zissel, z.l., the *Alter M'Kelm*, cites *Chazal* in the *Talmud Megillah*, 14. They note that when Achasverosh removed his ring and handed it over to Haman, he accomplished more with that action than all of the admonishments of the *Neviim*. Preceding the decree of these anit-Semites to destroy the Jews, they were warned by no fewer than forty eight *Neviim* and seven *Nevios*. Yet none of them was successful in motivating the Jewish people to repent and mend their ways. It was the apparent fear of imminent destruction that finally affected them.

The *Alter* explains that *Chazal* are communicating a profound message to us. The wisest man is

unimpressed with rebuke which, since it addresses the mind, remains an abstract awareness. In order for one to be motivated to change, he must feel the rebuke within himself; his senses must be moved. The *Neviim* addressed the mind. Hence, the people were not suitably moved. Haman's decree of annihilation, in contrast, shook the very foundation of their emotions. Finally, they *felt* the message which was being addressed to them.

When they were tearing Rabbi Akiva's flesh from him, he faithfully accepted the Heavenly decree and said, "All my life I was 'pained' -- I wondered when the opportunity to serve the Almighty with 'all my soul' would present itself. Now I can sanctify His Name by sacrificing myself for the holiness of His Name." How did Rabbi Akiva "pain himself"? He did so by "imagining" realistic pictures of himself actually being sacrificed!

Likewise, one fulfills the obligation to "regard himself as personally having gone out of Egypt" in this manner. He should imagine himself as a slave who has been liberated from grueling bondage. This imagery will evoke within him a profound sense of gratitude to his liberator. He will gladly sacrifice all of his earthly possessions -- even himself -- in appreciation to his benefactor. It behooves us to do the same in regard to the Exodus. We must feel servitude to the extent that when we imagine liberation from this theoretical bondage, we "experience" freedom. We should be so overcome with gratitude to Hashem, our benefactor, that we want to demonstrate our appreciation to Him by "shouting" it out to the entire world.

With this idea in mind, *Horav Chaim Friedlander, z.l.*, differentiates between the text of *Chazal* and that of the *Rambam*. *Chazal* state *unmg ,t ,utrk ost wchj* "*one is obligated to regard himself*," while the *Rambam* writes *unmg ,t ,utrvk*. The word *,utrvk* means to demonstrate, to indicate to oneself and to others. He should perform those traditions and act the entire evening of the *Seder* as if he himself had been liberated. According to the *Rambam*, it is insufficient to *view* oneself as being liberated; one must *demonstrate* this feeling for others to see. When one truly believes in something, this belief is "written" all over him, in every facet of his daily endeavor. This is the epitome of belief in the Exodus.