

## It shall be when your children say to you, “What is this service to you?” (12:26)

The first question which was cited in our *parsha* is that of the *rasha*, wicked son. The second question which is to be found in *Sefer Devarim* is that of the *chacham*, wise son. On the surface, they appear to be asking the same question. The difference lay in the subtle changes in their relative vernacular. The wicked son does not ask; he states. His question, if anything, is rhetorical, since he has all the answers. He refuses to acknowledge that the service is Divinely mandated, and, since *mitzvos* are “man-made,” they are not binding on him. Conversely, the wise son asks, mentions G-d, and includes himself in the congregation. Interestingly, the Torah, in recording the wicked son’s question, uses *lashon rabim*, plural, *b’neichem*, “your sons/children,” while when referring to the wise son (and also the single son and the son who knows not what to ask) writes *bincha*, “your son,” in the singular. Why is this?

*Horav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, zl*, applies the well-known adage, “An epidemic spreads, while health is not contagious.” This means that when one person becomes ill, the chances are that his germs will quickly spread to others and cause an epidemic. Health, on the other hand, does not spread. A similar idea applies with regard to spirituality. One sinner carries with him spiritual germs which can and will infect the innocent and unsuspecting. The wise, righteous man usually remains alone, since no one is lining up to receive his inspiration.

Hashem responded to this divergence (*rasha/chacham*) with two words. Hashem introduces the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, with *Anochi (Hashem Elokecha)*; “I (Hashem, your G-d) Who took you out of Egypt.” When Hashem created the world, however, the place which would be inhabited by humans, which would require relationships, the Torah writes, *Bereishis*, “In the beginning.” With regard to spirituality, it is *Anochi* with an *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with a numerical equivalent of one. The Torah addresses the realm of physicality and materialism with *Bereishis*, whose first letter is *bais*, two. By their very nature, friendships and relationships are implemented only via a group setting. A loner in a community remains alone. In order for the physical world created by Hashem to succeed, a sense of community, of interaction, organizations and groups must exist. If the community in which one makes his home is on a collision course with the spiritual dimension he seeks for himself and his family, then it is best that he remove himself from this community.

The Torah instructs us to carry out the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach* in a *chaburah*, group, setting. It provides, however, one stipulation: it must be *shcheino ha’karov eilav b’michsas nefashos*, which is translated as, “his neighbor who is near to his house shall take according to the number of people” (*Shemos* 12:4). Based upon the above distinction, *Rav Kornitzer* renders the *pasuk* with a homiletic twist, focusing in on the Torah’s use of the words *nefashos*, souls, as opposed to *anashim* people/men/*shecheinim*/ neighbors. One must seek to share his *Korban Pesach*, to include in his group individuals who are like-minded in the area of *nefashos*, who are in spiritual agreement with

him and his way of life. It is important to reach out as long as the reciprocal influence is not negative to one's personal spiritual journey.

Thus, when we see that it is *b'neicham*, a cadre of children (in the plural), a movement has taken root. When the questions are coming from a movement, he may suspect that its leanings are not positive. These children are not here to build and strengthen Torah. They are here to do the opposite, and, as such, must be stopped. As long as they refuse to listen, because they have all the answers, we have no discussion with them. They do not come to learn. They come with contempt, to ridicule and destroy. Such an attitude does not become or beget a "good neighbor."