

Sanctify to Me every firstborn... Moshe said to the people, “Remember this day on which you departed from Egypt... And it will come to pass that Hashem shall bring you.” (13:1,2,4)

Rarely does a *mitzvah* receive such a *hakdamah*, foreword, prior to presenting the actual *mitzvah* to *Klal Yisrael*. Apparently, the *mitzvah* of *kiddush b'chorim*, sanctification of the firstborn, is tied directly to the story of the Egyptian bondage and the ensuing exodus. First, we note that unlike for the *b'chor* of an animal whose *kedushah* is pronounced by the declaration, *Harei zeh kadosh*, “This is sanctified,” this declaration does not suffice for a human firstborn. It is critical that we expend much effort in raising the infant *b'chor* to achieve Heavenly *kedushah*. This is the idea behind prefacing the *mitzvah* with the *Pesach* story.

Let me explain. *Horav Moshe Tzvi Neriya*, *zl*, quotes *Horav Tzadok*, *zl*, *m'Lublin* (*Pri Tzaddik*), who observes that, concerning the *mitzvah* of sanctifying the firstborn, the Torah does not write, “Speak to *Bnei Yisrael*, and they should consecrate for Me their firstborn.” Rather, the Torah commences with, *Va'yidaber Hashem el Moshe*, “Hashem spoke to Moshe, sanctify for Me every firstborn.” It is almost as if Hashem issued the *mitzvah* directly to Moshe, that he should sanctify the firstborn. Why? He explains that Hashem commanded Moshe *Rabbeinu* – who is the *shoresh*, root/source (who gave the), of Torah *She'b'ksav*, the Written Law, to imbue the *b'chorim* with *kedushah*, derived from Torah *She'b'ksav*, connecting them to the first word of the Torah: *Bereishis*, “In the beginning.” They are intricately bound with the Torah. They, too, are *bereishis*, first (the beginning of a family). Their *kedushah* should emanate from the Torah. While this is applied to the original firstborns who left Egypt, a similar idea holds true for ensuing firstborns throughout time: From day one, when they enter this world, they must be inculcated with *kedushas HaTorah*. It does not just happen; we must make it happen.

How is this done? *Rav Neriya* explains that even prior to the *b'chor* learning Torah *She'b'ksav*, he must be imbued with the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the exodus from Egypt. He should hear clearly of the *emunah*, faith, of his ancestors during their travail. *Chinuch*, education, begins in steps; the stories, the faith and love, precede the actual study.

Concerning *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Torah commands us to relate the story to our sons and grandsons. With regard to the Revelation at *Har Sinai* and the Giving of the Torah, we are instructed to “Make them known to your children and your children’s children” (*Devarim* 4:10). We have no requirement to tell them the entire story of how it happened and what led up to that epic moment. Just tell them what took place without embellishing it with a story line. Why?

Concerning the transmission of Torah from generation to generation, stories are sorely insufficient. The only way to transmit Torah is to study and master it. If I may add – *yetzias Mitzrayim* is about the past. *Mattan Torah* is about the present and future of *Am Yisrael*. Stories will not suffice.