

## And so that you may relate in the ears of your son. (10:2)

One of the mysteries that plague the commentators is the fact that the two sons of Moshe *Rabbeinu* were not in Egypt during the demonstration of the miracles and wonders associated with the Exodus. They did not see *Krias Yam Suf*, the Splitting of the Red Sea. All of *Klal Yisrael* observed the final end of 210 years of slavery, as their oppressors experienced a fitting end to their domination of the Jews. Two sons, not just ordinary sons, but the two children of the man of the hour, who became the *Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael* and its quintessential leader. Yet, his two children experienced nothing.

*Horav Yehoshua, zl*, second *Admor* of Belz, explains that this was by design. If every Jew and his children had experienced *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the exodus from Egypt, who would be appropriate to fulfill the commandment to relate the story to their children? The *mitzvah* of *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim* is an integral part of the *Pesach* experience. The *sefer* revolves around the story which a father should relate to his child. Hashem wanted Moshe to be the one who would convey the story, explain the miracles, inspire the only two children who did not personally experience the Exodus. He would set the tone for all ensuing generations. He infused the *emunah* gained from the experience into the hearts and minds of his children. Had they been present, this critical *mitzvah* would have had to wait.

Indeed, as a result, every father has a compelling privilege and obligation to transmit the *mesorah*, heritage, of our people to the next generation. Doing this ensures the continuity of the values and practices of our ancestors. By passing down the historical narrative, we reinforce a sense of identity and a strong connection to our roots. This practice also fosters a shared understanding between different generations. Thus, one's grandchildren develop a deeper understanding of what life was like when their grandfather was growing up.

The *Pesach* story transmitted throughout the generations has created a living connection to the struggles and triumphs of our ancestors. This sharing of our history reinforces a sense of resilience, a feeling of hope and an acceptance of a Jew's mandate to be free. When one listens to the story related to him by his father or grandfather, the emotional resonance that accompanies the tale deepens, to the point that the child is transported back through the millennia and sees himself as having experienced the Exodus. Last, by continuing to transmit our *mesorah* from generation to generation, we ensure that it is not some abstract historical narrative, but rather, a living, relevant experience to which we personally can relate.

Throughout our tumultuous history, the *mesorah* that was transmitted from generation to generation, from father to son, served as the link between generations. Indeed, when I listened to my *Rosh Yeshivah's shiur*, I realized that he had heard *shiurim* from the *Bircas Shmuel* and *Shaarei Yashar*, who had heard *shiurim* from the *Netziv*. We can follow this chain back to *Har Sinai*, which is exactly how we should be learning. Our present *Rebbeim* are a microcosm of past generations. They embody the past as they set the stage for our future.

Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates the following story in his first book, *Touched by a Story*. It is timeless, as is the lesson it imparts. After the war that decimated European Jewry, a small scrap of paper was found in a bunker in (what used to be) the Warsaw Ghetto. It imparted a message that reveals why it had been saved during the horrifying terror to which the Jews were subjected. A group of Jews had been hiding in the bunker of the ghetto for a number of weeks. Food was scarce. Whoever was fortunate to obtain food immediately shared it. Fear reigned supreme. This is how they lived. Knowing that, at any moment, the Nazi beast could break down the door and finish them off without the slightest qualm should have driven them out of their minds. Yet, they persevered. Those who survived used these moments of truth to build their lives anew – lives filled with faith in Hashem.

The greatest proof of their perseverance was the piece of paper that was discovered amid the ruins of the bunker. It was not a last will and testament to be delivered to family of those who succumbed. It was just a small scrap of paper, but that, in and of itself, may have provided the greatest lesson.

The paper contained the sentence, *Ashrei yoshvei veisecha, ode Yehallelucha selah*; “Praiseworthy are those who dwell in Your house, May they always praise You (*Tehillim* 84:5). Beneath the verse were the letters *aleph, shin, reish, and yud* accompanied by *nekudos*, vowel sounds. The scrap of paper was not a mere scrap; it was a lesson in *aleph-beis* taught by a father to his young son. Hiding in a cold, damp bunker, with every minute presenting a new threat to their lives, the father had nothing better to do than teach his son to read. Veritably, he did not have anything better to do, because learning Torah is life and, without Torah, life has no meaning. With the cacophony of Nazis screaming orders, shooting their machine guns and the bitter weeping of the victims, old and young, the father had the presence of mind and the extraordinary patience to pass his legacy on to his son. Who knew if he would survive? That was up to Hashem. His obligation as a father was to teach Torah to his child.

Did they live? We do not know. One thing is for certain, their learning gave the highest meaning and value to their lives. Their bodies might have been in the bunker, but their minds soared in the heavens. The perseverance of fathers teaching their sons Torah under the most adverse conditions is a testament to their enduring faith and its power to imbue them with the outstanding fortitude and resilience to continue thinking and planning for tomorrow, even when they have no today. It was this simple faith that inspired the hope and strength to withstand the most unimaginable challenges. When we connect to previous generations, we are stronger; because we are not alone. We are part of a long continuum, an unbroken chain of transmission that heralds back to *Sinai*.