



The Pesach Perspective 2021, Finally feeling free!

The Pesach Perspective is in honor of the speedy recovery of Sasson Betzalel ben Batya and Shaul Ben Berta and in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward and Edward Ben Shaul. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

We are about to celebrate Pesach, the holiday of freedom. After cleaning our homes to near perfection, we eat ancient but spiritual bread, the Matzah. We drink four cups of wine in honor of our liberation. But the leading Mitzvah of the day is to remember, recall and relate the story of our freedom from Egypt.

The act of telling the story is a clear Mitzvah from the Torah itself. (Shemos 13:14) *“When the time comes, your son will ask you saying, what does all this mean? You shall say to him, it was with a mighty hand that the G-d brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage.”*

The more we elaborate and expound on the story, the greater our observance is of this important Mitzvah. In fact, the Haggadah states, *“כל המרבה בספור יצאת מצרים הרי זה”* - *all who magnify their telling of the Exodus are praiseworthy.*

In the Haggadah, we read about five rabbis living under Roman oppression in the second century. When they gathered for a Seder, they lost track of time as they went through the story of our freedom. They had to be reminded by their students that it was already dawn, and they had to say the Shema.

However, a question comes to mind: Unlike most other Mitzvahs, we do not make a blessing before we begin to recount the story. Why don't we make a blessing before we start one of the principal Mitzvahs of the entire Seder night?!

One of the common answers is that we make the blessing for telling the story of exodus in the first step of the Seder, Kiddush. During Kiddush, we say, "*Mikra Kodesh Zeicher Litzias Mitzrayim - a holy assembly commemorating the exodus from Egypt.*" Since Kiddush already commemorates the story of our freedom, there is no need to say another blessing just a short while later.

The Chasam Sofer (*Rav Moshe Schreiber, a leading Rabbi from Europe in the nineteenth century*) gives a deeper explanation. He compares this question to the circumstances of a person who is about to immerse in a Mikvah and convert to Judaism.

They only make the blessing of conversion after they immerse in a Mikvah. But in fact, they should make the blessing of conversion before they immerse as we make blessings before doing a Mitzvah. But the blessing has "*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu - He who has sanctified us with His Mitzvahs and commanded us.*" Since the person is not yet Jewish, they can't make this blessing because they were not commanded.

The Chasam Sofer quotes the Talmud (*Pesachim 116b*) "*in each generation, a person is obligated to feel as if they are leaving Egypt.*" He explains that since we must experience leaving Egypt, **we must convert, change and transform ourselves.**

The Haggadah writes, "*In the beginning, our forefathers were idol worshippers, but now G-d has brought us to his service.*" Like converts, we can't say the blessing of freedom before elaborating on the story of slavery and subsequent redemption.

Only after we experience the same exodus can we make the blessing at the end of maggid "*ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל - Blessed are you G-d, the one who has redeemed the Jewish nation!*"

May we experience the ultimate redemption and celebrate this Pesach in Yerushalayim with the third Beis Hamikdash.

*Have a joyful & meaningful Pesach,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*