



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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As *Chodesh Nisan* is upon us, we begin to look ahead and prepare for *Pesach*. In addition to purging our homes of *chametz*, and the many provisions to procure to prepare for *yom tov*, we also begin to prepare and look ahead to the majestic night of Freedom, the *Seder Layl Pesach*.

Among the many incredible messages inherent in the *Seder Layl Pesach* experience is the fundamental idea of sacred speech. Speech plays a central role in the entire evening. Our Sages teach us that we must verbally express and recall the many details and nuances of the redemption from Egypt. Our youngest children traditionally verbalize four questions to begin this dialogue. We then reply to those four questions by stating:

“We were Slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt...and there is a *mitzva* incumbent upon each of us to discuss and tell of the redemption from Egypt.” “**Vchol Hamarbeh lesaper b’yetziat mitzrayim — harei zeh meshubach...**” — “All who say ***much*** in their description of the redemption from Egypt are to be praised...”

In the *Hagada* text of the *Rambam*, we note a slightly different version of this last statement: “**Vchol Hamaarich — lesaper b’yetziat mitzrayim, harei zeh meshubach...**” — “All who speak ***extensively*** in their description of the redemption from Egypt are to be praised...”

How are we to interpret the subtle difference between our more familiar version and that of Maimonides? What lesson might we glean from clarifying the difference between the words ***hamarbeh*** (much) and ***hamaarich*** (extensive)? Why ultimately do most of us not utilize the *Rambam’s* version of this important text?

Perhaps one answer to these questions actually is hinted at later on in the *Seder’s* discussions of the ten plagues. After listing those ten plagues, we are then introduced to several rabbinic interpretations of those plagues, but the first comments included are those of *Rebbi Yehuda*.

Unlike the other Sages mentioned, *Rebbi Yehuda* doesn’t choose to elaborate extensively about each of the plagues; rather, he teaches us an acronym to recall the plagues in a short, concise, memorable way. *Rebbi Yehuda* seems to be telling us that the most memorable ideas are clear and succinct instead of the most verbose or extensive. What Rabbi Yehuda is teaching us is that we need to become more accustomed to realizing the power of our words. When we are able to share important information in a most direct and clear manner, it is more likely to be understood and received favorably. When we are not aware of this important concept, our intended messages might get lost or misconstrued.

This very idea of the power of speech is actually an important lesson that is also alluded to in the Exodus story itself. The Chasidic Master *Rebbe Moshe Yechiel HaLevi Epstein of Ozarov, zy’a* makes an interesting



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observation in his commentary on the *Hagada*. The Rebbe points out that the prime villain in the Exodus story is not simply called *Melech Mitzrayim*, the King of Egypt, but also **Paroh**. The Rebbe taught that the word **Paroh** is made up of the same Hebrew letters (*pay, reish, ayin, and hay*) as the words **peh ra**, a wicked mouth! The Rebbe wrote that inherent in the Jewish People going forth and becoming freed from Egyptian oppression is the need to work to leave behind that power represented by **Paroh**; that is, to leave behind the use of words for wicked purposes and begin to use our words to speak appropriately and for sacred purposes.

The great contemporary teacher of Chasidut, **Reb Elimelech Biderman shlita**, points to a beautiful passage in the *Kedushat Levi*, of **Reb Levi Yitzchak MiBerditchev zy'a**, to clarify this idea further:

The more one tells the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, the more they are meshubach, which means not simply praiseworthy, but also improved! When the words of the hagada come from the mouths of the Jewish People, the letters themselves arouse great chasidim in all realms, generating wonders and miracles for each of us!

On the *Seder* night, we recall the Exodus from Egypt, and we are mandated to speak with clarity of all the miraculous events that transpired as we went free from Egypt. Each year, as we tell this sacred tale and come together to experience leaving Egyptian oppression behind, may we also merit to heed the beautiful messages introduced by the Rebbe of Ostrov and Reb Meilech Biderman. May the words of Torah we share on the *Seder* night inspire us to realize the sacred gift of speech and the potential redemptive power inherent in channeling our words to inspire, improve, bring clarity, and build unity among us. ■

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