

One-Star Hospitality?!

Why do we Invite People Over for a Poor Bread?

Dedicated by Raquel and Jason Goldberg, in memory of their daughter Temima A"H

1. The opening part of Maggid:

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְהֵתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכֹל, כָּל דְּצָרִיף יִיתִי וְיִפְסֹח.
הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְׁתָּא עַבְדִּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנִי חוֹרִין.

This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is famished should come and eat, anyone who is in need should come and partake of the Pesach sacrifice. Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free people.

2. Primo Levi, If this is a Man:

When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarovsky (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working.

And so it was agreed. Only a day before this would have been inconceivable. The law of the camp said: "Eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbour." To do otherwise would have been suicidal. The offer of sharing bread "was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we, who had not died slowly changed from prisoners to men again."



Question

1. Mishnah Berachot 1:5, quoted in our Haggadah

אמר ר' אלעזר בן עזריה: הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה ולא זכיתי שתאמר יציאת מצרים בלילות עד שדרשה בן זומא שנה' (דברים טז) "למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך" – 'ימי חייך' הימים, 'כל ימי חייך' הלילות. וחכ"א 'ימי חייך' העולם הזה, 'כל ימי חייך' להביא לימות המשיח:

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "But I am like seventy years old, and I could not [convince the Sages that] the emergence from Egypt should be recited at night, until [Shimon] Ben Zoma provided exegetical support for this ruling, as Devarim 16 says, 'So that you will remember the day you emerged from Egypt, all of the days of your life.' 'The days of your life' are the days, 'All of the days of your life' includes the nights." And the Sages said: "The days of your life" is this world, "All of the days of your life" includes the times of Mashiach.

Approach 1: The miracle of premature aging

2. Talmud, Berachot 27b-28a

אתו ואמרו ליה: ניחא ליה למר דליהוי ריש מתיבתא? אמר להו איזיל ואימליך באינשי ביתי. אזל ואמליך בדביתהו, אמרה ליה, "דלמא מעברין לך!" אמר לה "לשתמש אינש יומא חדא בכסא דמוקרא, ולמחר ליתבר!" אמרה ליה, "לית לך חירותא!" ההוא יומא בר תמני סרי שני הוה, אתרחיש ליה ניסא ואהדרו ליה תמני סרי דרי חירותא. היינו דקאמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה "הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה" ולא "בן שבעים שנה."

They came and said to him: Would his honour accept becoming the Rosh Yeshiva? He said to them: I will consult my household. He went and asked his wife for advice.

She said to him: Perhaps they will remove you! He said to her: Let a person use a fine glass goblet for one day, and let it break the next day!

She said to him: You have no white hair!" That day he was eighteen years old. A miracle occurred, and eighteen rows of white [hair] came to him. This is why Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "But I am like seventy years old," and not "seventy years old."

Approach 2: The miracle of survival

3. Talmud Yerushalmi, Berachot 1:6

אף על פי שנכנס לגדולה האריך ימים. הדא אמרה שהגדולה מקצרת ימים.

Even though he attained authority, he lived long. This is what they say, that power abbreviates life.

Approach 3: Why didn't I think of that?

4. Rambam, Commentary to Mishnah Berachot 1:5

ומה שאמר ר' אלעזר בן עזריה "הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה" ולא אמר "בן שבעים שנה" לפי שלא היה בן שבעים, כי אם צעיר לימים, אלא שהיה מרבה להגות וללמוד ולקרות לילה ויומם עד שחלשו כחות גופו ונזדקן, ונעשה כזקן בן שבעים שנה. והרי החלה בו הזקנה ברצונו כמו שנתבאר בתלמוד, לפיכך אמר "בתמיהה אני! על אף רוב השתדלותי והתחברותי עם החכמים, לא זכיתי לדעת הרמז בכתוב על חובת קריאת פרשת ציצית בלילה עד שדרשה בן זומא!"

When Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "But I am like seventy years old" and he did not say "seventy years old," it was because he was not seventy years old, but young, but he would study and learn and read prodigiously, day and night, to the point that his strength was drained, and he aged prematurely and he appeared like a man of seventy years. He aged willingly, as recorded in the Talmud. Therefore he said, "I am shocked! Despite my great efforts and my joining with Sages, I did not merit to know the textual hint in the text about the duty to read the portion of tzitzit at night, until Ben Zoma taught it."

5. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 19a

אמר רב שיזבי משמיה דר"א בן עזריה: מאי דכתיב "לא יחרוך רמיה צידו (משלי יב:כז)"? לא יחיה ולא יאריך ימים צייד הרמאי.

Rav Shizbi cited Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah: What is the meaning of Proverbs 12:27, "The cunning person will not roast his prey?" The hunter who plays tricks will not live and have extended days.

6. Talmud, Sanhedrin 17b

"למידין לפני חכמים" לוי מרבי. "דנין לפני חכמים" שמעון בן עזאי ושמעון בן זומא וחנן המצרי וחנניא בן חכיןאי.
"Those who learn before the Sages" is Levi, who learned from Rebbe. "Those who argue before the Sages" is Shimon ben Azai, Shimon ben Zoma, Chanan of Egypt and Chananiah ben Chachinai.

7. Talmud, Berachot 57b

שלושה תלמידי חכמים הם: הרואה בן עזאי בחלום יצפה לחסידות, בן זומא יצפה לחכמה, אחר ידאג מן הפורענות:
There are three Torah scholars: One who sees Ben Azai in a dream should anticipate piety, [one who sees] Ben Zoma should anticipate wisdom, [one who sees] Acher should worry about punishment.

Summary

Questions

- Why does Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah emphasize his age?
- Why does he say he was "like" seventy years old?

Answers

- People should have listened to me because I aged miraculously
- People should have listened to my decades of commitment, and Gd's help that enabled me to survive this long
- I am surprised that, with all of the years of learning and dedication that aged me, I never thought of Ben Zoma's idea.

The Three and the Fourth

The One Who Doesn't Know

The Wicked (Shmot 12)

Commandment:

...Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover offering.

The Son's Question:

And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?'

The Father's Answer:

you shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to Hashem, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when smiting the Egyptians, but saved our houses.'...

The Innocent (Shmot 13)

Commandment:

You shall set apart for Hashem every first issue of the womb: every male firstling that your cattle drop shall be Hashem's.

The Son's Question:

And when, in time to come, a child of yours asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?'

The Father's Answer:

... W h e n P h a r a o h stubbornly refused to let us go, Hashem slew every male first-born in the land of Egypt... Therefore I sacrifice to Hashem every first male issue of the womb...

How to Ask (Shmot 13)

Commandment:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of Hashem.

The Son's Question:

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The Father's Answer:

...And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what Hashem did for me when I went free from Egypt.'

The Wise (Dvarim 6)

Commandment:

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The Son's Question:

When, in time to come, your children ask you, "**What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that our G-d Hashem has enjoined upon you?**"

The Father's Answer:

you shall say to your children, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and Hashem freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. Hashem wrought before our eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; and us G-d freed from there, in order to take us and give us the land promised on oath to our fathers. Then Hashem commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere our G-d Hashem, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. It will be therefore to our merit before our G-d Hashem to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as G-d has commanded us."