



Maggid: A Blueprint For Self Improvement Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Magid begins with the words "*Ha lachma anya*, This is the bread of poverty." In what sense is matza the bread of poverty? The Maharal explains that matzah is a simple food. It contains only two ingredients: flour and water. We should approach Pesach with simplicity. Simplicity implies *bitul hayesh*, self-nullification. Self-discovery entails going back to being ourselves, which is what liberation is about. Animals have no ambition and no yearnings. This kind of passivity is our enemy. In our hearts we have a whole menagerie which keeps us from discovering ourselves. The more we focus on our failures and disappointments, the more paralyzed we become.

We have to believe in ourselves. A person can make a decision to improve himself and Hashem will help him. This is contingent on telling Hashem, "I am who I am. I want to approach You with simplicity. Help me." Receiving this level of *siyata d'shmaya* at the seder is encapsulated in "*Ha lachma anya*," our statement of simplicity. At the end of this hymn, we invite all those in need to join our seder. Although it is only a ceremonial statement, it teaches us an important lesson. Our goal should be to imitate the ways of Hashem. The animal self is passive. The spiritual self is active and wants to give. That is why we begin Magid with a declaration of kindness.

We proceed to Mah Nishtana. One of the mystic names of Hashem is *Mah*, the one who brings forth questions. Mah Nishtana questions a series of contrasting pairs: chametz and matzah, dipping out of pain and dipping as a sign of freedom, reclining as kings and eating the bitter marmor. Although we live lives that are in some ways paradoxical, we must search with open hearts and admit that sometimes we do not know.

We then recite Avadim Hayinu, which tells how we were enslaved to Pharaoh. Pharaoh comes from the root word *paruah*, wild. The

same letters spell *oref*, the back of the neck, the source of involuntary motion. Pharaoh took us to the world of subconscious, where rational thinking was irrelevant and where there were no moral choices to make. In Kabala, *galut mitzrayim* is called the exile of *daat* because we did not know who we were and what we were meant to accomplish.

If Hashem had not redeemed us we would still be enslaved to everything Pharaoh stood for. *Mitzrayim* comes from the root word *metzar*, narrow straits. Egypt was a wide open place with no moral strictures to hold a person down. In truth, there is nothing more constricting than a wide open place. The endless possibilities paralyze a person from pursuing a life of growth. When we left Egypt and received the Torah, the strictures of the Torah opened us up to a life of purpose.

The Maharal notes that the enslavement was a step towards redemption. We often do not discover who we are until we figure out who we are not and who we do not want to be. In Egypt, the Jews learned that they did not want to be Egyptians. They did not desire broadness that was really narrow, or freedom of thought that was really enslavement to the subconscious. This rejection made the Jews free, together with the inspiration that came from above.

We continue the Hagadah with a discussion of the four sons. The four sons live within each of us at different times in our life. There are four different levels of awareness. The wise son asks, What are all these mitzvos? What do the paths look like? He wants to know how to get from where he is to where he wants to be. *Chochma* comes from the words *koach mah*, the potential that lies in essence, rather than how it can be used or how it feels. Ultimately we have to come to a level of not speaking. We have to look for a higher awareness and channel it. That is what makes someone a *chacham*.

The rasha asks, "What is this service to you?"

He calls Judaism *avodah* (service) and not halacha (Jewish law) because he does not see himself as going from one place to another. He has no destination, but lives in the present. It seems senseless to him to burden himself with seeking. The difference between a tzaddik and a rasha is that while the rasha sees only the top of the mountain, the tzaddik sees the path. He is willing to live in the world of process. The rasha lives only in the world of product. People become *reshaim* by being reactive and losing themselves. They allow their emotions to control them.

The Hagadah says that you should "grind the teeth" of the rasha. Teeth break large pieces into smaller pieces. Similarly, *reshaim* take ideas that are grand and trivialize them into nothing. We answer him with "*Ba'avur zeh*." These halachot are important because they redeemed us from Egypt. They transformed us from living a life of constraint to one of walking with Hashem. Judaism is not *avodah*. *Halacha*, from the root word '*halach*', to go, takes us where we want to be. We have to learn to silence the rasha within us.

The Tam says, "*Mah zot? What is this?*" According to the Zohar, *zot* is the *Shechina*. The Tam asks, "Where is Hashem?" He wants a religious experience without having to keep halacha. We answer, "*B'yad chazakah...*" Hashem displayed miracles and took us out of Egypt. However, he did all this because he wanted us to take it further. Tam also means straightforward. Yaakov was an "*ish tam*," he was the same inside and outside. Our simple self tells Hashem, "All I really want is to know you."

The fourth son does not know how to ask. In today's society, most people are incapable or unwilling to ask about Hashem. The biggest enemy in *kiruv* is apathy. Telling about our personal experiences and what has given us meaning can kindle a spark within the hearts of our lost brethren.