

BILVAVI

4 SONS
WICKED SON



BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH
THE RAV'S SHIURIM ARE AVAILABLE
ON THE KOL HALASHON TELEPHONE LINE
073.295.1245 ISRAEL | 718.521.5231 USA

THE WICKED SON'S QUESTION

Of the four children mentioned in the Hagaddah, the *rasha* (wicked son) says “What is this *avodah* to you?” He says “to you” and not “to him,” Since he removed himself from the *klal*, he is a *kofer b’ikar*, a denier of a primary principle, so we blunt his teeth and we say to him “Had you been there, you would have not been redeemed.”

The source of the *rasha*'s question is first mentioned in the Torah in *Parshas Bo*, by “*If you will ask what is this labor to you*” - which is referring to inquiring about the need for bringing the *korbon pesach* - and Hashem answers, “*Because I plagued the houses of Egypt and saved the homes of Yisrael.*”

We answer the question of the child who does not know to ask, by answering him about the *korbon pesach*. But we do not answer this to the *rasha*.

What is a *rasha*, and what he is all about? What does he mean when he says “What is all this *avodah* to you?”

Most *mefarshim* understand this simply to mean that the *rasha* is questioning the entire night of Pesach, which is all about the *korbon pesach*. The *Rokeach* says, however, that the *rasha* is questioning the “*avodah*,” not the *korbon pesach*. However, the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* says that the *rasha* is questioning the *korbon pesach*. And from the words of the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, the *rasha* is asking even more: “What is all this *tircha*, this bother, which are you busy with?” He is questioning all the preparing and cleaning that we do before Pesach. So he is not only questioning the night of Pesach itself, but he is questioning all the preparing that comes before Pesach.

So there are three ways to understand what the *rasha* is questioning. He is questioning the night of Pesach, he is questioning the *korbon pesach*, and he is questioning all the preparation before Pesach of getting rid of *chametz*.

The answer to the *rasha* is “Had you been there you would not have been redeemed.” Simply this means that he is not deserving of *Geulah*. But it also means that he would have died in the three days of darkness. Thirty days

before the Yom Tov is time to prepare for Yom Tov, to look for *chametz*. The *rasha* would have died within the thirty days before Pesach – corresponding to the three days of darkness.

A QUESTION WITH NO ANSWER

The *Rishonim* say that the four children are each asking four different questions, but they also note that the *rasha* is not really asking a question - he is rather coming with a “complaint,” so we don’t really answer the *rasha*. We just say to the *rasha* that he wouldn’t have been redeemed, but we are not answering his question. The *Rishonim* explain, therefore, that we don’t answer him, because he doesn’t have a question.

The word for “question,” *shaalah*, is the same root as the word “borrowing” - to be a *shoel*. A borrowed item is called a *shaalah*. Then the borrowed item is returned – *teshuvah* (and *teshuvah* also means “answer”). If the borrowed item is not returned, this is a *shaalah* without a *teshuvah* – a borrowed item which hasn’t been returned, but which can also mean a “question without an answer.”

The *rasha* is coming with a complaint to excuse himself from this night, so we don’t answer him. A question which has no answer is not really a question. The *Geulah* is about answers to questions that are asked. The ruination in Egypt was a “question that has no answer.” We left Egypt and we were sanctified with the status of the firstborn, while the firstborns of Egypt were killed. The child asks about this, and we answer him about the *Geulah* from Egypt, mentioning the striking of the firstborns. These are questions with an answer.

But there is another kind of question – a “question that has no answer.” The root of this concept is in the items which we asked to borrow from the Egyptians, which we didn’t return [since it was owed to us]. Borrowed items which weren’t returned are a *shaalah* (borrowed item) without a *teshuvah* (without being returned), which also means “question with no answer.” This happened by the plague of darkness, when we borrowed back our money from the Egyptians, and it is also the root of the *rasha*’s question – a

question that has no answer. (The *rasha* is connected with the plague of darkness, because the *rasha* perished then in the plague of darkness).

The question about the death of firstborn is a question which we answer – it is what led to the *Geulah* - while a question that has no answer is on the level of the plague of darkness, which caused the *rasha* to perish.

In the order of the four sons, the *rasha* is placed near the *chochom* (wise son), and the *Arizal* explains that this is to give a little bit of a *tikkun* (soul-repair) to the *rasha*. According to another view, however, the *rasha* is placed near the “child who does not know how to ask.” The child who does not know how to ask, on a deeper level, is the source of the *rasha*’s question – because the *rasha* does not have a real question. He is simply coming with a complaint, so we cannot answer him if he does not have a real question. This reflects a statement of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, that “We don’t answer a person who already has his own answers. We only answer a person with questions.”

The *rasha* asks, “What is this *avodah* to you?” The wise son says “What are the laws?” They are asking very similar questions, so what is the difference between them? The Hagaddah points out to us that the *rasha* is only saying that the *avodah* is “to you”, but he excludes himself from *Klal Yisrael*.

A person will be asked in Heaven if he dealt with the subject of *emunah*, which is explained as, “Did you know what to answer a heretic?”

If a *rasha* is asking about *emunah*, we would answer him. But he is merely stating his complaint under the guise of a question, but he is not really asking a question from a desire to know the answer. He is merely disguising his complaint in the form of a question, and he is asking a question with no answer to it. A question with no answer is really pointing towards heresy, to denying Hashem and the Torah and *mitzvos*. This is the ruination of the *rasha* – he has a “question with no answer,” so he cannot be on the level of leaving Egypt. If he would have a question with a desire for an answer, then he is connected to the process of *Geulah* – like the other children – and can leave Egypt. But if he has a question with no answer, he is not connected to the process of *Geulah*, so he wouldn’t have left Egypt.

THE WICKED SON HAS NO TASTE IN THE SPIRITUAL

A *rasha* is someone who eats the *korbon pesach* out of gluttony and wolfs it down, while a *tzaddik* eats in a state of holiness, and not out of gluttony. The *rasha* doesn't eat in a state of holiness. So he doesn't taste the *korbon pesach* or the *matzah*. He is missing even the physical pleasure of enjoyment on Yom Tov. He is not tasting anything.

Since the *rasha* has no taste, that is why he says “What is this *avodah* to you?” - he doesn't want the *avodah*! If he has no taste for it, then he does not want it. In Egypt, we were slaves of Pharaoh and when we left we became servants of Hashem. The real difference was that in Egypt, it was cruel labor (men's labor for women, and women's work for men) which we had no desire in. We didn't have any “taste” in such work and labor. When we left Egypt and now we could serve Hashem, we could now have a taste and an enjoyment in our service. It wasn't merely that we were now serving Hashem instead of Pharaoh. Rather, the whole quality of our work was different. We could now have a taste in what we were doing.

A *rasha* eats out of gluttony and with no holiness, so he doesn't taste his food properly, just devouring it. He doesn't have the taste of serving Hashem [and that is the root of all his issues and questioning]. In contrast, the *chochom*, the wise son, is also asking a very similar question to the *rasha*'s question, inquiring what this is all about has a desire to understand the reason, unlike the *rasha* who has no taste in serving Hashem. The *chochom* wants the *taamei Torah* – the “taste” of the Torah, the reasons for the *mitzvos* which enable us to taste the Torah better. The *rasha* has no taste in serving Hashem and *mitzvos*, so he has no desire to understand what that taste is, and therefore he can't really ask a question. He can only come with a complaint. Since he is not connected with tasting the taste of serving Hashem and doing the *mitzvos*, he just sees *avodah* but he doesn't have any taste in it. And with this perspective of being unable to taste, he couldn't have been redeemed in Egypt.

A *rasha* doesn't eat properly the *korbon pesach* and *matzah* and he just eats it gluttonously, with no real taste in it. If he would have the taste, he would

find the light. Instead, he remains with just darkness – the plague of darkness where every *rasha* perished in and wasn't redeemed from Egypt.

But Pesach is the “night that shines like day” - it shines with the light of “tasting” the spiritual world, of Hashem, Torah, and *mitzvos*. This is also called the taste of *taamei Torah*. We never ask for the reasons for the *mitzvos*, except when it comes to the three *mitzvos* on Pesach night of *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror*. This is because on Pesach night, we must try to reach the *taamei Torah*, to taste the Torah.

The Hebrew word for taste (*taam*) is the same letters as the word *me'at*, a bit. The *Chovos HaLevovos* says, “A little bit that's pure, is better than a lot that is dirty.” Only a little bit of *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt [because the other 80% died in the plague of darkness.] Since the word *me'at* (a little) hints to *taam* (taste), the taste of a matter is the main thing. There is a rule of *taam k'ikar*, the taste of something becomes like the food itself. The *rasha* has no *taam* - he has no “taste” for Hashem, Torah, and *mitzvos*, and therefore he is missing the *ikar*, the main aspect – so he is *kofer b'ikar*, he is denying a primary principle of faith.

The night of Pesach is on the level of *taam*, to have a taste in the spiritual. The root of Pesach is when Yitzchok called to Esav to bring him “*mataamim*”, tasty food which took place on Pesach. First Yaakov came in and gave the food, and then Esav came in to bring the food, but since Yitzchok had already eaten, he didn't need Esav's food. Such food was pointless to Yitzchok now and therefore it was like tasteless food. This was what Esav brought – food with no point to it, which meant that it essentially had no “taste” to it. This is the root of the *rasha*, when there is no taste – and the *rasha* is compared to Esav, who is called Esav *HaRasha*, Esav the wicked son.

THE HIDDEN LIGHT– BEING ABOVE ALL QUESTIONS

Leaving Egypt is understood by use in question-and-answer format. The children ask questions and we answer them. But above this level is the *matzah*, which is called *michlei d'mehemenusa*, “food of faith” – the level of

having *emunah peshutah* (simple trust in Hashem) by being above the need to ask questions.

Even the *rasha* has a “holy spark” with him, which is able to above all questions. The root of the *rasha*’s denial, in which he does not have an actual question but a complaint, is really a misuse of a holy power to not have any questions. At the root, there is a holy power to be above all questions, the power to have *emunah peshutah*, and this is the holy root of the *rasha*’s having no real question. But the *rasha* is using this power in the side of ruination, where it becomes translated into denial.

The light that is above the light of the festivals and is revealed on Pesach is the holy spark, the power to have *emunah peshutah* in Hashem, where everything is about Hashem and it’s not about ourselves. The Gemara says that all of the festivals are *lachem*, “for yourselves”, and *Chazal* learn from this that there is a *mitzvah* to have physical pleasure on Yom Tov (see *Pesachim 68b*). But the future will be only about Hashem, the state of the Next World where there is no drinking and no eating - no pleasure for ourselves - only a “day of Hashem.” That light is above the concept of the festivals, and it is above all taste as well. It is above the need to understand and get a taste of the matter.

This is the depth of the hidden light that is revealed on the night of Pesach, even with the wicked son. The *rasha*, on this world, isn’t able to reveal it yet, but on Pesach it shines within him - through the *matzah*, the “food of faith.” It is to be above all questions – the light of complete *emunah*, as revealed through *matzah*, the food of *emunah*.



The Rav's classes appear
in "Kol haLashon"
Torah Bank Service
USA 718.521.5231 #2>4>12
Israel 073.295.1245

For Inquiries on
"Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh"
Contact: 052.763.8588
Email info@bilvavi.net

