

Pesah 2014: Learning Never Stops

A Seder Supplement from the Schechter School of Long Island



Schechter
School of Long Island

עֲבָדִים הָיינו לְפָרַעַה בְּמִצְרַיִם. וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם,
בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה, וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הָרִי אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ,
מִשְׁעֲבָדִים הָיינו לְפָרַעַה בְּמִצְרַיִם.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord our God took us out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Had God not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, then we, our children and grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

וְאִפְּלוּ כָלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים, כָּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים, כָּלֵנוּ זָקֵנִים, כָּלֵנוּ
יֹדְעִים אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה, מְצוּהָ עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם.
וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח:

Even if we all were wise, perceptive, experienced, and well-versed in Torah, it would still be our obligation to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. The more one talks about the Exodus, the more praise he deserves.

Sparking Your Conversation

- **Kids:** Why would someone who is very smart still need to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt?
- **Teenagers:** What was a time when you thought that you knew everything about something, only to be exposed to a completely new way of thinking?
- **Adults:** What are the ways that lifelong learning can provide benefits for all of us as we grow, mature and face new and different challenges?
- **Lifelong Learners:** What can we do to ensure that entire communities know that Jewish learning is without limits, and that all of us are obligated to find new ways to make Jewish learning a lifelong pursuit for all?

1. Tiferet Shlomo, *The Heritage Haggadah*, ed. Eliyahu Kitov, 119

The Jews in Egypt had knowledge, understanding, the power of speech, and all other intellectual attributes associated with mitzvot and good deeds, but as long as Pharaoh held the Jews as his slaves, all these attributes were more in the realm of the potential than the actual. When God intervened and freed the Jews from Egypt, there was a redeeming miracle regarding our intellectual faculties as well, causing each one to emerge from potential and be realized.

2. Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, *Ha-Moadim B-Halakhah*, Vol. 2, “Pesah: The Seder”

If one were to assume that the telling about the Exodus is purely for the sake of informing people about the meaning of the Pesah sacrifice, the matzah, and the maror, then it would follow that if the people already knew this information, there would be no mitzvah in the telling...This is the meaning of the passage, “And even if we were all sages...it is a mitzvah for us...” — this comes to inform us that this telling about the Exodus is a distinct and independent mitzvah, and that is why it is appropriate to say, “whoever goes to great lengths, is to be praised.”

3. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks’s Haggadah* (2010), 15

There is a fundamental difference between knowing and telling the story. We do not tell the narrative of the Exodus to know what happened in the past. We do so because each telling engraves that event more thoroughly in the memory, and because each year adds its own insights and interpretations. Judaism is a constant dialogue between the past and present, and since the present always changes, there is always a new juxtaposition, a new facet of the story.

4. Peter Senge, *Schools that Learn* (2000), 459-460

Even in these times of change for communities— of globe-spanning information technologies, diverging family forms, mobile corporations, shifting urban populations, fragmenting political structures, and increased interest in lifelong learning for everyone—the answer is always tied to the needs of children. Communities always exist, in part, because children need a place to learn to be adults. Thus, a “school that learns,” wherever it is located and whatever form it takes, requires a community that fosters learning all around it.