



• PATHWAYS TO PARENTING

Pesach: A Jew's Pride and Joy

RABBI SHAYA COHEN

WITH PESACH arriving in just a few short weeks, this is the time to gain an understanding of the unparalleled good fortune of the Jew in having such a unique holiday.

And unique it is indeed: Consider the classic image of a mother—hopefully with other family members pitching in too—scrubbing an obscure corner of the house in order to ensure that every last nook and cranny is *Pesach'dig*. The meticulous and unyielding exactness with which the Jewish people have observed Pesach is something that has been marveled at throughout the ages. What motivates the Jewish father and mother to expend their last ounces of energy preparing for this Yom Tov?

Pesach has had a unique effect not only on the observant Jew, but even on those who are tragically distant from Torah. Even among Jews whose observance of Shabbos and kashrus is obsolete, the traditions of the Passover Seder have been kept alive and repeated each year. What is it about Pesach that touches the heart of even the most seemingly apathetic Jew and moves them to recite the glorious

national story that begins with the words, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt”?

We can decipher these enigmas by understanding the ultimate meaning and message of Pesach. The Ramban writes that until the Jews witnessed the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the human race had never directly seen Hashem’s all-encompassing creative powers. Many people had used their intellect to recognize Hashem and His involvement in the affairs of mankind, but never was the reality of Hashem’s total mastery of all so clear and palpable, and on such a large scale.

But, as human experience bears out, faith in Hashem is not acquired once and forever; instead, it requires ongoing reinforcement. This, the Ralbag explains, is why the Jewish people sang the *Shirah* after the splitting of the sea. Even after seeing miracles of such magnitude, their faith needed the strengthening that only the spiritually uplifting experience of *Shirah* could provide.

So, too, does Pesach serve for us as a present-day song of praise to reaffirm what we know to be true about Hashem’s mastery of the

world. By recalling the redemption in all its splendor, from the power that was displayed during the Plague of the Firstborn to the love that was expressed through the *Ananei Hakavod* in the desert, the Jewish people reawaken and rejuvenate their faith and trust in Hashem.

When we relate the intricate details of the Ten Plagues and the amazing precision with which they were meted out—a glass full of blood in the hands of an Egyptian becoming water when touched by a Jew, or Jews walking about in sunlight at the very moment that a thick darkness paralyzes their Egyptian neighbors—these events clearly illustrate Hashem’s constant control over nature. They drive home that every occurrence is a direct result of Hashem’s will—and when we need help, there is but one direction to turn.

But the Torah, in its infinite wisdom, teaches that simple remembrance is not enough. For the message of Hashem’s omnipotence to truly penetrate, it must be expressed through actions, specifically during a *Chag* when we refrain from work and other mundane matters so we can focus on absorb-

ing the Divine message conveyed by the many different mitzvos of Pesach.

First comes cleaning the house of all *chametz*, followed by the various mitzvos of the Seder, primarily among them the eating of the matzah, all of which help us to actually relive our history. By eating matzah just like the Jews ate after leaving Egypt and being deprived of *chametz* just as they were, we are reminded of the speed with which the redemption came. Although 210 years of slavery had already elapsed, we were rushed out of Egypt without even enough time to bake a loaf of bread.

This is a palpable, powerful demonstration of Hashem's love for His people. And so it is with every aspect of the Seder night, all of which place us back in Egypt and make us realize that we, too, were redeemed along with the rest of our nation.

But perhaps the most powerful mitzvah of all is the one regarding

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which the Torah commands us, "And you should tell your child on that day..." When a man relates the Pesach story to his child, he becomes linked to a heritage that goes straight back to that glorious day over 3,300 years ago.

This is the very same story his father told him, which he had heard from *his* father, and upward through the ages, and that's enough to fill him with an overwhelming sense of pride in being Jewish. It's staggering to consider that from America to Ethiopia, from Russia to Australia, millions of Jews from all walks of life gather in their

homes on this one special night to tell a story they have heard so many times before, just as it was told by the original generation of millions of eyewitnesses.

Is there another people on earth that can claim such continuous transmission of its national story and such tenacious devotion to an ideal? There is none.

This alone is an unparalleled source of pride in our Judaism. It is enough to make us and our children ecstatic over our amazing good fortune in simply being Jews, members of a nation unique within mankind. ●

Rabbi Shaya Cohen is the Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Zichron Aryeh and the founder of Priority-1. He has been a Rosh Yeshivah for close to 50 years and has trained hundreds of mechanchim around the world. He is a sought after speaker in the chinuch world and was a featured speaker at the 2016 Agudah Convention.