

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

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A Deeper Look Into The Mitzvah Of ספור יציאת מצרים

based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 21) on the Mitzvah of ספור יציאת מצרים writes as follows, “The Mitzvah is to tell over the events of the Exodus from Egypt on the evening of the 15th of Nissan. Each person should tell it over in his language, and praise Hashem for all the miracles He did for us. As it says, ‘And you should tell your son...’ The idea of the Mitzvah is that a person should remember the miracles and events that happened to our forefathers when they left Egypt and how Hashem took revenge against the Egyptians. Even if one is alone he is obligated to express this verbally to awaken his heart regarding this matter, as speech awakens the heart.”

Upon initial analysis, the Sefer Hachinuch appears difficult to understand. He writes that the Mitzvah is about remembering the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim, and he quotes the Pasuk of והגדת לבנך as the source for this Mitzvah. Yet he also writes that part of this Mitzvah is praising Hashem. Where do you find in this Pasuk any obligation to praise Hashem? In addition, if the Mitzvah is remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim, why is it necessary to express the events of Yetzias Mitzrayim verbally if one is alone, and awaken the heart? Even if one does not express it by mouth and merely reads it, he is still remembering the event of Yetzias Mitzrayim. So why through reading it alone doesn't he fulfill the Mitzvah?

The Sefer Hachinuch can be explained based on what he writes further, in the reason for the Mitzvah. He writes as follows, “Don't be puzzled why there are so many Mitzvos to remember Yetzias Mitzrayim, as it is the great foundation and pillar of our Torah and Emunah....it is a clear sign to the creation of the world, and that their is a G-d who is in control of everything...this will silence anyone who denies the creation of the world, and it will sustain our Emunah in the knowledge of Hashem.” To summarize, the goal of remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim is to help us oppose any

views that challenge creation, and to sustain our Emunah.

If the goal is Emunah we can now understand what the sefer Hachinuch writes above. According to the Sefer Hachinuch the Mitzvah of Emunah is defined in the Mitzvah of believing in Hashem. There (Mitzvah 25) he writes, “The idea of Emunah is to implant in your heart that this is the truth and it can't be changed. If one would ask you, you should respond to anyone that this is what you believe even at the threat of death. All of this strengthens and entrenches the belief, when you actualize it; meaning, when you fulfill with your mouth the convictions of your heart.” It is clear from the Sefer Hachinuch that the idea of Emunah is to take that which you know intellectually, and penetrate it deeply into your heart to the point where any other reality is impossible.

Based on this we can explain the Sefer Hachinuch as follows: The goal of ספור יציאת מצרים is to penetrate its memory deep within our hearts. It is not merely to remember the event of Yetzias Mitzrayim, but to sustain our Emunah in the face of any challenge. Therefore, the Sefer Hachinuch knew that to impact our heart, just thinking about Yetzias Mitzrayim is not enough. We need to utilize the strategies of praising Hashem, and speaking it out with our mouths, as doing this will transmit our knowledge into our hearts.

Keeping the above idea in mind can help us prepare for a meaningful Seder. A person may find the Seder somewhat pointless, as he already knows all the information. However, we see from above that the goal of the Seder is not solely to remember, but it is rather to implant that memory firmly and deeply within our hearts. It is to instill a deep Emunah that can withstand any opposition.