



The Four Sons Within Us Part 1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Pesach means the mouth that speaks and as we know the main part of the Seder is speaking. Speaking is about taking potential, what is in your mind, clarifying it, and telling it further.

There are many aspects of the Seder that are intriguing. Let's focus on the four sons. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov says that we give birth to the four sons inside ourselves. The key point of the Seder is very much about knowing how to have a dialogue with ourselves. How? It says, "Keneged arba banim dibra Torah." Not through your own intuition and not through what you may have read somewhere, but by studying what the Torah says about the sons.

The first son is the chacham. We all have a chacham that lives inside of us. Pirkei Avot says, "Eizehu chacham haroeh et hanolad-Who is wise, one who desires to know what will happen." We play chess in our minds. If I do this, this will happen. If I do that, that will happen. We often find ourselves stuck with what Rav Dessler would call the problem of – "I want." I want to lose weight but I also want to eat whatever I want. So people have to choose between the I wants and oftentimes they don't. The result of that is that you don't reach your goals because you never discerned in your mind what was most important. A chacham wants to see that which will yet be born. He doesn't want to be victimized by his own inner conflicts. I want to

be a person who knows what the Torah demands of me, but I also want to be involved in other things. If you're a chacham you'll think about what you really want and what will come forth from your decisions.

There's another definition of chacham- one who learns from every person. Now there are unpleasant people who you may know that you would think you could teach, but what could you possibly learn from them? Yesterday I went to buy shoes and the Arab salesman hiked up the price and didn't include what I asked for. And I was thinking-what can I learn from this guy? And then I got it- If you want people to listen to you, you have to treat them with respect. If he would have shown his true self the minute I walked into the store, I would've been out of there in no time. And that's part of - haroeh et hanolod because you have to know that what you learn from other people, will affect you. We're extraordinarily prone towards wanting approval and that means responding to people in a way that will get you approval, which often will not let you be the person you want to be.

The chacham asks - What are the chukim, mishpatim and eidot that You commanded? He realizes that the source of knowing how he could fulfill himself and how he could learn from other people, lies with Hashem. What does Hashem tell me about how to approach reality and how to be myself? Chukim comes from the root word to engrave.

The act of engraving changes the metal. The chacham asks what will change me. What ways of engraving my consciousness have you given, that will enable me to be the person I want to be. The chukim are the laws that are engraved. Hashem is telling you this is what you need to do whether you understand it or not. The Gemara says that the word Shatnas is Sham Satan. Wool is the softest and most absorbent material while linen is the harshest and most resilient. Hashem says don't mix them. When there's a need for resilience, there's no need for softness. When there's a need for softness, there's no need for resilience. The exception is tzitzit. When you know how to mix the two, then you can. The chacham says- I would like to understand the chukim and there are reasons for it, but I'm still going to do it because it's going to take me where I want to be.

Mishpatim are laws that our logic would command us to do. You want to be who you could be? You have to use logic. There has to be sevara but it can't contradict the chukim. Eidot are the mitzvot that bear witness to things that occurred, that tell you how much Hashem is committed to us, how beloved we are to Hashem. You can learn from every person because he's a creation of Hashem. There's something he could teach you, positively or negatively, because Hashem's involved. And we see this with Shabbat and the chagim too.

Present Presence: Parshat Pekudei

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Book of Shemot concludes with Moshe's final actions for the Tabernacle's consecration. It describes the cloud that would always be above the Tabernacle and the interaction between this cloud and Israel in the desert:

"He erected the Courtyard around the Tabernacle and the Altar, and he placed the curtain of the gate of the Courtyard... The clouds covered the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle. When the cloud rose up from the Tabernacle, the Children of Israel would embark on all their journeys. If the

cloud would not rise up, they would not travel until the day it rose. For the cloud of Hashem would be on the Tabernacle by day, and fire would be on it by night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel throughout their journeys."

These verses raise several questions that seem unrelated, but whose answers will indeed show a deep connection. First, the Mishchat Shemen asks whether the cloud was always on the Tabernacle, or whether it did in fact rise up. Then, the Mikdash Halevi asks why, when the entire passage is written in the past tense, does the Torah then imply the

future with, "For the cloud of Hashem would be on the Tabernacle." Finally, Rabbi Kanatovsky asks why the Torah uses the unusual term *Beit Yisroel* instead of the more common *Bnei Yisroel*.

The Mikdash Halevi answers that this passage has two levels of meaning. It is a record of what happened in the wilderness, and it is also directing us now as a guide for our path in life. The Torah is teaching us that Hashem was with us in the desert, and will also be with us in the future throughout our dark exile. Similarly, the Siftei Re'em notes that the cloud by day

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refers to the era when we had the *Beit Hamikdash*, whereas the fire by night refers to the dark stages of exile. Just as we felt the closeness to Hashem through the Mishkan, writes Rabbi Schlesinger, we can bring Hashem closer to us through Torah learning. Indeed, Pirkei Avot testifies, "When ten people learn Torah together, God's presence rests among them." Just as the cloud was not directly on Bnei Yisroel when they traveled, but more symbolically within them, so will Hashem rest within us in our sojourn through life.

Rabbi Y. Belsky discusses the three things that Moshe did to consecrate the Tabernacle. Why are these actions recorded here, in Sefer Shemos, rather than in Sefer Vayikrah, where the Torah teaches the actual sacrificial service? He explains that since the purpose of the physical redemption was to lead us back to the spiritual level of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, it is indeed fitting that these three areas be consecrated in reference to the redemption itself rather than in the tasks of the priests. He points out a parallelism to the three blessings of the Matriarchs. The show-bread that Moshe prepared on the Table reflected the blessing in the dough; the menorah Moshe lit paralleled the Shabbat

candles that would never go out; and the incense offering on the altar represented God's cloud on their tents.

However, it would appear that anointing these vessels would have sufficiently consecrated them. Why did Hashem command Moshe to actually use them? He wanted to teach us the difference between potential and actualization. Anointing the vessels conferred upon them the potential for sanctity but for the Divine Presence to rest upon it, it needed to be actualized through service.

Every Jew, continues Rabbi Belsky, has innate sanctity. Will it remain unfulfilled potential or will it be actualized? We have the tools to bring God's Presence to earth by utilizing the three pillars of the earth's continued existence, pillars that represent these same symbols of our Matriarchs and the vessels in the Tabernacle. We can spread the light of Torah through continued learning and teaching, we can do our service of the heart through prayer, and we can engage in acts of loving kindness by helping to provide for the needs of others.

Tov Hapeninim writes that even when Bnei Yisroel were encamped they were still traveling. For daily life is also a journey. In this

context, the cloud was always with them, whether they were eating bread, whether the priests were cleaning the ashes from the altar, or whether they stopped to rest. Similarly, we must seek to find Hashem wherever we may be on our journey. Resting too is part of serving Hashem. As proof, Rabbi Kofman cites the Netziv who points out that we are permitted to interrupt *Hallel* at the *seder* to eat the festive meal. He explains that when we sanctify our physical activities they become an integral part of serving Hashem.

We can now understand why the passage in Pekudei uses the term *Beis Yisroel* (House of Israel), for we must try to recreate a mini sanctuary in our homes. *Nefesh Shimshon* suggests letting the aura of the Shabbat candles permeate the entire week, so that there remains an air of harmony within the home. We can make our "dough" blessed by spending money on necessities rather than frivolities that will distract us from our true purpose. Finally, we can surround ourselves with a veil of modesty. Just as we moved or stopped according to Hashem's command through the cloud, so must we let Hashem take the lead in our lives. The more we bring His presence into our lives, the more we will merit feeling His presence.

Pesach: Small Actions, Big Results

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoach Teller

Small matters played an inordinate role in the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people. Three seemingly insignificant acts: not altering their attire, not changing their names, and not speaking the Egyptian language helped the Jews merit salvation. Similarly, the minor act of spreading the blood of the *korban pesach* on the lintels of their doors saved them from the plague of the firstborns. We also find this theme in the laws of Pesach. The smallest speck of *chometz* (leavened bread) cannot be nullified.

In Az Yashir, we say, "*Nachita b'chasdecha am zu ga'alta*. You (Hashem) led, with your kindness, this nation that you have redeemed." Small acts of *chesed* (kindness) brought the redemption. Although the Jewish people suffered greatly in Egypt, they sought to help each other in every way they could. When Hashem saw their incredible compas-

sion, he responded in kind.

Chazal say, Hashem never awards greatness to an individual until He tests him with minor matters. We see this particularly in regard to *chesed*. People run after the major *chasadim* and fewer people are willing to volunteer for smaller deeds. But those insignificant acts of kindness breed greatness.

Small deeds have the potential to reap great dividends. The Midrash relates how Moshe carried one of his lost thirsty sheep back to his flock on his shoulder. When Hashem saw this exceptional compassion he said, "He will be the shepherd of my people." Before Hashem created Adam and Chava he prepared a beautiful world for them. When we arrange our home in an inviting way so that guests feel welcome, we emulate His ways. Although he appeared to be far away, Batya stretched out her hand to save Moshe.

Rav Kaheneman was one of the key figures in the renaissance of Torah learning after the Holocaust. His motto was, "The return will always be greater than the investment, provided you stretch out your hand." And indeed he was the living embodiment of this.

At the end of his life, Rav Zisha said, "I'm not worried if they will ask me why I didn't have the *chesed* of Avraham, the perspicuity of the Vilna Gaon, or the courage of Yitzchak. I'm only worried that they'll ask me why I didn't become Zisha, why I didn't accomplish what I could have.

We must never downgrade a small act. We should not downplay our personal significance in any situation Hashem places us. Rather we should utilize the skills we have been given to help others, one small step at a time.