

One Might Think

Continuing to expound the *pasuk* it just cited for the last of the Four Sons – “And you shall tell your son **on that day** saying, ‘**On account of this** God acted for me when I left Egypt’” – the Haggadah now derives the time for this obligation.

The question many commentators ask on this short section is, as my rebbe expressed in Talmudic terminology, “What is the *havah amina*?” **Why would one think that the mitzvah of *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim* begins from the first of Nisan?**

Rashi and other commentaries offer a simple answer: since the Halacha requires us to study the laws of Pesach well in advance of the holiday, one would think that the mitzvah to stimulate his son to ask about the Redemption should also begin beforehand – from *Rosh Chodesh*. The Avudraham and Ritva add that this is especially so in light of Moshe’s instructing the Jewish People three verses earlier, “And you shall worship [with] this service **in this month**.”

My rebbe, Rav Ahron Soloveichik, expanding upon another idea found in earlier commentators, answers by noting that our Haggadah follows both Rav and Shmuel’s opinions regarding the law that when relating *yetziat Mitzrayim* “one begins with disgrace and concludes with praise.” Rav interpreted this to mean that we start by saying,

“At the beginning our fathers were idol worshippers” and we end with “and now The Place has brought us close to His service.” Shmuel, on the other hand, argues that we start with “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt” and finish with “and God took us out of there.”

My rebbe explained that while Shmuel stresses the physical slavery and freedom, Rav emphasizes the spiritual servitude and redemption. Working with the opinion of Rav, the Haggadah entertained the possibility that the mitzvah of *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim*

should begin each year when *Bnei Yisrael*’s spiritual redemption began in Egypt. When was that? The first of Nisan, when they received their first mitzvah – *Rosh Chodesh*, is when it commenced.

My rebbe’s brother, Rav Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik, though, offers a different, creative solution to our problem. The Rambam, notes the Rav, derives the basic mitzvah of *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim* from “Remember this day that you left Egypt” by comparing it to “Remember the day of the Shabbat to sanctify it.” Commenting on this latter verse, the Ramban writes, “By way of simple meaning, they said that it is a mitzvah that we should always remember Shabbat – on all days ... so that we recognize that

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יכול מראש חדש תלמוד לומר לומר ביום
 ההוא. אי ביום
 ההוא יכול מבעוד יום, תלמוד לומר בעבור זה. בעבור זה
 לא אמרתיו אלא בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מנחים לפניך:

One might think [that the obligation to "tell your son" of the Exodus

begins] from the beginning of the month. Therefore it says, "on that day." If [it said only] "on that day," one might think [that the Torah meant] while it is yet day. Therefore it says, "on account of this." I did not say "on account of this," except at the time that matzah and maror are placed before you.

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the world has a Creator ...". Based on a combination of the Rambam and Ramban's positions, contends the Rav, the Haggadah reasoned that just as the mitzvah "Remember the day of Shabbat" begins from the first day of the week, so, perhaps, does the mitzvah of "Remember this day that you left Egypt" start from the first day of the month.

"On that Day" vs. "On Account of This"

From "on that day" the Haggadah learns that the mitzvah to recount *yetziat Mitzrayim* is only on the day when the service of the *Pesach* (mentioned a couple of *psukim* earlier) is to be performed. However, says the Haggadah, one might suppose that the obligation begins immediately after the *korban* is offered, while it is still daytime. Therefore, says the Haggadah, the *pasuk* states "on account of this" – on account of the mitzvot of matzah and maror – implying that the obligation of *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim* applies only concurrent to the requirement to eat matzah and maror.

The obligation of *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim* applies concurrent to the requirement to eat matzah and maror

This exposition of the verse, though, presents us with a serious problem. The *korban Pesach* is offered on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan (shortly before the actual holiday begins), and is eaten, with the matzah and maror, that evening. According to the Torah, day follows night, as it states repeatedly in *Bereishit*, "And it was evening and it was morning." Similarly, all calendar days, and Shabbat and holiday observance, begin and end with nightfall. Technically, then, the *korban* is brought on the previous day, while it is still the fourteenth! **How is the Seder night, the fifteenth of Nisan, "when matzah and maror are placed before you," considered "on that day" – on which the *Pesach* is offered?**