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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת בא

והיה כי יביאך ה' אל ארץ הפנעני והחתי וכו', ועבדת את העבדה הזאת בחדש הזה. שבעת ימים תאכל מצת וביזום השביעי חג לה' וכו'. והגדת לבנך ביזום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים וכו'. ושמרת את החקה הזאת למועדה מימים ימימה. (שמות יג, ה-י)

And it shall come to pass when Hashem shall bring you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite ... you shall perform this service in this month. For seven days shall you eat matzos, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival for Hashem ... And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt.' ... You shall observe this decree at its designated time from year to year. (Shemos 13:5-10)

This week's *parshah* concludes with the obligation to observe the *Yom Tov* of Pesach and teach future generations about the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The Torah commands us to celebrate Pesach by eating only *matzah* and no *chametz* for seven days. Furthermore, the *possuk* instructs parents about the responsibility to educate their children about the reason for these *mitzvos* and to relate the great miracles and kindness Hashem performed for us at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Rashi explains, based on a Mechilta, that the phrase 'It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf,' answers the *rasha's* question. We recite in the Haggadah:

רשע מה הוא אומר? מה העבדה הזאת לכם? לכם - ולא לו. ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הפלל כפר בעקר. ואף אתה הקהה את שניו ואמר לו: בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים. לי - ולא לו. אילו היה שם, לא היה נגאל.

The wicked one – what does he say? 'Of what purpose is this work for you?' He says, 'To you,' thereby excluding himself. By excluding himself from the community (of believers) he denies the basic principle of Judaism. Therefore, blunt his teeth and tell him 'It is because of this that Hashem did for me when I went out of Egypt.' 'For me,' but not for him – had he been there he would not have been redeemed.

The Beis Halevi expounds upon the wicked son's claim and provides us with an enlightening explanation of the *possuk*. The wicked son's argument is similar to that of the Reform movement, which limits the adherence to the Torah and *mitzvos* to specific circumstances and locales. They profess that just as times have changed, certain *mitzvah* observances, have lost their relevance, *chas veshalom*, and require "modernisation". The wicked son does not deny that these observances ordained by the Torah were appropriate to celebrate and commemorate Yetzias Mitzrayim. However, he questions that the sole objective of the Korban Pesach was to eradicate *avodah zarah*, which was rampant in Mitzrayim. As we know, the Jews had to bring a lamb - the symbol of idol worship - as a sacrifice to Hashem, even at the expense of their safety, to combat the influence of idolatry that was among them. The wicked son argues that nowadays, with the practice of idolatry nearly non-existent, this law should no longer be applicable, and we should devise a more relevant and meaningful observance. But we refute him and blunt his teeth by proclaiming that he got it all wrong and that if he had then been alive, he would not have been saved. But the question remains, how does the answer of the *possuk* בעבור זה counter his argument?

The Beis Halevi explains that by analysing this *possuk*, we can understand an important message in these words. Let us begin by asking another question. Seemingly, this *possuk* explains the reason why we observe the *mitzvos* of Pesach, and we teach our children that it is due to the miracles we experienced in Mitzrayim. If that's the case, shouldn't the *possuk* be phrased differently? Shouldn't it say: *בְּעִבּוֹר שְׂיָצְאֹתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה הַמִּצְוָה*, *Because I came out of Mitzrayim, I am performing this mitzvah*? Why is the *possuk* written the other way round, which seems to be misleading?

Teaches the Beis Halevi, it is the other way round. With this, he imparts a lesson which is relevant for all *mitzvos*, as the reasoning behind performing *mitzvos* is often misunderstood. It is not because we were saved that we perform these *mitzvos*, but the opposite. We perform these *mitzvos* because they have their intrinsic value, and it was because of this merit that Hashem saved us from Mitzrayim. It was “*בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה*” - because of the merit of this *mitzvah*, that “*אֵלֹהֵי הַיָּם לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם*” - Hashem saved us from Mitzrayim. In other words, Hashem rescued us from Mitzrayim so that we could fulfil these *mitzvos*, with the merit of Klal Yisroel's future observance of these *mitzvos* providing a *zechus* to be saved.

Although numerous times the Torah itself ascribes a rationale for *mitzvos*, this is only one aspect of the *mitzvah*, the one most relatable and meaningful to us; but the true essence of the *mitzvah* is not revealed to us. The commandments connected with Pesach were not ordained because they correspond to certain historical events; on the contrary, the historical event took place because of the *mitzvos*. This is evident from that the Torah and *mitzvos* existed even before the world was created. Furthermore, Chazal teach that Avrohom ate *matzah* on the 15th of Nissan long before there was a *geulah* to celebrate, which confirms that there must be another reason unknown to us.

This is the answer to the *rasha* and every child. We want to stress that we don't observe *mitzvos* based on our limited understanding since then they risk becoming irrelevant over time. We refute the *rasha*, “Do not make the *mitzvos* dependent on your understanding or on whether they are deemed appropriate for current circumstances. *Mitzvos* are eternal, containing lofty concepts beyond our comprehension and are always applicable, as evident in the *possuk* of *בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה*. It was only because of the *mitzvos* that we came out of Mitzrayim, and not vice versa. *לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל* - *If he would have been there he wouldn't have been saved*, since he wouldn't have the merit of the *mitzvah* which was the true cause for our salvation.”

The *possuk*, *וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת הַחֻקָּה הַזֹּאת לְמוֹעֵדָה מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה*, *You shall observe this decree at its designated time from year to year*, is better understood according to the Beis Halevi. Now, after teaching this lesson - that *mitzvos* are not dependent on occurrences - does the Torah emphasise that this *mitzvah* always remains applicable and relevant.

We must appreciate the depth within the *mitzvos* we perform. The Torah reminds us here that there is much more to any *mitzvah* – including these apparently straightforward ones – than what appears on the surface. The infinite wisdom and profundity contained in every *mitzvah* are inconceivable, resulting in their meaningfulness remaining permanent and immutable!