

The Four Questions Asked at the Seder Correspond to the Four Questions HKB”H Asked Adam and Chava

In honor of Pesach, which approaches us auspiciously, it is only fitting to examine the following Mishnah (Pesachim 116a): “**מִזְגָּו לֹא כָּס**: **שְׁנֵי, וְכָאן הַבָּן שׁוֹאֵל אֶבְיוֹ, וְאֵם אֵין דַעַת בָּבָן, אֶבְיוֹ מַלְמְדוֹ מִהָּנְשָׁתְנָה הַלִּילָה הַזָּה מִכָּל—they poured a second cup for him; at this point, the son asks his father; if the son does not have sufficient knowledge, his father teaches him to recite: “Why is this night different from all other nights?”** Addressing the words of the Mishnah, the Gemarah elaborates (*ibid.*): “**תָנוּ רַבָּנָן, חַכְמָה בָנוֹ שׁוֹאֵל, וְאֵם אֵינוֹ חַכְמָה אֲשֶׁרְתָו שׁוֹאֵלָתוֹ, וְאֵם**—**לֹאָוּ הַזָּה שׁוֹאֵל לְעַצְמוֹ, וְאֶפְרַיאֵל שְׁנֵי תַלְמִידִים חַכְמִים שִׁיְדֻעָין בְּהַלְכֹת הַפֵּסָח שׁוֹאֵלָין**—**The Rabbis taught: If his son is intelligent, the son asks him; if he is not sufficiently intelligent, his wife asks him; if she cannot ask, he asks himself; even if the two participants are both Torah scholars, proficient in the laws of Pesach, they must ask one another.**

This is precisely how the halachah was established in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 473, 7): “**מִזְגָּו לֹא מִיד כָּס שְׁנֵי כְּדֵי שִׁיאָלָו**: **הַתִּינְקוֹת לִמְהָ שׁוֹתִים כָּס שְׁנֵי קָוְדָם סְעוֹדָה, וְאֵם אֵין חַכְמָה בָנוֹ אֶבְיוֹ מַלְמְדוֹ, אֵם אֵין לוּ בָן אֲשֶׁרְתָו שׁוֹאֵלָתוֹ, וְאֵם לֹאָוּ הַזָּה שׁוֹאֵל אֶת עַצְמוֹ, וְאֶפְרַיאֵל תַלְמִידִים חַכְמִים שׁוֹאֵלים זֶה לְזֶה מִהָּנְשָׁתְנָה**—he is immediately poured a second cup so that the young children will inquire as to why we are drinking a second glass of wine before the meal. If the son is not sufficiently wise, the father teaches him how to ask. If he does not have a son, his wife asks him the questions; otherwise, he asks himself the questions. Even if the participants are Torah scholars, they must still ask each other the questions.

The simple reason for following this format is explained by the Derech Pikudecha (Mitzvah 21). The Torah specifically states (Shemos 12, 26): “**וְהִיא כִּי יִאמְרָו אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מִהָּעֲבוֹדָה הַזֹּאת לְכֶם, וְאָמְרָתֶם זֹבֵחַ פָּסָח**”—and it shall be that when your children will say to you, “What is this service to you?” You shall say, “It is a Pesach-offering to Hashem, Who skipped over the houses of the Bnei Yisrael...” Elsewhere, it states (*ibid.* 13, 14): “**וְהִיא כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בָן מָוחָר לְאֹמֵר מָה זֹאת, וְאָמְרָתָךְ אֶלָיו בְּחוֹזֶק יְדֵ הַזֹּאת אֶת מִמְצָרִים מִבֵּית**—and it shall be when your son will ask you in the future, “What is this?” You shall say to him, “With a strong hand Hashem removed us from Mitzrayim, from the house of bondage.”

The Derech Pikudecha adds the following explanation: “**וְהַנְּהָה עִיקָּר** המצווה שִׁיחָה הַסִּיפּוֹר עַל יְדֵי שְׁאָלָה וְתִשְׁוֹבָה, וְאֶפְרַיאֵל אֵין לוּ מִשִּׁיאָלָנוּ הַזָּה שׁוֹאֵל לְעַצְמוֹ וּמִשְׁבֵּבָה, כִּי מִצְוָה עַלְנוּ לְהַטְעִים עֲנֵנִי האמונה וְלְהַדְעִים מִותְקָוֹת עֲבוֹדָה, וְכָבֵר יִדּוֹת שְׁעֵל יְדֵי הַשְּׁאָלָה בְּאֶת הַתִּשְׁוֹבָה יְוָתֵר תְּרָאָה מָה שָׁאָמָרָו רְצָל (תְּעִנִית ז.) וּמְתַלְמִידִי יְוָתֵר מְכּוֹלָם, דְּהַתְלִימִיד לְהַיּוֹת אֵינוֹ שָׁלֵם בְּשְׁכָלָו עַדִּין—**שְׁוֹאֵל שְׁאָלוֹת, עַל יְדֵי כָּן בְּאָוֹ הַהֲלָכוֹת יְוָתֵר מִוּטָעָמוֹת בְּלִי פְּקֹפָק**”—the point of the mitzvah of “*sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*” is to instill faith in the participants and to impress upon them that the service of Hashem is pleasant and appealing. It is well-known that well-formulated questions lead to more precise, sensible and clearer answers.

The Primeval Serpent Introduced the First Question into Creation

I was struck by a wonderful idea as to why the mitzvah of “*sipur yetzias Mitzrayim*” demands a question and answer format. First, let us focus on the subject of questions. The first question asked in this world, after HKB”H created the world, was the question the primeval serpent addressed to Chava (Bereishis 3, 1): “**וַיַּהַנְּחָשׁ הִיא עֲרוּם מִכָּל חַיָּת**”
“**הַשְׁדָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָה אֱלֹהִים, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל הָאָשָׁה אָרֶף כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹקִים לֹא תִאכְלֵוּ מִכָּל**”—now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that Hashem G-d had made. He asked the woman, “Did, perhaps, G-d say: ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” According to Rashi, the serpent asked Chava more questions than necessary in order to engage her in conversation and to eventually discuss the matter of the Tree of Knowledge.

As we see, from what eventually transpired, the cunning serpent employed the first question in creation to ultimately trap Adam and Chava, as it is written (*ibid.* 2): “**וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָשָׁה אֶל הַנְּחָשׁ מִפְּרִי עַץ הַגָּן נִאכֵּל,**”
“**וּמִפְּרִי הַעַץ אֲשֶׁר בָּתוּךְ הַגָּן אָמַר אֱלֹקִים לֹא תִאכְלֵוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְעַרְבּוּ בְּפָנֵ תְּמוּתָן,**”
“**וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּחָשׁ אֶל הָאָשָׁה لֹא מוֹת תִּמְوتָה, כִּי יוֹדֵעַ אֱלֹקִים כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְתָם מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִפְקַחְתָּו**”—**עֲנֵיכֶם וְהִיִּתְּמַכְּרָתָם כְּאֶלְקִים יְוָדֵי טֹב וּרְעָ**”—the woman said to the serpent, “Of the fruit of any tree of the garden we may eat. Of the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden G-d has said: ‘You shall not eat of it and you shall not touch it, lest you die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die; for G-d knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d, knowing good and bad.”

Let us note a fascinating development. In the aftermath of Adam and Chava's sin—prompted by the serpent's question—HKB" H appeared to them and proceeded to ask them several questions of His own. The most famous and the very first question HKB" H asked Adam was (*ibid.* 9): “אַנְתָּה”—**where are you?** In all, HKB" H asked them a total of four questions. Let us review the pesukim detailing these questions (*ibid.* 8):

"They heard the sound of Hashem G-d walking in the garden toward the direction of the sun; and the man and his wife hid from Hashem G-d among the trees of the garden. Hashem G-d called out to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' (Question #1) He said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I am naked; so, I hid.' And He said, 'Who told you that you are naked? (Question #2) Have you eaten of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?' (Question #3) The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' And Hashem G-d said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' (Question #4) The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

Prior to the Serpent's Blasphemous Question the World Was Free of Uncertainty

Having given the matter much consideration, I would like to propose my humble explanation. Let us consider what creation was like prior to the sin. Before the serpent had the audacity to pose the first question, the world was free of questions, doubts and uncertainty. Adam and Chava reigned over nature unequivocally. The passuk describes their status as follows (*Bereishis* 1, 28): **G-d blessed them and G-d said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the sky, and every living thing that moves on the earth."**

Their location and status in Gan Eden was clear (*ibid.* 2, 8): **"Hashem G-d planted a garden in Eden, to the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed."** They were supposed to live eternal lives in Gan Eden; death did not exist, yet, in the world. Above all, HKB" H's dominion over all of creation was evident and beyond question and uncertainty. HKB" H's directive not to eat from the Eitz HaDa'as was indisputable (*ibid.* 16): **"And Hashem G-d commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the Tree of Knowledge Good and Bad, you must not eat thereof; for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.'**"

Creation was complete and perfect, until the serpent came along and turned things topsy-turvy. He presented Chava with a seemingly simple, innocent question: Did HKB" H prohibit them from partaking of all the fruits in the garden? In truth, however, the question was not

innocent at all; it was prompted by the serpent's mockery and disdain. Why didn't He prohibit you from eating from all the trees of the garden? Thus, he continued to taunt on and on—insinuating that just as there was no prohibition to partake of the other trees in the garden, so, too, there was not prohibition to eat from the Eitz HaDa'as.

Hence, it is crucial that we understand the cause of Chava's downfall. She failed to discern the tremendous deception inherent in the serpent's inquiry. She should have ignored the question and not responded at all. The very fact that she responded indicated that she was carrying on a conversation with an appropriate party. Had she distanced herself immediately, with intense disgust and loathing, she would not have fallen into his deceitful trap and would not have disobeyed Hashem's directive. Then, the entire world would have remained pure and free of questions and uncertainty.

Yet, by failing to thwart the serpent, it succeeded in trapping her and Adam HaRishon and causing their downfall. Consequently, tremendous confusion and numerous deleterious effects were introduced throughout creation. HKB" H drove Adam and Chava out of Gan Eden; death descended upon the world; the earth began to sprout thorns and weeds. The greatest harm, however, was that the world became full of questions and uncertainty leading to heresy and denial of Hashem—all as a consequence of the serpent introducing its malevolent question into creation regarding HKB" H's directive. The initial effects could be seen in the generation of the flood and their corruption; subsequently, the generation of the dispersion built a tower attempting to wage battle against Hashem; ultimately, the sins of Sodom and Amorah were so intolerable that they had to be destroyed.

This allows us to comprehend the fact that Pharaoh, the ruler of Mitzrayim, took on the form of the primeval serpent. In the words of the Zohar Chadash (138b): **"וּפְרֻעָה דָּאִיהוּ דִּיוֹקָנָא דְּנַחַשׁ חִיבָּא"**. Therefore, when approached by Moshe and Aharon--acting as HKB" H's agents to facilitate the release of Yisrael from Mitzrayim—he followed in the footsteps of the serpent by opening with a sacrilegious question (*Shemos* 5, 2): **"Pharaoh asked, 'Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice to send out Yisrael? I do not know Hashem, nor will I send out Yisrael.'**

Amalek also acted as a representative of the primeval serpent, as explained by the Zohar Chadash: **"וְאִיהוּ נָחַשׁ הוּא סְמָךְ לְהָוָא עַמְלֵק"**. Amalek succeeded in introducing improper thoughts into the minds of Yisrael on their way out of Mitzrayim. They inquired blasphemously (*Shemos* 17, 7): **"הִישׁ הִ בְּקָרְבָּנוּ אֲם אַנְיָן—is Hashem in our midst or not?** As a consequence of this blasphemous question, Yisrael were punished (*ibid.* 8): **"Amalek came and battled Yisrael in Refidim."**

Rashi comments: **סֹמֶךְ פָּרָשָׁה זו לִמְקָרָא זוֹ לֹומר, תָּמִיד אַנְיִ בִּנְיכֶם וּמוֹזָמֵן לְכָל צְרָכֵיכֶם, וְאַתֶּם אָוֹמְרִים הַיָּשׁ ה' בְּקָרְבָּנוּ אָמָן, חַיְיכֶם שַׁחֲכָל בָּא'**—"the Torah juxtaposes these two passages to say, ‘I am always among you and ready for all of your needs, yet you say, ‘Is Hashem in our midst or not?’ By your lives, the dog (Amalek) will come and bite you; and you will cry out to me; and you will know where I am.’" It is not for naught that the kabbalists teach us that **טַקְעַת עַמְלָק** possesses the same numerical value as the word **טַבְעַת סְפָעַת**, meaning doubt or uncertainty; for, he introduces uncertainty and doubts into the minds of Yisrael regarding issues of faith.

HKB”H’s Question “איך” in Contrast to the Serpent’s Blasphemous Question

Taking the high road, let us endeavor to explain why HKB”H presented Adam HaRishon with a series of questions—beginning with **“where are you?”**—in the immediate aftermath of the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as.” Shlomo HaMelech states (Koheles 7, 14): **גַּם אַתָּה זֶה לְעוֹמֶת זֶה עֲשָׂה הָאֱלֹקִים**—**G-d has made the one as well as the other.** The wisest of all men teaches us a vital lesson. If the forces of evil and impurity raise their ugly heads to wage battle against the representatives of kedushah, the forces of kedushah must battle them with the very same weapon.

Solong as the serpent had not introduced questions and uncertainty into creation concerning faith in HKB”H, it was unnecessary to employ questions from the side of kedushah. The situation changed, however, the moment the serpent introduced questions and doubts into creation and tripped Adam up with his deception. From that moment on, the only device capable of fending him off is questions launched from the realm of kedushah. The purpose of these questions is to rise spiritually and reinforce our faith in Hashem and His mitzvos.

To understand how HKB”H’s question to Adam HaRishon—**“איך”**—represents an equal and opposite force to the serpent’s malevolent question, let us introduce a well-known story from the great luminary, the author of the Tanya. He was imprisoned in the capital city of St. Petersburg, after his enemies spread vicious rumors that he was guilty of treason. The warden of the prison, knowing that he was a Torah authority, asked him to explain why HKB”H asked Adam HaRishon, **“Where are you?”** Clearly, HKB”H knew where he was.

The author of the Tanya replied with religious fervor. HKB”H was not asking him where he was physically located; HKB”H was inquiring as to his spiritual status—**“איך”—where are you?** See how you have fallen from such great heights to such low depths. Prior to the sin, you were greater than the angels and the seraphim; now, you wander about naked and devoid of mitzvos—unable to observe even the

one, single mitzvah that I commanded you. The author of the Tanya adds that this questions echoes throughout the universe in every generation. HKB”H poses this question to each and every individual—**“איך”—where are you spiritually?**

We can now rejoice at having shed a glimmer of light on the matter of HKB”H’s four questions emanating from the realm of kedushah. His question **“איך”—where are you?**—directly counteracts the serpent’s deceitful question motivated by heresy—(**“zeh l’umas zeh”**). The aim of the serpent’s question was to topple Adam and Chava from the highest spiritual peaks down to the deepest pit of cravings and deplorable behavior. In direct contrast, the purpose of HKB”H’s question **“איך”** was to prompt Adam to contemplate teshuvah—by acknowledging the degree of his spiritual descent.

If a Matter of Judgment Will Be Hidden from You — You Shall Rise and Ascend”

Let us now examine a revelation from two great luminaries—the great author of the Panim Yafos and the Hafla’ah, and his student the Chasam Sofer, zy”a. All revelations and achievements in Torah scholarship come as the result of difficult questions that the diligent Torah scholar has labored to resolve. The author of the Hafla’ah writes that when a person encounters a question or doubt in his Torah study or service of Hashem, he should realize that it is a device from Hashem. It is Hashem’s will that he climb higher on the spiritual ladder of Torah and mitzvos; it is impossible to do so without stumbling upon a question or difficulty requiring effort and exertion to arrive at a correct and certain answer. This is comparable to a father reprimanding his son in order to teach him and urge him on to the next level. Thus, a person should rest assured that had Hashem not wanted him to grow in his Torah knowledge and acumen, he would not have encountered this difficulty and uncertainty. The only purpose for such difficulties and uncertainty is to ultimately provide clarification and solid answers.

Applying this concept, the author of the Hafla’ah interprets the following passuk (Shemos 15, 26): **וַיֹּאמֶר אָמֶן שָׁמֹועַ תִּשְׁמֹעַ לְקוֹל הָאֱלֹקִיךְ, וְהַיְשֵׁר בְּעִינֵינוּ תַּעֲשֶׂה וְהַזָּנוֹת לְמִצְוֹתָיו וְשִׁמְרָתָכְלָה כָּל חֻוקֶיךְ, כָּל הַמְּחֻלָּה**—**He said, “If you will listen diligently to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and you will do what is just in His eyes, and you will give ear to His mitzvos and observe all His statutes, then any of the diseases that I placed upon Mitzrayim, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem, your healer.”** There is a well-known question raised by the commentaries on this passuk. Since Hashem already promised that He would not inflict upon Yisrael any of the diseases that He had visited upon the Egyptians, what need would there be for Him to heal them?

As we know, Moshe and Aharon approached Pharaoh, the ruler of Mitzrayim, as part of HKB”H’s mission to take Yisrael out of Mitzrayim. Because Pharaoh was so totally mired in tumah, he was overwhelmed by questions concerning HKB”H and His management of the world. This is reflected in his blasphemous remarks (Shemos 5, 2): **מי ה' אשר אשמע בקומו לשלוח את ישראל, לא: יידעת את ה' וגם את ישראל לא אל לא אל? —who is Hashem that I should heed His voice to send out Yisrael? I do not know Hashem, nor will I send out Yisrael.**

This question represents a form of illness inflicted upon Pharaoh by HKB”H; however, not in order to heal him but for him to remain in doubt and to eliminate him and his people from existence. On the other hand, HKB”H places this illness upon Yisrael, stimulating question and inquiries regarding the Torah for an entirely different purpose. He does not wish for them to remain with their questions unresolved; He desires that they rise higher and higher, achieving greater heights of Torah scholarship. By laboring in their Torah studies to resolve difficult questions, they will achieve greater levels of Torah erudition.

This then is the meaning of the statement: **“any of the diseases that I placed upon Mitzrayim”—the doubts and questions they encountered regarding the nature of Hashem (“who is Hashem that I should heed His voice?”), which led to their extinction; **לא** “כִּי אַנְּיָה רֹפֵאךְ —I will not inflict them upon you with the same intent and purpose. Rather, HKB”H will present those engaged in Torah study with difficult questions regarding Torah issues. The difference between Yisrael and Mitzrayim, however, is that: **“כִּי אַנְּיָה רֹפֵאךְ —I am Hashem, your healer**—in Yisrael’s case, the difficulties and questions will heal them and aid them in achieving greater levels of Torah erudition.**

Based on this valuable introduction, his brilliant pupil, the Chasam Sofer, interprets in Torat Moshe (Shoftim) the passuk in Devarim (17, 8): **כִּי יִפְלָא מִמֶּךָּ דָבָר לְמִשְׁפָט بֵּין דָם לְדָם בֵּין דָין לְדָין וּבֵין נֶגֶע לְנֶגֶע דָבָר**—**if a matter of judgment will be hidden from you, between blood and blood, between verdict and verdict, or between affliction and affliction, matters of dispute in your cities—you shall rise and ascend to the place that Hashem, your G-d, shall choose.** The text specifies: **“if a matter of judgment will be hidden from you”—“a matter of judgment” suggests something understood and clear-cut; yet, if it defies your logic and presents difficulties and is unclear, rest assured that the reason for this difficulty is so that: **“you shall rise and ascend”—it was hidden from you, so that you would rise higher and higher, ultimately achieving a greater understanding of the Torah.****

The Purpose of Studying in Depth Is to Shatter the Klipos

Now, it is incumbent upon us to examine why a person is unable to achieve greater levels of Torah understanding without first being stimulated by difficult questions. It appears that we can explain this matter based on what the great Rabbi Chaim Vital, ztz”l, writes in Sha’ar HaMitzvos (Vaeschanan) in the name of his teacher, the Arizal:

“גַם בָּעֵנִין עַסְק הַהֲלָכָה בְּעֵינָן עַם הַחֲבִירִים, רָאִיתִי לִמְוֹרֵי זֶלֶה” הַמַּתְגָּבֵר כָּאַרְיָה בְּכָחָ בְּעֵת שֶׁהָיָה עוֹסָק בַּהֲלָכָה, עַד שָׁהִיחָה נֶלֶאָה וּמוֹעֵעָה גְדוֹלָה, וְשָׁאַלְתִּי אֶת פִּיו מַדְעָה טוֹרָחָה כָּל כָּךְ, וְהַשִּׁיבֵּל כִּי כִּי הַנְּהָרָה הַעֲיָן לְשִׁבְרַת הַקְּלִיפּוֹת, שָׁהָם הַקּוֹשְׁתִּיאָ שִׁשָּׁה בַּהֲלָכָה הַהִיא שָׁאַיָּן מִנְחִים לְאָדָם לְהִבְּזִין אֹתָה.

וְלֹכֶן צָרִיךְ הָאָדָם לְטוֹרָחָה וְלְהַתִּישׁ כּוֹחֵוֹ אֶזְרָאֵל, כִּי לְכֹן נִקְרָאת הַתּוֹרָה תּוֹשִׁיחָה שְׁמַתְשָׁתָה כּוֹחֵוֹ שֶׁל הַעוֹסָק בָּהּ, וְלֹכֶן רָאוֵי לְטוֹרָחָה וְלְהַתִּישׁ כּוֹחֵוֹ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ עוֹסָק בַּהֲלָכָה. גַם בָּעֵנִין פְּלֹפְלֹפְלָה וְעֵינָן הַהֲלָכָה הִיא מִוּרֵי זֶלֶה” אָוֹםֶר, כִּי תְּכִלִּתְהַעֲיָן הָאָהָרָ לְשִׁבְרַת הַקְּלִיפּוֹת שָׁהָם הַקּוֹשְׁתִּיאָ, כִּי הָם גְּרָמוּ לְאָוֹתָם הַקּוֹשְׁתִּיאָוֹת בַּהֲלָכָה, שְׁלָא יַוְנְטוּ תִּירּוֹצִים כִּי אָם בְּקוֹשִׁי וּבְדוֹחָק גָּדוֹלָה כְּנוּדָעָה.

I witnessed my mentor exerting tremendous energy while engaged in halachah to the point that he was sweating profusely. I asked him why it was necessary to work so hard. He replied that one must learn in depth to shatter the Klipos. They appear in the form of difficult questions that prevent a person from understanding the halachah.

Therefore, it is imperative to go to great lengths and to exert one’s energy while studying halachah. For this reason the Torah is referred to as “Toshiyah,” because it usurps a person’s strength, weakening he who engages in its study. [Translator’s note: the name “Toshiyah” derives from the Hebrew root meaning to weaken.]

We learn a very important principle here from the Arizal. The questions and difficulties that arise in halachah stem from the Klipos, which prevent a person from understanding the Torah. By exerting oneself and studying in depth in an effort to resolve these questions and difficulties, one is able to shatter the Klipos. With this in mind, we can only wonder how this coincides with the words of the author of the Hafla’ah. After all, he wrote that if a person encounters questions or uncertainty while engaged in Torah-study or the service of Hashem, he should recognize that these devices were sent by Hashem—Who wants him to rise to greater heights in his Torah study and performance of mitzvos. This seems to be at odds with the Arizal’s explanation that the difficult questions that arise in the study of halachah stem from the Klipos.

In truth, we can suggest that they are both saying the same thing. According to the Arizal, the difficulties and questions arise from the Klipos. If not for the Klipos, a person would achieve

an understanding of the entire Torah just as the holy Avos did—by refining their bodies of all impurities. The Hafla'ah, on the other hand, writes that the questions and difficulties a person encounters in his studies were sent by Hashem. He means that HKB”H arranges for the klipah to present the difficulty, so that the person will exert himself in Torah study and eliminate this klipah. By doing so, he will remove the obstacle and indeed achieve a greater understanding of the Torah.

Based on what we have learned, we can begin to understand an idea presented by the Arizal in Likutei HaShas (Keilim). He explains that the forces of negative, outside influences and tumah are referred to as “Klipos,” because they resemble: **הקליפה שקדמה לפרי**—the peel or outer husk that precedes the actual fruit. Just as a person cannot eat a fruit without first removing the outer peel covering the fruit; so, too, a person cannot achieve an understanding of the Torah—the holy fruit that is sweet and delightful—without first removing the difficult questions that act as an external barrier preventing access to the light of the Torah.

We can now appreciate why “sipur yetzias Mitzrayim” demands a question and answer format. The purpose of the exile in Mitzrayim was merely to serve as a preparation for receiving the Torah. As HKB”H said to Moshe (Shemos 3, 12): **“And this is the sign for you that I have sent you: when you take the people out of Mitzrayim, you will worship G-d on this mountain.”** Rashi explains that Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim in the merit of the Torah that they were destined to receive on this mountain three months after the exodus.

Seeing as a true understanding of the Torah can only be achieved by means of difficult questions, our blessed sages established that a father should relate the story of the exodus on the seder night specifically via questions and answers. After all, “sipur yetzias Mitzrayim” is a form of Torah study. Furthermore, by following this format, we illustrate the difference between Pharaoh and the Egyptians and Yisrael. HKB”H sent them the following question as a form of disease: **“Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice?”**, so that they would not find an answer and would cease to exist. In contrast, the questions accomplished the exact opposite for Yisrael. The questions and difficulties enhanced their existence and aided them in achieving greater heights in the understanding of the Torah.

The Exile in Mitzrayim Encompassed All Four Future Exiles

Continuing along this exalted path, let us now proceed to explain why our blessed sages instituted that on the night of the seder, the son

should ask his father precisely four questions—no more and no less. In fact, the four questions correspond to the four questions HKB”H asked Adam and Chava after they sinned with the Eitz HaDa’as: (1) **“מי הגיד לך כי עירום אתה”—who informed you that you are naked?** (2) **“המן העז אשר צויתיך לבתני אכול ממו”—did you partake of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?** (3) **“מה זאת עשית”—what is this that you have done?** At this point, we must ask: Why, indeed, did HKB”H pose precisely four questions—no more and no less?

It appears that we can connect the four questions to the four exiles. We learn in the Midrash (B.R. 2, 4): **“ויהארץ היתה תהו זה גלות”** **בבל, ובחו זה גלות מדי, וחושך זה גלות יון, על פניהם זה גלות ממלכת הרשע”—[אדורם]** **“when the earth was chaos”** **alludes to galus Bavel;** **“and void”** **alludes to galus Madai;** **“and darkness”** **alludes to galus Yavan;** **“over the surface of the deep”** **alludes to the galus of the wicked regime (Edom), which is unfathomable like the deep.** In another Midrash, we learn (B.R. 44, 17): **“וְהַנֶּה אִמְמָה חַשִּׁיכָה גְדוֹלָה נוּפָלָת עַלְיוֹן, אִמְמָה זו בָּבֶל, חַשִּׁיכָה זו מִדֵּי, נוּפָלָת עַלְיוֹן זו אֲדוֹם”—the passuk states: “and behold—a dread, great darkness fell upon him.” “A dread” refers to Bavel; “darkness” refers to Madai; “great” refers to Yavan; “fell upon him” refers to Edom.**

With regards to these Midrashim, our teacher, the Arizal, queries in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Ki Seitzei) why our blessed sages only list four exiles--Bavel, Madai, Yavan and Edom—and neglect to include galus Mitzrayim among these exiles. He explains that the four exiles listed are individual entities; each one of them opposes one of the four letters of the blessed name Havaya. Bavel corresponds to the letter “yud,” Madai corresponds to the first “hei,” Yavan corresponds to the letter “vav,” and Edom corresponds to the second “hei.”

In contrast to the other exiles, galus Mitzrayim was a general, all-encompassing exile. It included all of the other exiles wrapped up in one. For, it corresponds to the tip of the letter “yud”—“kotzo shel yud.” “Kotzo shel yud” incorporates all four letters of the name Havaya. For this reason, Chazal only mentioned the four individual exiles, omitting galus Mitzrayim—which is not a novelty in and of itself, but rather encompasses all of the exiles. [This concludes the Arizal’s comment.] To emphasize this point, the Gaon Chida, ztz”l, provides us with a nice allusion in the first passuk of sefer Shemos (1, 1): **“וְאֶלְהָ שָׁמוֹת”** **“בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיָּה”—and these are the names of Bnei Yisrael who came (הבאים) to Mitzrayim.** The word **בְּנֵי** is an acronym for the four exiles: **בָּבֶל מִדֵּי יְהוּן אֲדוֹם**—indicating that all four exiles were included in Mitzrayim.

This explains very nicely why Chazal instituted the drinking of four cups of wine on the night of Pesach—corresponding to the “four expressions of redemption”—“arba leshonos shel geulah”—mentioned in parshas Vaeirah: **I shall take you out, I shall rescue you, I shall redeem you and I shall take you.** The apparent difficulty here, is that in reality there was only one redemption. Yet, based on what we have just explained, there is no difficulty. Since galus Mitzrayim incorporated within it all four exiles, the geulah from Mitzrayim also included all four redemptions. Therefore, HKB”H mentioned in the Torah the “arba leshonos geulah,” because, in fact, that geulah incorporated four all-encompassing redemptions--from the four exiles that were included within galus Mitzrayim.

We can now appreciate why HKB”H chose to ask Adam and Chava precisely four questions after the sin of the Eitz HaDa’as. Had Adam and Chava not been persuaded to follow the serpent’s advice, they would have remained in Gan Eden for all eternity and there would never have been a reality of galus in the world. After they betrayed Hashem and ate from the Eitz HaDa’as, however, they introduced the yetzer hara and the malach hamaves into existence. As a consequence, all the neshamos of Yisrael—having been part of Adam and Chava at the time of the cheit Eitz HaDa’as—must endure the four exiles prior to meritting the geulah.

We can even suggest that this explains why HKB”H cut off the four legs of the serpent after the cheit Eitz HaDa’as, as it is written (Bereishis 3, 14): “**וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶל הַנֶּשֶׁה כִּי עָשִׂית זֹאת אֶרְור אֶתְּנָה מִכֶּל הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכֶּל חַיִּיךְ**”—and Hashem G-d said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, more cursed are you than all the animals and all the beasts of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.” Rashi provides the following clarification: “**דְּגָלִים הֵyo לוּ וַיְקַצְּטוּ**”—it had legs and they were cut off. Thus, we can propose that the serpent was punished “midah k’neged midah”—measure for measure. Its legs were cut off—forcing it to endure the ignominy of slithering on its belly—because it caused Yisrael the ignominy of wandering from place to place in galus.

For this reason, HKB”H, in His infinite mercy, cleverly asked Adam and Chava four questions—corresponding to the four exiles, which correspond to the four major Klipos. It was meant to teach us that in the aftermath of the cheit Eitz HaDa’as—when man fell into the

serpent’s devious trap which commenced with the first blasphemous question—mankind is doomed to struggle in an effort to resolve the four questions corresponding to the four exiles. By answering the questions and difficulties we will successfully break and remove the yoke of exile from around our necks.

We can now begin to appreciate the depth of Chazal’s reasoning for instituting that the sons ask their fathers four questions on the night of Pesach. For we have learned in the Gemara (R.H. 11a): “**בְּנֵיסֵן נָגָלוּ, בְּנֵיסֵן עֲתִידֵין לִגְאַל**”—in Nissan they were redeemed; and in Nissan they are destined to be redeemed. Therefore, in order to produce an awakening and stimulus from below in anticipation of the final and complete geulah from the four exiles, they instituted this format; the sons ask their father four questions and the father answers all of their questions. In this manner, we trigger an awakening from above. We prompt HKB”H to also answer for us all of the four difficult questions—shattering the Klipos of the four exiles by redeeming us once and for all, for all eternity.

Based on this interpretation, we can understand full-well the sound reasoning for the specific berachah recited at the conclusion of “sipur yetzias Mitzrayim.” After the father has successfully merited answering all of the sons’ four questions, it was instituted to recite a berachah for the geulah from Mitzrayim and a prayer for the future geulah:

“ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים, והגינו היללה זהה לאכול בו מצה ומורור, כן ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו יגינו לנוועדים ולגלדים אחרים הבאים לקרנתנו לשлом, שמחים בבנינו עירך ושדים בעבודתך, ונaccel שם מן הזבחים ומון הפסחים אשר יגיע דם על קיר מזבחך לרצון, ונודה לך שיר חדש על גואלינו ועל פרות נפשנו, ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל.”

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Mitzrayim, and enabled us to reach this night that we may eat matzah and maror. So, Hashem, our G-d and G-d of our fathers, bring us also to future festivals and holidays in peace, gladdened in the rebuilding of Your city, and joyful at Your service. There we shall eat of the offerings and Pesach sacrifices, whose blood will gain the sides of Your mizbeiaħ for gracious acceptance. We shall then sing a new song of praise to You for our geulah and for the liberation of our souls. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who has redeemed Yisrael.

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