



PARSHAS BO – AVI FRIEDWALD

והיה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם מה העבודה הזאת לכם... (שמות יב,כו)

“And it will be when your children say to you – what is this work to you...”

This pasuk is well known to us as the question asked by the evil son at the seder table. The Haggadah goes on to provide an answer which doesn't talk to the Rasha, but talks to the other attendants at the seder. The Haggadah explains that the Rasha in his question excludes himself from the Jewish nation, by saying this is work for you – not me.

The question is – why this question more provocative than the question asked by the wise son, who also seems to exclude himself when he asks – “what are the testimonies, statutes and judgements which Hashem our G-d commanded you”, where he has also suggested these are relevant to everyone else but himself?

The Beis Halevi (brought in the Sefer Yalkut Lekach Tov) explains that the evil son's question is actually more sophisticated than it appears on the surface. The Rasha fully understand all that happened in Egypt. He also understands the significance of the Korban Pesach and all the halachos that accompany it.

However, the Rasha's challenge is – this is all very logical – but surely only relevant to earlier generations when Idolatry was rampant – and there was a need to remind ourselves of the extent that we need to separate ourselves from this. However, nowadays, where there isn't the same desire for Idolatry and monotheism is much more acceptable as a belief – is there really a need for us to still commemorate this and keep all of the halachos of the Korban Pesach?

This is a very dangerous challenge – as it indicates that we can look at mitzvos, evaluate their reasoning and then determine if they are relevant to us anymore. In order to ensure this doesn't rub off on ourselves – we need to first protect ourselves – and respond that this is based on a misunderstanding of the reasoning for mitzvos.

The Torah preceded the world and so did the basis of all the mitzvos. It's well known that the Avos kept the mitzvos, including Korban Pesach, long before the Jews went down to Egypt. – בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים – it's because we listened to Hashem and offered the korban pesach as we were commanded that we were redeemed – and not vice versa.

We can look to give reasons for mitzvos after the event to make them more easy to comprehend, but, if those reasons appear to us to be no longer relevant – then we need to recognise that these are not the only reasons – and the mitzvah therefore is still as relevant as it was at the time of the giving of the Torah, and before that.

Written with tremendous gratitude to Hashem on the recent birth of our daughter Basya Malka on 11 Teves 5774. She is named after my late grandmother – Rebbetzin Bertha Newman ז"ל who was involved in educating children both during WWII and afterwards as a communal rebbetzin. May this dvar torah be a zechus for both and ensure we are mechanech our daughter in the right way.