

## Light Insight

If I were to ask you to sum up the difference between a child and an adult in one sentence, what would it be?

I would like to suggest that the difference is that a child sees himself as the center of the world, and an adult understands that G-d is the center of the world.

A child is prepared to wake up an entire continent if he has a tickle in the back of his throat. An adult understands that things don't revolve around him, around his self-gratification, around his self-fulfillment. An adult realizes the higher reality that life is no more than a series of opportunities to give. Each moment is another opportunity to connect to the Ultimate Giver, by emulating Him. Of course, according to this definition, most of us are still toddlers.

Nonetheless, this is what the Torah means when it says that man is created "in the image of G-d." It doesn't mean that G-d has a face, arms or a white beard. When the Torah speaks anthropomorphically, it does so to speak in language we under-

stand. On a deeper level, however, when the Torah says that man is created "in the image of G-d", it means that just like G-d is the Giver, man is created to be a giver and not a taker.

For example, in this week's parsha, we learn of a malady called *tzaraas*. For centuries, *tzaraas* has been erroneously translated as 'leprosy'. Even a cursory glance at this week's parsha shows the inaccuracy of such a translation. Leprosy is a highly contagious disease. However, if something that looked like *tzaraas* broke out on a newlywed, or if it afflicted someone during a festival, the Talmud tells us that the Kohen (the only person capable of establishing the nature of the affliction) should delay his examination so that the simcha of the wedding festivities or of the holiday should proceed without impediment. If *tzaraas* really meant leprosy, allowing someone with this disease to roam loose, not to mention at a wedding feast or a Jewish holiday, would be tantamount to criminal negligence.

In fact, *tzaraas* was not a

physical disease at all, but rather a malady of the spirit. It was the physical symptom of a spiritual illness. If we do not see such a disease today, it is because our bodies have become so desensitized to our spiritual state that they can no longer act as a barometer of our spiritual well-being.

One of the spiritual maladies that caused *tzaraas* was chronic selfishness.

From the Jewish perspective, society does not exist for its own sake, nor does it exist so that we may fulfill our own needs. It exists in order to provide us with opportunities to become givers, so that we may exercise our kindness and caring. When someone fails in this fundamental endeavor, it shows that he has failed to understand the purpose of society itself. Thus he has no place in society until he can cure himself of this spiritual illness.

He would get a *tzaraas*, and would be barred from the camp. How would he be healed and be allowed to re-enter the camp? He would cease to be a chronic 'taker' and return to being a reflection of G-d Himself, the Ultimate Giver.

## INSIGHTS into the HAGGADAH

*The essential goal of the Pesach Seder is to communicate the story of the going out of Egypt. The following is a compilation of insights on the Haggadah. We hope they will enrich your Pesach Seder.*

### *“And the One Who Does Not Know How to Ask”*

**R**abbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai in his commentary on the Haggadah explains that there are three ways one can fulfill the Mitzvah of the telling of the Exodus from Egypt. Ideally, the story should be told in question and answer format. The Talmud derives this from the Torah’s description of Matzah as “*Lechem Oni*” — the bread over which a person answers. The next best way is to tell the story even if no one asks. This is derived from the verse “and you shall tell your son on that day...” You should tell him, even if he doesn’t ask. The procedure of question and answer is preferable, but not absolutely necessary. The third way is, even if a person would be alone, he must speak about the going out of Egypt. This is what Rabban Gamliel teaches us when he says that one must at least “say” three particular statements as the bare minimum to fulfill the Mitzvah of the telling of the Exodus from Egypt, even if he would be alone. Thus, there are three possible levels on which to

perform the Mitzvah.

Rabbi Azulai also writes the following advice for those making Passover Seders. When introducing the fourth son the Haggadah adds an extraneous word, “and.” This teaches us that even if someone has other sons that fit into the first three categories, he should also pay attention to the one who does not know how to ask. This is an important reminder for those who might conduct the reading of the Haggadah on an advanced intellectual level beyond the abilities of the youngest or least knowledgeable to grasp.

### *“And They Embittered Their Lives”*

**D**uring a scholarly lecture, a simple person asked Rabbi Yonason Eybeschutz the following question. The Torah says, “and they embittered their lives,” but the cantillation symbol that the cantor reads is a happy tune! The simplicity of his question amused the more erudite listeners. “Excellent Question!” said Rabbi Yonason. “G-d told Abraham that his offspring would be in exile for 400 years. But in fact we were in Egypt for only 210 years. Why was this? Since the Egyptians ‘embittered their lives,’ G-d had pity on us and shortened the exile by 190 years — surely a cause for song! By the way,” said Rabbi Yonason, to the astonishment of his listeners, “the cantillation symbol, called ‘*Kadma V’Azla*,’ hints at this idea by its exact numerical value: 190.”

## Response Line

### **Middle Riddle**

*Neil Reznik wrote:*

*Why is the afikomen taken from the middle matzah during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matzah?*

Dear Neil Reznik,

On the first night of Passover, we say two blessings over the matzahs.

The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best

to say on a whole “loaf,” we therefore put an unbroken matzah on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *asher kideshanu...*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matzah on this night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matzah, because this matzah symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is second, the broken matzah is second in the stack.

The third matzah is just there to complete the idea of *lechem mishneh*, which means that on Shabbat and festivals we use two whole loaves instead of just one, so it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matzah is let slip from the hands before the second blessing is said. (According to some, no third matzah is used at all.)