

## OF NUTS AND NOGGINS: EXHIBTING TRUE FREEDOM IN THE SEDER AND IN OUR LIVES

<sup>1</sup>The גמרא tells us<sup>2</sup> that the תינוקות of ד' כוסות applies to men, women, and תינוקות. The גמרא asks what good wine will do for the תינוקות. Rather, the גמרא says we give them nuts and roasted grains (or nowadays, candy and presents) so that they should stay awake and ask questions at the סדר. We see from this גמרא that there is some connection between the ד' כוסות and the kids staying awake and asking questions. One might think that giving the kids treats is a יום טוב in קיום, which would make sense, given that the גמרא continues to talk about יום טוב. In fact, the way we fulfill יום טוב nowadays is by drinking wine! However, the גמרא earlier told us that the purpose of the ד' כוסות is דרך חירות. If we're not talking about יום טוב, what is the connection between דרך חירות and having the kids stay awake and being involved?

Rav Packer answers that the epitome of חירות is the ability to think for yourself. A slave does not have time to himself, as he is completely under the control of his master. Even though he may technically be able to think for himself, and the master cannot control the slave's thoughts, there is simply no chance for the slave to be able to sit on an idea and think deeply without being interrupted. After a long day, even if there is no more work to be done, the slave is completely wiped and would rather go to sleep than think. This last point also illustrates that someone who is tired has this same inability to think. Given both of these points, we show our freedom by giving the kids gifts. The purpose of these gifts is to keep them awake, so that they will be able to demonstrate freedom as well by asking questions and thinking for themselves.

When I heard this idea, I thought of a slight difficulty. If freedom comes from the ability to ask questions, then what are we to make of the שאינו יודע לשאול, the son who doesn't know how to ask? Moreover, why is this son at the סדר in the first place? He's not considered free! In order to answer this question, we need to take a look at how we respond to the שאינו יודע לשאול. The הגדה tells us שנאמר והגדת לבנך...לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי וכו', את פתח לו, as the פסוק states "and you should tell your son...saying because of this ה' took me out of מצרים". Perhaps we can suggest that the beginning of the פסוק clarifies the end. Why did הקב"ה take us out of מצרים? What is זה בעבור? So that we will tell the story to our children, each at their own level. For those children who can understand and ask themselves, that is what they should be doing. However, for the child who can't ask, we have to teach him to ask, and release him from his "slavery".

Freedom is not a gift that can be taken for granted. In general, when we are given means to help us, we should use them to help others. We are given money not just to support ourselves and our families, but to help עניים in need. We are given certain talents to help us in our עבודת ה', and to help others in their עבודת ה'. So too with our freedom; we are given freedom so that we are able to serve the true Master, and to be able to give the gift of freedom to others who unfortunately don't have that privilege. Just because the son can't ask, it doesn't mean he can't teach us a lesson. This פסח, let us be זוכה to discover our talents and our means, and how we can best purpose them for our needs, and for the needs of others.

<sup>1</sup> I heard the first part of this idea in the name of Rabbi Chaim Packer שליט"א

<sup>2</sup> פסחים קה:–קט.