

Pesach

In the *mishna* in *Pesachim*, our sages tell us how to structure the retelling of the narrative of יציאת מצרים - the Exodus. We are told to be, “מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח” - begin with the embarrassing information and conclude with the ennobling information.” The *gemara* quotes two opinions that explain this guideline. The first is that we should begin with our sad plight as slaves and to conclude with our freedom. The second opinion holds that we should begin with our ancestors’ idolatry and conclude with our closeness to *Hashem*. The first explanation seems to focus on the temporal journey from slavery to freedom, and the second explanation focuses on the spiritual journey from alienation to closeness with *Hashem*. In either interpretation, we need to understand why *Chazal* structured the *Haggadah* in this manner since it is instructive to what we are conveying to our children on this special night.

Fullness of the Narrative: The complete scope of any event cannot be understood without the background information. This process is called סיפור, recounting, since we literally “count out” the events and conditions that led to the climax of the story. We need to immerse ourselves in the story so that we can achieve the level of feeling as if we just emerged from slavery.

Appreciation: The kindness of *Hashem* to all is a basic tenant of our faith. We can fully appreciate His generosity when we understand the sad situation in which we found ourselves at the beginning of the story. The gratitude is magnified when we have this perspective.

Humility: No matter how much we achieve as individuals and as a people, we still need to remember our humble beginnings. Humility is one of the keys to greatness and growth.

Need to be vigilant: We need to know that we must be alert to our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. We can backslide both spiritually and materially if we are not careful, especially since we have been there before. Being a Jew means constant growth and introspection to make sure that the exile of *Mitzrayim* does not make a comeback.

At our *Seder*, we strive to imbue our children with a sense of identity, pride in our heritage and our special relationship with *Hashem* and the joyous duty of being servants of *Hashem* instead of servants of *Pharaoh*. This is all included in the ritual of the *Haggadah*, and we should highlight it as we make this journey with our loved ones.

A joyous and *kosher Pesach* to all of *Am Yisroel!*