

וְאֵפִילוּ
כָּלנוּ חֲכָמִים
כָּלנוּ גְבוּרִים
כָּלנוּ זְקֵנִים
כָּלנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה
מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיציאת מצרים.
*And even if we were
all knowledgeable,
all understanding,
all wise
and all proficient in the Torah,
we would still be obligated
to tell the story of the Exodus.*

FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS QUOTE:

1. Where is this quote from?
2. Identify four similar items in this quote, and distinguish between them.
3. This statement is based on at least two assumptions. What are they?
4. Give four reasons why is the commandment "to tell the story of the Exodus" so important?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

1. This quote is from the Avadim Hayyinu passage, located right after the Four Questions.
2. This is part of the "First Telling" of the Haggadah's Four Tellings.
3. This phrase does not occur in the Mishna or in the Talmud and it is quite likely that this is the earliest time it appears in Jewish literature.
4. Maimonides (1135-1204) quotes it in his Mishneh Torah.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

There are four different categories of people.

1. **KNOWLEDGEABLE:** A person with encyclopedic knowledge.
2. **UNDERSTANDING:** A person who has depth and the ability to explain.
3. **WISE:** (A gracious rendition of the word זְקֵנִים which literally means, *elderly*.) A person who has accumulated wisdom from of a lifetime of learning, experiences, successes and failures.
4. **TORAH PROFICIENCY:** A person who has an expert fluency in Torah, Jewish law and lore.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

The two assumptions underlying this quote are:

- 1) If we know the story well enough, to the point of mastery, we do not have the obligation to tell it again.
- 2) Perhaps we are not that knowledgeable in the first place. Perhaps we think we know a lot, but in fact we do not. Perhaps we think too highly of ourselves. Perhaps we need to be more humble when it comes to how we present ourselves.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Four reasons for why "telling" is so important:

1. **TELLING IS A SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE:**
It gives order and structure to our lives, in the same way that an actual pilgrimage would.
2. **TELLING IS A FORM OF DISCOVERY:**
Even though we have told it dozens of times, we always discover new things in it. We come to the story each year with new set of eyes.
3. **TELLING ENHANCES OUR IDENTITY:**
We form our identity and the transmit of our values through the telling of stories.
4. **TELLING IS JOYFUL:**
Who doesn't love a good story?

רבותינו
הגיע זמן
קריאת שמע
של שחרית.

*“Teachers –
the time for saying
the Shema of the morning
has come.”*

FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS QUOTE:

1. Where is this in the Haggadah?

2. Who is saying it to whom?

3. Can you isolate four elements in this quote?

4.. What are four possible interpretations
of this statement?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

1. This quote occurs in "First Telling" in the second paragraph after the Four Questions.
2. The story takes place in the town of B'nei Brak in late 1st - early 2nd century.
3. The five rabbis are: R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, who had a vast memory; R. Joshua ben Hananya, who debated with the Romans; R. Elazar ben Azaria, who became head of the academy at age 18; R. Akiva, who came to learning late in life; and R. Tarfon, who was known for kindness and piety.
4. All of these rabbis, with possibly the exception of Elazar ben Azaria, were alive during the Destruction of the Second Temple and played a crucial role in preserving the tradition.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

1. The unnamed students state this to their teachers.
2. Evidently they are not with them throughout their evening of telling the story.
3. Interestingly enough, they are not with their families, or their families are not in the picture.
4. To what extent is the Seder a family event or an event of masters and students?
Does the master/student relationship conflict with the parent/child relationship?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Four elements in this story:

(1) רבבותינו-TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:
This is a story about this relationship.

(2) הגיע זמן-TIME:

Time is elapsing. The rabbis do not have clocks, but they seem to be unaware of time.

(3) קריאת שמע-THE RECITATION OF SHMA:
A ritual performed twice each day, morning and evening recalling God's oneness and our obligation to be loyal to God always.

(4) שחרית-SHACHARIT:

Literally, the morning service. But generally this is about a transition from evening to morning.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Here are four possible interpretations:

1. You can become totally immersed in the experience of telling the story ("flow") that you lose track of time. But everything has its limit.
Even telling this story has its limit.
2. This is a story about the halakhic obligation to recite the Sh'ma as soon as dawn breaks. It echoes the story of R. Akiva's martyrdom which also took place at dawn, at the recitation of the Sh'ma, in the presence of R. Akiva's students.
3. This is a story about authority, and the attempt of youth to usurp the authority of their masters, not uncommon in festive moments.
4. The coming of morning is always a sign of hope. The break of dawn is a poetic signal to be hopeful and not despairing.

מִתְחִלָּה
עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה
הָיוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
וְעַכְשָׁיו קָרְבָנוּ הַמָּקוֹם לְעֲבוֹדָתוֹ.

*IN THE BEGINNING,
our ancestors
were idol worshippers.
BUT NOW
God has brought us close to serving him.*

FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS QUOTE:

1. Where is this quote from?
2. Can we isolate four elements in this quote?
3. "All BEGINNINGS ARE HARD." Traditional proverb. Discuss.
4. Can we come up with four questions about this statement?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

1. This quote is located in the "Second Telling" of the Haggadah, the part that starts at "The Four Children" and continues through to the singing of *VeHi She'amda*.
2. It introduces a very significant quote at the end of the Book of Joshua.
3. Joshua convenes Israel at Shechem and recounts to them their history going all the way back to their ancestors.
4. For Joshua the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of the Land occasioned an opportunity to reaffirm God's covenant with Israel.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2 Four elements in this quote:

1. מִתְחִלָּה וְעַכְשָׁיו -
From the beginning until now.
2. אֲבוֹתֵינוּ -
Our ancestors.
3. עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה -
Idolatry.
4. קָרְבָנוּ הַמָּקוֹם לְעֲבוֹדָתוֹ -
God has brought us closer to him.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

1. "All beginnings are hard" originates in midrash and is found throughout Jewish literature.
2. They are the first words of Chaim Potok's 1975 novel, *In the Beginning*:
All beginnings are hard. I can remember my mother murmur those words while I lay in bed with a fever. "Children are often sick, darling. That's the way it is with children. All beginnings are hard. You'll be all right soon."
3. Beginnings are often marked by conflict.
4. A beginning is disjunctive: it places a differentiating boundary between the future and the past, the most interesting place.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

- Four questions about *From the beginning...*
1. Does Jewish Peoplehood begin with Abraham or with the Exodus from Egypt?
 2. Do people come close to God on their own, or does God make them come close?
 3. Why was idolatry so attractive in ancient times, and how does idolatry manifest itself today?
 4. Arguably, Judaism originates in a break from commonly held beliefs. In a word, the Bible is a revolution that ushers in the beginning of a new era. Is Judaism still revolutionary? In what ways is Judaism still countercultural even today?

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר
חַיֵּב אָדָם
לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ
כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם.

*In every generation
a person must
see himself/herself
as if he/she came out of Egypt.*

FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS QUOTE:

1. Where is this quote from?
2. What are four elements in this quote?
3. What does *ke'ilu* mean and what are some other examples of it?
4. What are four takeaways from this statement?

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

1. This quote is located in the "Fourth Telling" of the Haggadah, immediately following the explanation of the three main symbols on the Seder Plate, *pesach*, *matzah* and *maror*.
2. Its earliest source is the Mishna, Tractate Pesachim 10:5 and is probably the oldest layer of the Haggadah.
3. It is based on a reading of the verse, "this is on account of what the Lord *did for me*, when I *went forth from Egypt*." (Exod. 13:8)
4. Because that verse is in first person the rabbis conclude that every single individual has to see himself/herself as if they themselves came out of Egypt.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 2

1. בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר -
In every generation.
2. חַיֵּב אָדָם -
a person is obligated.
3. לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ -
to see oneself.
4. כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם -
as if he/she left Egypt.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

כְּאִלּוּ - *Ke'ilu* means *as if*. This is a word that we find all over rabbinic literature.

Here are four other examples:

1. *One who saves a life is considered as if one has saved an entire universe.* (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)
2. *One who enjoys from this world without saying a blessing is considered as if one has stolen from God.* (Talmud Berakhot 35b)
3. *One who embarrasses another person is considered as if one has murdered that person.* (Mishna Bava Metzia 58b)
4. *One should always consider oneself as if one is half innocent and half guilty.* (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Repentance 3:4)

ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Four Takeaways from *Ke'ilu-As If*:

1. While you will never know exactly what it is to be a slave, imagining what is like to be a slave brings you closer to the experience.
2. Empathy with historical experiences and personages of the past will enable you to develop empathy for people who are suffering today.
3. Coming after the three main symbols of the Seder means that you, yes you! are the fourth symbol of the Seder!
4. Every generation experiences the Exodus in terms that are unique to it.