
מגיד

When reciting the Haggadah, one should have in mind to fulfill the positive Torah commandment of relating the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim on Pesach night (MB 473 §1). Women are also obligated to say the Haggadah, and they can recite it on behalf of another person — even a man — who is unable to recite it on his own (Igros Moshe, OC 5, 20:33). Some have the custom to recite the following declaration of intent. (Reb Moshe did not recite this.)

הַנְּנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזוּמָן לְקַיֵּם הַמִּצְוָה לְסַפֵּר בְּיַצִּיאת מִצְרַיִם.
לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קְדוּשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׂכִינְתָּיהּ, עַל יְדֵי הַהוּא
טְמִיר וְנִעְלָם, בְּשֵׁם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וַיְהִי גַעַם אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ,
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עָלֵינוּ, וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָהּ:

The broken matzah is lifted for all to see as the head of the household begins with the following brief explanation of the proceedings.

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְהַתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא
דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכִפִּין יִיתִי וַיִּכּוּל, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ

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☞ Charity saves from death

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָּא

This is the bread of affliction

Shelah explains that when we were in Egypt, we had sunk to the forty-ninth level of impurity, which prompted the angels to ask Hashem how the Jews differed from the Egyptians. We allude to this by reciting this passage in Aramaic, a language the angels cannot understand. We say, *Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat*, without investigating the person's credentials, as per the halachah that we do not investigate the eligibility of a pauper who asks for food (*Bava Basra* 9a).

As a young man, R' Moshe served as a rav in Luban, which was under the rule of the Russian Communists. Sadly, many Jews were swept away by the Communist ideals, and they sought to impose those ideals on their religious brethren. This was reminiscent of

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Behold, I am prepared and ready to fulfill the mitzvah of telling of the Exodus from Egypt. For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed is He, and His presence, through Him Who is hidden and inscrutable — [I pray] in the name of all Israel. May the pleasantness of the Lord, our God, be upon us, and may He establish our handiwork for us; our handiwork may He establish.

The broken matzah is lifted for all to see as the head of the household begins with the following brief explanation of the proceedings.

This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat! Whoever is needy —

the parable given by the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 5:10): When iron was created, the trees started trembling, knowing that axes to chop them down would be formed from iron. The iron turned to the trees and said, "Why are you trembling? If you wouldn't give me the handle, none of you would be harmed!" Similarly, in Communist Russia, the Jews supplied the "handle" of the "axe" that chopped away at them.

The Yevseksiya, the Jewish section of the Communist Party, was created in order to eradicate Jewish religious observance. The Communists banned yeshivos and Talmud Torahs, prohibited kosher slaughter, closed mikvaos, and arrested rabbanim for the "illegal" activities of arranging ritual circumcisions, marriages, and divorces.

R' Moshe was one of the rabbanim arrested, and he was brought before a judge for sentencing. This judge was a Jewish Communist who loathed religion, and, coming from him, exile to forced labor in frigid Siberia was a light sentence.

R' Moshe stood before the judge, guards on either side of him. His file was brought to the judge, who opened it and read the name and city of the defendant before him. "Why have you brought him?" he shouted angrily.

"We were instructed to arrest all of the rabbanim, and he is one of the most prominent among them," came the answer.

"One of the most prominent?" the judge exclaimed, his eyes bulging. "He is one of a kind! He is one of us, a true Communist!"

The people in the courtroom were dumbstruck. They could not believe what they were hearing.

"Let me tell you a story," the judge began.

"I have a brother, who is a Communist like me. You know how we Communists were persecuted by the czar's regime, and my brother ran to the town of Luban to hide from the authorities. Needless to say, he had nothing to do with the Jewish community or its rabbi. They viewed him as a sinner and a hater of religion — which was true.

"At one point, my brother contracted tuberculosis. The only way to cure this lung ailment was to travel to a health-resort town and breathe clear air and eat healing foods. But my brother, who had fled from the authorities, had no money, and it was only with difficulty that he could buy bread. How could he afford to pay the high cost of a health resort?

"His non-Jewish neighbors heard his sighs, his groans, his terrible coughing. They did not know that he was not a member of the Jewish community; all they knew was that he was Jewish. They told the local rabbi about his condition — this very rabbi — and do you know what he did? He held a collection for my brother on Shabbos, in shul!

"Concerned that some of the local Jews would refuse to donate money toward the recovery of an apostate Jew who did not belong to the community, the rabbi did not reveal the patient's identity. On Shabbos, he gathered pledges, and on Motza'ei Shabbos, he exerted himself to collect the money, which he used to send my brother away to recover. He took care of all of the arrangements himself.

"Now, tell me, is there a greater champion of equality? He is one of us!"

With that, the presiding judge handed R' Moshe an official state document permitting him to act as the rabbi of Luban without interference, and the judge issued a strong warning that no harm be done to him.

(Veha'ish Moshe Vol. 1, p. 95)

☞ Since we were all slaves, we are all equal

כָּל דַּכְפִּין יֵיתִי וַיִּכּוֹל

Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat

What connection is there between the statement, *This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt*, and the statement, *Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat*?

In Egypt, we were penniless slaves, and we ate the “bread of affliction,” until Hashem redeemed us and granted us great wealth. In doing so, He showed us that wealth comes from Him, and if He granted us the gift of wealth, it is merely a deposit in our hands, meant to be used to feed and bring joy to the poor. Accordingly, we say, *Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat*.

Therefore, said R' Moshe (*Darash Moshe, Pesach*, after *Parashas Tzav*), regarding Shavuos and Succos the Torah says: וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּחַגֶּדְךָ וְאֶתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר וְהִתְיָוֵם וְהָאֲלֵמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ, *You shall rejoice on your Festival — you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, the Levite, the convert, the orphan, and the widow who are in your cities (Devarim 16:14)*. Rashi (*ibid.*, v. 11) comments: “These are My four, corresponding to your four, *your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant*. If you will make Mine happy, I will make yours happy.” This is not written regarding Pesach, however, because on Pesach, we are all slaves who were taken out of Egypt, and as such, how can the rich man feel superior to the pauper? He would be embarrassed to rejoice without making the pauper happy as well.

☞ Dancing at three weddings

כָּל דַּכְפִּין יֵיתִי וַיִּכּוֹל

Whoever is hungry — let him come and eat

It is untenable that one person should be full while another goes hungry.

It was a scorching hot summer. Many of the city dwellers had gone out to the mountains for vacation, but that summer, it was sweltering even in the mountains. R' Moshe, who suffered from respiratory problems, was affected all the more by the heat.

An air conditioner was procured for him, but when it was brought to his room to be installed, he objected. “Do you expect that I should enjoy the air conditioner, while the yeshivah bachurim suffer in the

יִיְתִי וַיִּפְסַח. הַשְּׂתָא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּאַרְעָא
דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׂתָא עֲבָדִי, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.

The Seder plate is removed and the second of the four cups of wine is poured. The youngest present asks the reasons for the unusual proceedings of the evening.

heat? And what about the other families vacationing here?"

The bachurim were amazed by his refusal to have the air conditioner installed.

There was an elderly man there who was close to ninety. Seeing their amazement, he said, "If you would have asked me, you would never have suggested bringing the air conditioner! Did you think that R' Moshe would behave any differently? You don't know him, but I remember him from back in Luban, and I knew that's what he would say."

"How did you know?" they asked him.

"R' Moshe began to serve in our town before he was married," the man related, "and I remember his wedding in the town. It was held on Friday afternoon, as was customary at the time, and it took place the week after Shavuos. There was one fiddler in the town — his name was Itzeleh — and he informed the rav that he would play music at the wedding from beginning to end. But do you know what happened?"

"Because the Sefirah period [when weddings are not held] had just ended, weddings were also being held for the daughter of the shoemaker and the daughter of the tailor. Since there was only one fiddler in the town, R' Moshe insisted that either Itzeleh attend all three weddings and play music, alternately, at each of them, or he should not come to R' Moshe's wedding either!"

"To ensure that the fiddler would indeed play at all the weddings, R' Moshe's chuppah was held last of the three."

(Veha'ish Moshe Vol. 3, p. 149,

and Introduction to Igros Moshe, section 8)

☞ R' Moshe waited for the widow

כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיְתִי וַיִּפְסַח

Whoever is needy — let him come and celebrate Pesach

For many years, an elderly widow was a regular guest for the Seder in R' Moshe's home. One year, however, she did not arrive.

הגדה של פסח [70]

let him come and celebrate Pesach! Now, we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel! Now, we are slaves; next year may we be free men!

The Seder plate is removed and the second of the four cups of wine is poured. The youngest present asks the reasons for the unusual proceedings of the evening.

The halachah is that one should begin the Seder immediately, but R' Moshe would not start until he had sent his son, R' Reuven, and his wife to the widow's house to find out what had happened. It took a while until they returned with her, and only then did R' Moshe start the Seder.

(Reb Moshe, p. 142)

☞ Charity brings redemption

כָּל דְּצָרֶיךָ יִיְתִי וַיִּפְסַח

Whoever is needy — let him come and celebrate Pesach

What is the connection between the statement, *Whoever is needy — let him come and celebrate Pesach*, and the statement, *Now, we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel! Now, we are slaves; next year may we be free men?*

This can be explained according to the following teaching of R' Moshe (*Darash Moshe, Vayikra 23:22*): Why does the Torah place the mitzvah to give gifts to the poor in the middle of the portion that discusses the Festivals? Rashi (ad loc.) states, "To teach you that whoever properly leaves *leket*, *shik'chah*, and *peah* — the gifts for the poor that one is required to leave in his field — to a poor person is considered as if he built the *Beis HaMikdash* and brought his offerings in it." This is as the prophet teaches: **צִיּוֹן בְּמוֹשָׁפֶט תִּפְדָּה וְשִׁבְיָהּ בְּצִדְקָה**, *Zion will be redeemed through justice, and those who return to her through righteousness* (*Yeshayah 1:27*). The Talmud (*Shabbos 139a, Sanhedrin 98a*) derives from this verse that Jerusalem will be redeemed only through charity.

If so, when a person gives charity, he deserves to have Hashem build the *Beis HaMikdash*, except that the sins of the generation prevent that. Nevertheless, this person is rewarded as though he built the *Beis HaMikdash* and brought offerings. Accordingly, when all the Jewish people are prepared to welcome guests and provide for their needs, we are certainly bringing the redemption closer.

[71] THE REB MOSHE HAGGADAH

According to R' Moshe, the people sitting at the Seder should recite the Mah Nishtanah in an undertone, along with the one asking the questions, since it is part of the Haggadah (Kol Dodi 54:25).

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמֶצֶה,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מֶצֶה.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יְרֻקוֹת,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מְרוּר.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבֵּילִין אֶפֶילוּ פְּעַם
אַחַת, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵין וּבֵין
מְסַבֵּין, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסַבֵּין.

☞ Relating the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim through questions and answers

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה

Why is this night different

The questions of the *Mah Nishtanah* stem from the obligation to relate the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in question-and-answer format, as the verse states: *וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךְ*, *And it shall be when your son will ask* (*Shemos* 13:14). R' Moshe (*Kol Ram* Vol. 3, p. 354) notes that the question-and-answer format is an actual obligation, as the Talmud teaches (*Pesachim* 116a) that if one has no child, his wife asks him, and if he has no wife, he asks himself. Thus, we find (*Pesachim* 115b) that when the table was removed before the meal and Abaye asked about it, Rabbah replied, "You have exempted us from saying *Mah Nishtanah*." The word "exempted" (פטרנו) implies that this is an obligation. The reason for this requirement is that this style engenders more excitement and leaves a greater impact.

הגדה של פסח [72]

According to R' Moshe, the people sitting at the Seder should recite the Mah Nishtanah in an undertone, along with the one asking the questions, since it is part of the Haggadah (Kol Dodi 54:25).

Why is this night different from all other nights?

1. **On all other nights** we may eat chametz and matzah, but on this night — only matzah.
2. **On all other nights** we eat many vegetables, but on this night — we eat *maror*.
3. **On all other nights** we do not dip even once, but on this night — twice.
4. **On all other nights** we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night — we all recline.

☞ The four questions correspond to the four sons

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות

Why is this night different from all other nights?

In his *Shabbos HaGadol* discourse of 1929/5689 (*Darash Moshe, Derush 12*), R' Moshe said that the four questions allude to the four sons discussed in the Torah. “On this night — only matzah” is the question of the wise son, because the exile is compared to night (*Yeshayah 21:11*), and the reason for eating matzah is, **כי גרשו ממצרים, ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם צדה לא עשו להם**, *For they were driven from Egypt for they could not delay, nor had they made provisions for themselves* (*Shemos 12:39*). This describes our situation in exile, for we are always ready to be exiled because of decrees that forbid us to observe our religion, and we give up our lives for our faith.

“On this night — we eat *maror*.” This is the question of the son who does not know to ask; he feels that the Torah’s commandments restrict him and are bitter.

The simple son asks why we dip twice on this night. He is prepared to dip into the sweet *charoses*, but he is not prepared to dip into the salt water. This signifies that there are some mitzvos that he likes, but other mitzvos that he feels are too difficult for him, and he suffers from the challenges of earning a living and surviving in the exile.

The Seder plate is returned. The matzos are kept uncovered as the Haggadah is recited in unison. The Haggadah should be translated, if necessary, and the story of the Exodus should be amplified upon.

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיּוֹצֵיאֲנוּ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה
וּבְזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה. וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הֲרִי אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ
וּבְנֵי בָנֵינוּ מִשְׁעָבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם.

The wicked son, in contrast, argues that “on this night — we all recline.” “What is wrong with the exile?” he wonders. “Let us feel like free men.”

The answer to their questions will be given below, in the sections discussing *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror* (see pp. 138-140).

☞ The mighty hand proved that the redemption was forever

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם, וַיּוֹצֵיאֲנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה
We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but Hashem our God
took us out from there with a mighty hand

R' Moshe taught (*Darash Moshe, Shemos 13:8*) that עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ, *We were slaves*, is the answer to the *Mah Nishtanah*, and the primary part of this response is that we were led from Egypt “בְּיַד חֲזָקָה, *with a mighty hand.*” For if the redemption had happened in a natural manner, we might have thought that *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was not that significant. Even if we believed that Hashem was the One Who redeemed us, we might have thought that it was only to rescue us from our tribulations; if that were the reason, once we were exiled again and faced more tribulations, there would no longer be any reason to commemorate *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. By taking us out of Egypt “with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,” Hashem showed that He was taking us to be His people and He became our G-d. Thus, the redemption was eternal. The resulting freedom lasts forever, because once we received the Torah, we were no longer slaves to material existence, and we are free in whatever situation or place we find ourselves.

The Seder plate is returned. The matzos are kept uncovered as the Haggadah is recited in unison. The Haggadah should be translated, if necessary, and the story of the Exodus should be amplified upon.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but HASHEM our God took us out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Had not the Holy One, Blessed is He, taken our fathers out from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children would have remained subservient to Pharaoh in Egypt.

☞ **The redemption from Egypt was primarily spiritual, the resulting freedom eternal**

הָרִי אָנוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בְנֵינוּ מִשְׁעַבְדֵימֵי הַיִּינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם
Then we, our children, and our children's children would have remained subservient to Pharaoh in Egypt

In 1922/5682, under the persecution of the Communist regime, R' Moshe said the following in his *Shabbos HaGadol* discourse:

We have been in this exile for 1854 years, suffering numerous tribulations. We are mocked and ridiculed, and the honor of the nation and the individual is gone. Most of the time, our oppressors do not even consider us human beings. The physical misfortunes are terrible, and all sources of livelihood have been closed to us, other than commerce. Even in that realm, they pressure us with many decrees. And above all, there is the exile of the spirit, for aside from the many decrees that burden us, many are influenced by the government, which is in the hands of evildoers. This is the case even though logically, there is no reason to look up to them, for they are simply murderers who took power by force, as the Talmud teaches, "From the time the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed ... strong-armed men and slanderers have triumphed" (*Sotah* 49a). Nevertheless, it is human nature to follow blindly after those in power, and therefore, the spirit of Torah has been greatly diminished. This being the case, it is puzzling — why do we rejoice over *Yetzias Mitzrayim*? What is Pharaoh to us, and what is this difficult exile to us?

[75] THE REB MOSHE HAGGADAH

וְאָפִילוּ בְּלָנוּ חֲכָמִים, בְּלָנוּ נְבוֹנִים, בְּלָנוּ זְקֵנִים,
בְּלָנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר
בִּיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה לְסַפֵּר בִּיצִיאַת
מִצְרָיִם, הָרִי זֶה מִשְׁבַּח.

The truth is that the redemption from Egypt was not for the physical redemption, for, in that regard, it was already known that there would be additional exiles. Our redemption from Egypt was a redemption of the spirit, to make us the nation of Hashem and the inheritors of His Torah, and in that sense, He took us out of there to eternal freedom. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu asked: וְאָמְרוּ לִי מָה שְׁמוֹ מָה אֶמַר אֲלֵהֶם, *And they say to me, "What is His Name?" — what shall I say to them?* (Shemos 3:13), as if to say, "How are we to perceive the Divine behavior?" Hashem answered that there are two components: regarding the physical redemption, it is: אֲהִיָּה אִשְׁרָ אֲהִיָּה, *I Shall Be As I Shall Be* — I shall be with them in this exile and I will be with them in other exiles." There will still be difficult periods. Indeed, every place the Jews were exiled, the Divine Presence was with them. But that is not the primary aspect of the redemption from Egypt. Rather, it was: כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה, *I Shall Be has sent me to you.*" *In the sense of the spiritual redemption, this redemption had no subsequent exile.* Therefore, in every situation, and despite every difficulty, we eternally celebrate the redemption from Egypt, for it is the spiritual redemption that we celebrate, and this is in full force, as it was then.

This is as we say, "Had not the Holy One, Blessed is He, taken our fathers out from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children would have remained subservient to Pharaoh in Egypt." The reference here is not necessarily to Pharaoh and Egypt; it can refer to other nations and their cultures, or to us and our desires and inclinations. But now, we are subjugated only to our Creator. We are His servants, and not slaves to servants!

This is the question of the wicked son: "Of what purpose is this work to you?" In other words, what benefit is there in the redemption from Egypt, considering that we were again subju-

Even if we were all men of wisdom, understanding, experience, and knowledge of the Torah — it would still be an obligation upon us to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. The more one tells about the discussion of the Exodus, the more he is praiseworthy.

gated? We answer him that if he does not understand that the spiritual redemption was primary, then “had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.” For even if he would have left Egypt and even entered Eretz Yisrael, he would not have been called a free man, since he was still subjugated to his evil inclination and his desires.

🕊️ Every person can know the Torah

וְאִפְּלוּ בְּלָנוּ חֲכָמִים בְּלָנוּ נְבוֹנִים בְּלָנוּ יוֹדְעִים אֶת הַתּוֹרָה
Even if we were all men of wisdom, understanding,
experience, and knowledge of the Torah

Is it really possible for us all to be wise and understanding and know the Torah? Doesn't the verse teach: *לֹא רַבִּים יִחְכְּמוּ*, *Not many will be wise (Iyov 32:9)*? And there are so many foolish people! How can we all know the Torah, which has seventy facets, and which is described as: *אָרְכָה מֵאֶרֶץ מִדָּה וּרְחֹבָה מִנֵּי יָם*, *Its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea (ibid., 11:9)*?

R' Moshe answered (*Darash Moshe, Shemos 13:16*) based on the principle that a *beis din* believes every person, even a simpleton or an ignoramus, if he makes a weak claim when he could have made a stronger claim. His choice of a less-effective claim is proof that he is speaking the truth, for if he would have wanted to lie, he would have opted for the stronger claim.

Why do we not assume that it simply did not occur to the claimant to make the stronger claim? It must be that when something is relevant and important to a person, he becomes wise and perceptive, weighing all facets of the issue and raising in his mind all the options, so that he determines the best argument to advance.

Accordingly, if we see a person who is not wise and perceptive in his learning, and does not weigh all the facets and possibilities, it is a sign that the matter is not relevant or important to him.

R' Moshe explained (*Darash Moshe, Devarim 31:28*) that Moshe

Rabbeinu alluded to this when he said, speaking of the heads of the tribes: רָאשֵׁיכֶם שְׁבִטֵיכֶם, which literally means *your heads, your tribes* (*Devarim* 29:9). The phrasing of this term implies that every member of every tribe can be a leader and a head. Similarly, on the verse: הַקְהִילוּ אֵלַי אֶת כָּל זִקְנֵי שְׁבִטֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם וְאֲדַבְּרָה בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, *Gather to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, and I shall speak these words into their ears* (*ibid.*, 31:28), R' Moshe explained that this means that every Jew is capable of growing in Torah to the point where he is one of the elders of the Jewish people and a leader of the generation.

☞ Where are all the prodigies?

וְאִפִּילוּ כָּלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים

Even if we were all men of wisdom

We see gifted children, whose comprehension is swift and whose memory is remarkable. Years later, where are they? Why aren't they shaking up the world with their greatness, R' Moshe wondered (*Ksav Emes* Vol. 2, p. 324).

He answered with the fable of the race between the tortoise and the hare. At the start of the race, the hare easily overtook the tortoise. Seeing how slowly the tortoise was progressing, however, the hare decided to take a nap. He figured he'd allow the tortoise to crawl halfway to the end, and then sprint past him to the finish line.

The hare dozed off, while the tortoise doggedly made his way down the racecourse. When the hare awoke, the tortoise had already reached the finish line....

When we have wise children or students, we must make certain to keep them engaged so that they make the most of their potential.

☞ Who accompanied whom?

כָּלֵנוּ זִקְנִים

We would all be men of wisdom

The word “*zakein*” has two meanings: It can mean an elderly person, or one who acquired wisdom (*Kiddushin* 32b). The halachah is that the obligation of וְהִדַּרְתָּ פָּנֵי זָקֵן, *in the presence of an old person shall you rise and you shall honor the presence of a sage* (*Vayikra* 19:32) refers to both an elderly person, even if he is not wise, and a wise person, even if he is not old. Furthermore,