Excerpted from *Iturey Torah* (Aharon Yaakov Greenberg, Yavneh, Tel Aviv, 1977) by Rabbi Lester Bronstein, Bet Am Shalom, White Plains NY

1. *And the Eternal said to Moses, “Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs before him. (Exodus 10:1)*

From Menahem Mendl Morgenstern of Kotzk (1787-1859):

“Come to Pharaoh” – The Torah does not say *lekh,* “go” to Pharaoh, but *bo,* “come” to Pharaoh. [The reason is] because one cannot “go” from the Blessed Holy One. It is impossible to distance oneself from God, because God exists in every *makomi*place. “The whole earth is full of God’s kavod/glory,” (Isaiah 6:3) Therefore [God] says here, “come,” as if to say, “come with me, hineni/I am here with you wherever you go.”

From Yehuda Leib Alter of Ger, the Sefas Emes (1847-1905):

2. *Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, “Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and slaughter the Pesach.” (Exodus 12:21)*

“Draw out and take you a lamb” – It appears that the generation of those who left Egypt was a generation of great people [“the greatest generation”?] It was not an easy task to leave the service of Pharaoh and enter that of God at the drop of a hat.

On the verse, “draw out and take you a lamb,” our Sages tell us that the verse means “draw your hands forth from idolatry,” that there were Jews who had been deeply involved in idolatry, and it was very difficult for them to give this up (Mekhila). But immediately afterwards we are told that “neither had they prepared for themselves any provisions (12:39),” that within a short space of time these same idolaters had become such great believers in God that they had not even bothered to prepare provisions for the way.
3. And you shall explain to your child on that day, ‘It is because of what the Eternal did for me when I went free from Egypt.’ And it shall be a sign for you on your hand... (Exodus 13:8-9)

From She’arit Menachem (source unclear):

“And you shall explain to your child” — “…and it shall be a sign for you on your hand (13:9).” This verse is the basis of she-eyno yodea lish’ol/“the one who does not know how to ask.” But regarding the tam/“simple” child the verse is: “…and it shall be a sign on your hand,” but without the word “for you.” And why is this so?

It is possible to say that a child who does not know how to ask, who has no clue or concept of Judaism, is so on account of that child’s parents. The reason is that the parents’ home is void of any Jewish content. So “it shall be a sign for you” refers to the parent. Note that any sign or remembrance from Judaism would be recognizable to you, in your household, in your manner of personal conduct. [Were this the case], then you would not have a child who does not know how to ask, for in any case the child would have a trace of Jewish experience, and would at least know what to ask.

Suggested bibliography:

Greenberg, Aharon Yaakov, Iturey Torah, Tel Aviv, Yavneh, 1976. English version also available as Torah Gems, Yavneh, Tel Aviv, and Chemed, Brooklyn, 1998.


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