

Crazies Go To Vilednick; Chassidim Belong In Lubavitch!

Category: Holidays, Pesach

Why was Moses left out of the Haggadah? The real reason.

Where did the savior go?

If the first place you read the story of the Exodus was in the Haggadah, you would never know that Moses had anything to do with the whole story.

In the Haggada, Moses is given no credit for the miracle he performed — the ten plagues, the splitting of the sea — nothing! This is surprising, because in Judaism we make a pretty big issue about giving credit where credit is due. There is a mitzvah to recognize someone who has done a good thing for you. This concept is learned from the Mitzvah of Bikurim - thanking G-d for bringing them to the Land of Israel.

In fact, it was the failing in this mitzvah that led to the Jews being exiled from Israel.

Even though it was really G-d who made the miracles and Moses was only the messenger, it's like the Talmud says, "When you drink of the king's wine, you thank the wine bearer."

Yet in the Haggadah there is not a word about Moses' involvement in the Exodus. After everything that Moses went through on behalf of the Jewish people - he sacrificed his life for them. He never wanted to take the position in the first place, and then when he finally agrees and goes to Pharaoh, Pharaoh kicks him out of his palace saying, "If I ever see you again you will be executed!"

Moses worked so hard to arrange the Exodus, yet when Jews all over the world sit down at the Seder table they don't mention him at all. They seem to forget all about him.

The megillah is just the opposite. Just last month we read the story of Purim from

the Scroll of Esther. There, since Esther was the one who risked her life to save the Jews, the entire story is named for her. Also, the book is full of mentions of Mordechai. Why is there no mention of Moses in the Haggadah?

Some suggest that the sages didn't want to turn Moses into a god figure, to stress the difference between us and the Christians — who turn a man into a god. However, that can't be the reason, for, in fifty days from now, we will be celebrating Shavuot when we will not only mention Moses' name but basically give him credit for the Torah. The verse even calls it "the Torah of My servant Moses." There we don't seem to worry about turning Moses into a god.

Chassidim and Crazies

When Chassidism was introduced to the eastern European Jewish world, it conquered entire countries in a relatively short time. Chassidus was popular for a couple of reasons. There were those who were attracted to the Rebbes because of their ability to perform miracles. But others, scholars mostly, were attracted to the new philosophical world Chassidus opened up to them. Chassidus added life to Judaism. For example, every year on the night before Pesach, Jews would search their homes for chametz. This had always been simply the menial task of looking around to ensure that no leaven was left in the house. That is, until the Alter Rebbe returned from Mezritch and searched for chametz all night, explaining that chametz represents the evil that is within us, and on the eve of Passover we have the obligation to remove that as well.

Chassidus added soul to every action, deep meaning to seemingly trivial details.

In this way, two types of Chassidim were created - the Chassidim of Miracles and the Chassidim of the philosophy. This, in essence, is the difference between Chabad Chassidim and other Chassidic groups. They too had a philosophy, but they tend to focus on the miracles their Rebbes performed. And in Chabad, although our Rebbes also performed miracles, we always leaned towards intellectual prowess.

As the story goes, three Chassidim from different groups once sat together speaking the praises of their Rebbes. One said, "My Rebbe blessed me with children and his blessing was fulfilled." The second Chassid said, "My Rebbe advised me to enter into a certain business and I have found tremendous success

due to his blessings!" The third, a Chabad Chassid, "My Rebbe advised me to enter into a certain business and I lost my pants!" The others asked, "What was the miracle?" To which he responded, "The miracle is that I'm still his Chassid!"

What is the real difference between these two types of Chassidim? One who follows a Rebbe on account of his miracles has a very shallow connection with him. For him, the relationship is about instant gratification or "What can the Rebbe do for me?" The moment a blessing isn't fulfilled, the Chassid will simply find a new Rebbe.

On the other hand, one who follows a Rebbe for his teachings has a far deeper connection. They are in for good. They are seeking a deeper truth, not just instant gratification.

There is another, similar story. Rabbi Hillel of Paritch was sitting with his students and they were telling about the Rebbe of Vilednick. "He is a great miracle worker," they said. "Once a meshugener (crazy man) came to him and through his blessing the Rebbe cured him of his craziness."

R' Hillel responded, "Let the Mishugaim go to Vilednick, but Chasidim will go to Lubavitch." In other words, if one is looking just for miracles, Vilednick is perfect. However, if you're looking for Torah, truth, instruction in the development of your G-dly service, then go to Lubavitch.

What's his real accomplishment?

This is why we don't mention Moses in the Haggadah, while on Shavuot we give him all the credit. At the Seder, we celebrate the great miracles Moses performed while taking us out of Egypt. But miracles are not what our relationship with Moses is about. Judaism is about the Torah and our relationship to our leaders is about Torah. So when discussing the miracles, we leave Moses out — for that is not the height of his honor. When we receive the Torah, however, we give Moses the most honored mentions - because Torah is what makes our connection to our Rebbe — Moshe Rabbeinu — steady and long lasting.

The same applies to our relationship with G-d. Some people do mitzvos in order for G-d to bless them with health, wealth, children etc. and the moment life takes an undesirable turn they begin to wonder, "Am I doing all this for nothing?"

We are not Jewish because G-d brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians and split the sea for us, we are Jews because we accepted the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, even though life doesn't always go the way we would like it to, we continue being Jewish — because being Jewish is real, it is true and our connection to Judaism runs deeper than that.