



Beit Ha'am

Z-Talks

בית העם

שיג ושיח ציוני

David Ben Gurion

Speech at the Peel Commission

300 years ago, there came to the New World a boat, and its name was the Mayflower. The Mayflower's landing on Plymouth Rock was one of the great historical events in the history of England and in the history of America. But I would like to ask any Englishman sitting here on the commission, what day did the Mayflower leave port? What date was it? I'd like to ask the Americans: do they know what date the Mayflower left port in England? How many people were on the boat? Who were their leaders? What kind of food did they eat on the boat? "More than 3300 years ago, long before the Mayflower, our people left Egypt, and every Jew in the world, wherever he is, knows what day they left.

And he knows what food they ate. And we still eat that food every anniversary. And we know who our leader was. And we sit down and tell the story to our children and grandchildren in order to guarantee that it will never be forgotten. And we say our two slogans: 'Now we may be enslaved, but next year, we'll be a free people.'

1. What are the collective memories of the new generation of Jews?
2. How does the state of Israel help or impede the concept of Jewish peoplehood?

Out of Egypt/Alma Zohar

There's always war in Africa
What luck it's so far away,
We don't have to see or hear it,
from here

I too walked, once
Down lengthy paths of pain
From Egypt to Jerusalem,
Across a desert for many days,
Without water, no water,
With the same question in the eyes.
I, as they, encountered evil,
Striking out in all directions,
A falsely accused people,
People lacking all protection
Without a home, no home
Carrying small children as they go.
They come knocking at your door,
Crying out bitterly,
And you say – what do I need them for?
Foreigners from foreign lands.

Don't you know each day and age,
One and all must see himself,
As though having escaped Egypt,
So he won't forget how he fled,
How he was beaten, humiliated, murdered,
How he called out to the heavens.

I too vainly tried,
To save the little that I could,
With no place left to hide
Anyone could let my blood,
Mark of Cain, Mark of Cain,
People pleading on their knees.
They come knocking at your door,
Babes and bundles on their backs,
And you say – what do I need them for?
Who needs any more of those blacks?

Don't you know each day and age...

Ruler of the World
Save us please while you still can
And bless we'll never ever need
The mercies of another man

Don't you know each day and age...

There's always war in Africa,
What luck it's so far away,
We don't have to see or hear it, from here.
There's always war in Africa,
What luck it's so far away,
We don't have to see or hear...
The screams

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufW-Wb8F7NQ>

1. Has the journey of the Jewish people been completed?
2. What meaning does "the promised land" have to those who live outside of Israel? What does Israel need to be in order to become "the promised land"? What responsibility does Diaspora Jewry have to fulfill this vision?
3. Are the Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora still the same people, and do they share the same commitment?
4. Is there a common denominator between those reclining around the seder table in Stockholm, Sidney, Israel? What are their characteristics?

Exodus 13:8

“And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt”

Four Sons Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1911)

According to Jewish ritual, the story of the Exodus from Egypt at Passover should be adapted to the psychology of four typical children.

The first is clever, the second is impudent, the third a simpleton, and the fourth "such that he doesn't even know how to ask". And each must be answered in order, according to his tastes and measure of understanding.

The Clever

The clever boy wrinkles his high forehead, gazes searchingly with his big eyes and wants to know what really the matter was. Why did they first love his forefathers in Egypt, welcome them with open arms, and then begin persecuting and tormenting them, and, so queerly they kept on persecuting and tormenting them and throwing the baby boys into the rivers, but wouldn't for anything let them go. What was the explanation, Daddy? - asks the clever boy.

The Impudent

The second boy is "impudent" - there he sits - lolling back in his chair, crossing his feet and grinning ironically - and asks - what are all these funny customs and memories of YOURS? All this silly old nonsense should have been forgotten long ago!

"Blunt his teeth" says the ritual of the Passover concerning this son. But I doubt if his teeth can be blunted ... for nothing is more unvanquishable than indifference. Nothing can touch him, once he says of his own people, "you", you can give him up ... He will go on grinning at you with all his teeth, and nothing that you can do will blunt them.

And, indeed, you should not blunt the teeth of this son. Let him go on his way with strong teeth. Poor fellow, he will need them in the encampment of the triumphant whither he is drawn. He will have to crack hard nuts there, and the hardest will be the nut of contempt. Often and often will he have to take kicks in answer to loving speeches, be spat upon in answer to his flattery ...

The Simpleton

The third boy is the simpleton. His eyes are honest, clear and direct. He is not of those who inquire, discover and excavate contradictions. For him the world is simple and indisputable. He loves to believe and worship with the simple faith of the primitive man ... an artless, single-minded trustfulness. "Daddy" he says, and planting his elbows and pressing his chest on the table, he stretches out his neck and turns to you ... believing already everything you will tell him, for he wants to believe, "Daddy, when will a better time come?"

Then tell him gently and simply about everything that is happening now in the great illimitable Diaspora. Tell him how in a thousand different places, the newly scattered temple of the undying people is being raised by a thousand hands. Tell him how gradually the hitherto scattered national will is being unified before our eyes, how again a real people is being created ... like all healthy nations ... Tell him how everywhere, with every day the pride and respect for our own individuality grows ... Tell him what wonderful poets are now writing in our tongue, and how beautiful ... this tongue is ... And tell him further how gaily the colonist's children are chattering in this language in Palestine. And how ... by great labour ... through a thousand obstacles ... something new is rising and growing there.

The One Who Doesn't Know How to Ask

The fourth boy does not know how to ask. He sits at table sedately, does everything properly and it does not even enter his head to ask what it is all about and why.

According to the ritual, you should not wait for his questions but tell him of your own accord. I disagree ... there is sometimes a higher wisdom ... in that a man takes something from the past without question, without curiosity as to causes or effects ... According to the ritual, you should tell this son about everything that he does not ask.

But I think, let the father too be silent and ... kiss this son on his brow, the surest keeper of the sacrament.

1. Are there moral messages that can only be passed on in one way? If so, which? If not, why?
2. Are there educational methodologies that are the absolute right compared to others?
3. What are the 4 different types of "sons" in your community? What are the 4 different types of "sons" with regard to their connection to Israel?
4. What are the new messages parents/communities would like to share with their children/new generation?