



the lord brought us out of Egypt... dayenu

deuteronomy 6.<sup>20-24</sup>

When we talk about teaching the rising generation, Moses' instructions to Israel always comes to mind.

“When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying,

‘What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?’ (Deut. 6:<sup>20</sup>)

“Dad, what do all these commandments mean? Why do they exists? What are we to do with them, and why?”

“Then thou shalt say unto thy son,

‘We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day’” (Deut. 6:<sup>21-24</sup>).

There are a number of important points that can be gleaned from this brief passage. We will mention just two.

First, it is important that as we rear, train, and teach our children, we teach them from our own experience. We teach them from our own relationship with our Father and Savior. It is important that we be able to say to them,

“I strive to keep the commandments because Heavenly Father has been so good to me. He delivered me from the slavery of sin. He created in me a new heart. He gave me a spiritual land in which I have found rest. And all he asks is that I show my thanks by following his counsel. And, know this: following his council is also good for me. It brings peace and joy. He keeps me safe from evil and guilt. This is a great blessing of following his counsel.”

Again, it is important that we teach our children from the strength of our own personal relationship with our Father in Heaven and his Son, Jesus Christ. They need to hear of our love for him because of our personal encounter with him.

The great question asked by the missionary/prophet Alma, seems pertinent here.

“I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5.14)

If we have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, we should sing it to our children; not in the spirit of duty or warning or intimidation, but in the spirit of gratitude and awe of a God whose mercy and grace is beyond what we could have imagined. We should let our children know how great a Being He is whom we love and serve. We should invite them to find him for themselves, for he is not far from the humble and sincere seeker.

The second point is vital, it seems to me. In witnessing of God from our own personal experience, it is important to add,

“But remember, I obey and love him, because he first loved and delivered me.”

Some years ago I sat in a high priest group meeting. The teacher posed the rather cliché question:

“Why should we keep the Sabbath day holy?”

The first... the very first answer was, “Because we will be blessed.”

This seems to always be our first answer to why we obey. It makes me want to scream. While that may be true, that is not, cannot be the first answer. God is not a fertility god!

Church leaders, it seems, cannot suggest that we do anything without promising us that there is a reward awaiting us at the other end of the rainbow.

“Just stop it, will you? I am better than that. I don’t need to be bribed to do the right thing!”

I do not deny that blessing might flow due to our obedience. Nor does the Israelite father. He does affirm, eventually, that obedience is “for our good always, that [God] might preserve us alive.” But, I do deny that this is the first or primary reason we obey. If it is the first or primary reason, we are in deep doo-doo. Note the Israelite father’s *first* reason for obeying the Lord.

“We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...”

“I obey God in the first place,” says the Israelite father, “not in order to *be* blessed, but because I have already *been* blessed. I was rescued. I obey out of gratitude for this past benefit, not in anticipation of a future. I owe him. He can and will never owe me.”

These are very different world views—very different views of God. One reflects a true worship of God, the other reflects the false worship of Bel.

One reflects selfless gratitude, the other reflects selfish insatiability.

One of my favorite parts of the Jewish Seder is the “Dayenu.” In it, participants declare that they are satisfied with the first blessing. If that first blessing had been the final blessing, “Dayenu—We would have been satisfied”—they confess. True, in his goodness and generosity, God just keeps

them coming. But we will worship, adore, and serve him whether there is a flow of blessing or not. We will do good because we are good and love good. We will worship him in word and in action because he has already given us the best he has to give.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15.<sup>13</sup>).

“In giving my life for you, I have given the best I have.... Myself. Will that be enough for you, or will you require, more and more and more?”

Dayenu!