

רָשָׁע

מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר

מָה הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם:

לָכֶם וְלֹא לִי

וְלִפִּי שֶׁהוֹצִיא אֶת עַמּוֹ מִ

כַּפָּר בְּעֵקֶר

וְאִף אֶתְּהָ הִקְהָה אֶת שְׁנֵי

בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְּ

לִי וְ

אֵלֹהֵי הָיָה שָׁם, לֹא הָיָה נִגְזָר

ultimate purpose is to shape character, train
create "habits of the heart."

by the commentators as to why this particular
of rebellion. The simplest answer is that,
of as asking, in this case the verse speaks of
does not seek an answer; he seeks only to

the word *avoda*, service. The Torah uses the
slavery to Pharaoh and service to God. The
did our people gain by leaving Egypt? They
other. Then they were servants to Pharaoh,
God. But in both cases they had a master; in
rebellious child understands freedom to mean
not understood that freedom is not the ability
to do what you ought. A society in which
his own eyes" (Judges 21:25) does not have
sovereignty of God and law (the Torah and
weak, and the powerful take advantage of the

The WICKED SON

what does he say?

"What is this service to you?"

"To you," he says, not to him.

When he sets himself apart from the community,
he denies the very core of our beliefs.

And you must set his teeth on edge and tell him,
"Because of this

the LORD acted for me when I came out of Egypt."

"For me," and not for him;

had he been there he would not have been redeemed.

Ex. 12

Ex. 13

powerless. The difference between serving Pharaoh and serving God makes all
the difference in the world: between injustice and justice, slavery and freedom,
a society where people are used as means and one where they are respected as
ends in themselves.

WHEN HE SETS HIMSELF APART FROM THE COMMUNITY,
HE DENIES THE VERY CORE OF OUR BELIEFS

What principle is the wicked son denying? The answer is that though the rebellious
child denies none of the thirteen principles of faith enumerated by Maimonides,
he does deny something else. Maimonides explains: "One who separates himself
from the community, even if he does not commit a transgression but only holds
aloof from the congregation of Israel, does not fulfill religious precepts in com-
mon with his people, shows himself indifferent when they are in distress, does
not observe their fasts, but goes his own way as if he were one of the nations and
did not belong to the Jewish people – such a person has no share in the World
to Come" (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 3:11).

The mere fact that an individual fails to identify with the collective fate of
the Jewish people – even though he observes the commandments – is a denial
of one of the principles of Judaism, namely that ours is a *collective* faith. Martin
Buber was wrong when he called his great work on faith *I and Thou*. In Judaism
the primary relationship is *We and Thou*. Despite its insistence on individual
responsibility ("If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"), Judaism is equally
insistent on collective responsibility ("And if I am only for myself, what am I?").