

PREPARING FOR PESACH, IV: TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

On the night of the Seder, as the members of Jewish families all over the world play act the bondage and the salvation from Egyptian cruelty, the participants perform many misvot -- commandments. One of the key ingredients is the question and answer format for teaching next generation the history and its significance. The Hagaddah, "telling" -- is a positive commandment of the Torah. Why would telling a story have to be so dramatic? Why is it an obligation to tell this tale every year on the same night? Why do we perform so many contradictory acts?

The aim is to teach the children -- to imbue them with the faith that sustained our forefathers through a most difficult period. Education is a theme of the night but it doesn't end with the afikoman. Developing our offspring into the bearers of our heritage is a lifelong task incumbent upon every Jewish parent. In order to do it well one must understand the process.

It is a balance and a combination of 2 processes, planting and building. Growth, says Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, is a natural organic process. In contrast, he points out, building is an artificial process. Hashem uses these two techniques in running His creation. In our prayers we ask that he "build Yerushalayim" and "sprout for the offshoot of David". Both planting and building are essential to the development of our children. We must build them, brick upon brick, according to a man made "synthetic" plan. We must put structure into their lives. However, if we only build without providing "space" for their individuality to grow then they may degenerate into robots. We must not deprive them of initiative and original self-expression -- elements so necessary for success in their adult lives.

To quote Rabbi Wolbe: "If we allow children to sprout and grow without building them, they become wild. If we only build children, but fail to nurture their organic growth, we transform them into robots. If we employ both approaches, planting and building, then genuine education becomes possible...Education is simultaneously providing a child with the appropriate structure and space for growth"

As we sit and enjoy the Seder proceedings we should pause during the Hagaddah portion that deals with the Four Sons, the wise, the wicked, the simple and the one who does not know to ask and take a look at the children with which G-d has blessed us. The night will end but the responsibility to educate will continue as the little sprouts grow into trees and the foundations you pour become tall buildings. Remember to "tell your son on this night" and continue to nurture the seeds of faith that you plant and the spiritual foundations that you lay for many years to come.

TABLE TALK -- QUESTIONS FOR THE SEDER TABLE

After reciting the blessings on the massah -- "HaMotsee Lehem Min Ha- Arets" and "Al Akhilat Matsah" we eat two ounces of Matsah. Why isn't one ounce sufficient or at most one ounce and one bite. The misvah of eating matsah requires one ounce but eating after HaMotsee could be done with only one bite?

Answer:

There are two opinions as to which blessing is said on which matsah. Some say the misvah of eating matsah on the night of Pesach is accomplished by eating the top matsah i.e. the whole one. Others say the misvah is accomplished by eating the broken piece i.e. the middle matsah. In order to do the misvah 100% according to all opinions we eat two ounces of matsah --the broken and the whole.[Source Mishnah Berurah Siman 475:9]

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