THIS NIGHT

by Rabbi Label Lam

As for the one who does not know to ask, you should open him up, as it is written "And you should relate to your child on that day saying because of this HASHEM did for me with my exiting from Egypt." (Shemos 13:8) (From the Four Sons at the Seder)

How can we make the Seder more relevant for the one whom, for whatever reason, does not know to ask? In general education we can teach to the middle of the class and ignore those beyond 2 and ½ standard deviations to the left and the right. On Pesach night, though, we have a sacred obligation to reach each child according to his interest, mood, and attitude. Perhaps the meaning of the Seder can be synthesized and encapsulated in a simple story that has a concrete message no one still awake could fail to appreciate. Here is a story I would tell my young Hebrew Day School kids:

A young boy grew up blind from birth. Never had he seen the light of day. He tried with all his might to compensate for his lack. He learned to read and right in Braille. He managed with little assistance to maneuver through local streets. His childhood was a misery, mostly because of the cruelty of some neighborhood bullies that tormented and teased him daily. If he wasn't being tripped they were calling him names and the genius of their methodologies grew in sophistication. This poor boy, we'll call him Ben, would cry himself to sleep each night after writing about his suffering in his Braille diary. On day he hit the very lowest of ebbs. A practical joke they played on him humiliated him to the core and left his spirits mortally wounded. He wrote in his Braille diary that night, with tears flowing from his broken eyes, wondering aloud and crying to G- d, "Why do I need to live like this? When can it end? Enough!"

Just then his parents entered his room. They had exciting news. They had been talking to a doctor that believes he can cure his blindness. Ten days later he was in the hospital. After four days of careful preparation the operation was performed.

The night of the fifteenth with his family gathered around and with the Doctor himself, soft candles were lit. The magic moment arrived. Two huge round patches were removed and he beheld the face of his loving parents for the very first time. He shared glances with the Doctor and then ran excitedly to the window to drink thirstily all the sights the entire night.

As the weeks and months passed he became like the other children, free from his former oppressors who ran from his gaze now with fright. One morning he looked out the window and noticed rain. His first response was, "It's a bad day today!" When he heard his own grumbling he

became disgusted with himself. He realized that he had lost his appreciation for the new gift. He thought, "What would I have paid just for the ability to see rain running down the pane just a few months earlier and now I'm just a bundle of complaints."

He was so deeply disappointed with himself that he went back to the Doctor and asked him to reverse the procedure. The Doctor looked at him with incredulity. However when he explained himself the wise Doctor understood well and offered a wondrous piece of advice.

Since the anniversary of the operation was close at hand he instructed him to make preparations for the event by inviting his close family and the Doctor himself would come. They should set up the room with soft candle lights and fine decorations. That night he was to put those big round patches on again and to begin to read excerpts from his old Braille diary to the point where the tears began to flow and all the terrible emotions of the past were awakened, then the news of the Doctor and the operation etc. Then the patches were to be removed. They sang together happily deep into the night. The wise Doctor told him, "Ben, be sure to do every detail of this procedure each year and it's likely you'll never lose your feelings of abundant appreciation. Just remember, my son, never lose touch with this night!" Text Copyright &copy 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.