

UNIQUE APPRECIATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

by Rabbi Label Lam

*HASHEM spoke to Moses and Aaron saying: The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his division, **with the flag staffs** of their fathers' house; some distance from the Tent of Meeting they shall encamp. (Bamidbar 2:1)*

With the flag staffs: Every division shall have its own flag staff, with a colored flag hanging on it; the color of one being different from the color of any other. (Rashi)

Every division shall have its own flag staff, with a colored flag hanging on it; the color of one being different from the color of any other. Every division shall have its own flag staff, with a colored flag hanging on it; the color of one being different from the color of any other. Every division shall have its own flag staff, with a colored flag hanging on it; the color of one being different from the color of any other. Here is the ideal formation of all the tribes as they are configured by HASHEM in the desert. Every individual was included as part of a group that had its own distinct flag and color according to their family. Hmmmm! What current lesson can we glean from this ancient mandate?

Every family and individual is gifted with different strengths and challenges. Therefore even if everyone is keeping the same Shabbos Holy, the flavor of their table and every person around that table also varies. How can that personal touch be emphasized and encouraged?

Here are a few activities that have worked wonderfully at our Shabbos table almost every week and we do not get bored. On Friday nights we go around the table with the same question. "What did you do this week that gave you the greatest feeling of accomplishment?" At first when we started this, admittedly, people wanted to run away rather than answer. Now, they can't wait for their chance. Somebody got up early and studied. Someone helped a friend. One week we had three guests and one said he had a nice conversation with his mother. Another said all of Tehillim each day and another made it twice to Shacharis that week. One of our children got an 80% on a math test, claiming it was hard for her and she thought she would fail. One washed a large pile of dishes in preparation for Shabbos. Somebody forgave a friend and somebody else ignored an insult. Every pronouncement is met by a bouncy song to applaud and highlight the feeling of accomplishment.

We came to realize a few important and personal truths in this pastime. People usually feel good about doing something that was hard for them to do or something they did for someone else. Each person reveals a small part of their personal struggle in declaring their individual victory. They learn over time to look forward to doing challenging things and feeling better later and they learn how to

reward themselves and feel good about things that are unique to their situation rather than to aim only for generic goals that general society gives recognition to. These discussions can last quite a long time and everyone feels heard and rewarded in the process.

On Shabbos day we play "The Gratitude Game". Rather than lecture about being grateful and feeling good about what we have, we play a fun game. I start, "I am grateful for something that starts with the letter "G"" (for example). Suddenly people start to guess items and categories that zero in on thing I have in my mind. Whoever gets it has the chance to state, "I am grateful for something that starts with the letter..."

Everyone should be ready with something that they feel grateful for and turns can be shared or given away to help include those who feel left out or overmatched. Eventually, people of all ages are getting into it. It makes the Shabbat table a fun and interesting place to be, besides quietly teaching us to feel good about the details in our lives.

The combo of these two activities helps us reflect on the two important questions: 1) What are we doing to improve our state of being? 2) How grateful are we for what HASHEM is doing for us?

No two weeks or discussions are ever the same and even if all families in the Jewish Nation would do the same activities at their Shabbos table, no two would ever be exactly alike. Each family and person has their own special flavor -flag and that represents their individual tastes and challenges and their **unique appreciations and accomplishments**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.