

A WHOLE WORLD

by Rabbi Label Lam

"And you shall tell your child on that day ..." Shemos- Quoted in the Haggadah Shel Pesach

Regarding four sons the Torah speaks, One Wise, One Wicked, One Simple, and One who does not know how to ask... Haggadah Shel Pesach

The Haggadah is presumably in its words. Why then, when counting the four sons does the Haggadah need to say the word "one" before each of the four sons. Either count them 1 2 3 4 or don't count them at all! Why refer to each one as "one"?!

A story is told about two brothers living different lives. One lived in America and he was a successful businessman and he an extremely wealthy person. Unfortunately, though, he and his wife did not merit having any children. His brother lived in Meah Shearim in Jerusalem. He was very poor and living under the most austere with his wife and twelve children. Their lives and lifestyles could not have been more different.

One day the brother in America called his brother in Jerusalem and offered him a "business" deal that was hard to resist. "You have twelve children and you are living in poverty. I am a multi-millionaire but I have no children. I propose that you give me one of your twelve children and I give you a million dollars. That way your life will be greatly improved and my will be enriched by having one of your twelve children."

The brother in Jerusalem talked it over with his wife and thought about it deeply and decided that they would agree to the "business" deal. Lawyers were subsequently engaged and papers were drawn up and signed by both sides. A date was set that the transaction would be required to occur. A child would be sent to the brother in America and then the money would be released into the bank account of the brother in Jerusalem.

The fateful night arrived and the brother living in Jerusalem with twelve children was tasked with choosing which child they would part with. When all the children were fast asleep he and his wife made their rounds. Peeking at each one under the covers one after one they looked at each other and shook their heads with a "no". They made the circuit again and again and were unable to choose a child to part with. After agonizing for the entire night, at dawn they made a dramatic decision.

They called the brother in America and told him that the deal was off. The brother in America was irate. "We have a deal. We signed legal documents binding us to the deal. By tomorrow you can

have a million dollars in your bank account. You just can't back out like that! Everybody is legally bound to the agreement. You signed!"

The brother in Jerusalem acknowledged that he had signed a legal document but he pointed out a faulty premise that he had discovered in the agreement. He explained, "It begins by describing that I have twelve children. It's not true! As my wife made our rounds that night agonizing over which child we would send away, we realized that we don't have twelve children. We have One Shmuli, One Racheli, One Dovi, One Rivky, One Chaim etc. Each one is a ONE!"

So too on Seder Night we have a sacred obligation to speak not to an aggregate of children or to lecture and pontificate to a family but rather to speak each and every child. Each child is a one. We cannot afford and dare not risk leaving go of, and parting company with even one. Here are two signs I hung in the teachers' room. One read, "Every child in your class is somebody's entire world." The other one says, "A parent is only as happy as their unhappiest child!" Scoring 11 out of 12 in general education may be OK but in parenting each one is - **a whole world**.