

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh



TEACHING OURSELVES TO TEACH OURSELVES

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Pesach has a hold over every Jew. I have shared hours of discussions with Yieden of all shades of practise, and no matter how far from our mesorah they find themselves, they each have a cherished Passover memory. More than any other Yom Tov, Pesach calls every soul and invites it to participate in our rich heritage. The challenge is, what we do with this call, how can we activate it towards a greater spirituality going into the future.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l once commented that parents are more than simply mechanchim, educators; they are mashpiim, influencers. The word mashpia stems from the root shipua, referring to an incline or slope. The function of a parent is quite the same. The subliminal messages transmitted to one's children on a daily basis form expectations which they seek to live up to. Our expressed thoughts and actions are like an inclined slope, which mould the way our children act and react. The Seder is that unique opportunity to give over to our young something no school room can. To be that special mashpia though, one has to feel a true 'bren'.

As a youngster I was blessed in attending the Seder of the Bobover Rebbe, Rav Shlomo Zt"l for several years. There were many highlights, all of which remain in my heart. One such moment was seeing the Rebbe Rav Naftali Zt"l (The Rov's eldest son) singing 'dayeinu', yes, a sweet little nigun'el that we all know, but in Rav Naftali's hands it became a moment when heaven kissed earth. This slight sweet Yied, a survivor of all the Hell that was the Churban, was soft spoken and extremely humble. Whilst his holy father was the epitome of Regal Bearing, Rav Naftali was the flower that had bloomed in his dynamic shadow. Ah dayeinu, his hands gently wringing one another as his eyes looked up to a holy place beyond the physical. A sweet smile would skip across his lips as the melody caught on and lifted his neshoma.

This tableau became the signature tune to my personal memory of those long ago Sedorim. After the Seder, we youngsters would sit in a second room shmoozing, coming back to this world after our visit to the highs of Hashem's comforting hug. There sat Rav Naftali, glass of water in hand, sharing gentle stories with us, smiling as he took us to other challenges that defied our limited description but that seemed as mere skirmishes to this wondrous hero. Dayeinu, nothing is enough because everything is beyond this world. So, what can we mere pedestrians do to even dare aspire to being a mashpia for our loved ones, are any of us are even close to those heroes of yore?

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Chazal tell us in the Gemorah Pesachim:

‘He begins with the Jewish people’s disgrace and concludes with their glory.’ (Mishna Pesachim 10:4)

The Mishna is telling us that we must start our recitation of the Hagadah by reminding ourselves that at the very beginning we were all lowly, “Originally our ancestors were idol worshipers”, and yet afterwards we end with celebration.

The first Rebbe of Alexander, the Rebbe Rav Yechiel Ztl explained “begins with disgrace” to mean that even if a Yied

is far from his roots, and feels shame, he should know, that if he meaningfully participates in the seder, the merit of all the mitzvahs will bring him to a level of spiritual glory.

Sounds lovely, just sit at the seder, sing a few ditties and voila you are entirely uplifted and sparkling. Sure, but we all know the truth, as much as we want, it just doesn’t always work. You want this to happen, to have that special seder, yet, cutting thru the tedium isn’t easy. The songs are the same, the food as well. The matzohs significantly crispy and the wine just mellows the emptiness.

The Slonimer Rebbe the Bais Avrohom Ztl discusses the question of why the Torah commands us to tell over all the miracles of our leaving Mitzrayim. After all, we all know the story by heart and have heard about the miracles since childhood. It seems a bit of a waste of time to go over it again. However, says the Rebbe, every person has different feelings and experiences. Upon hearing about a miracle each listener will pick up a different nuance. Understanding is not monochromatic, it has different levels for each individual. When we sit at the seder, retelling the story, each participant will be enthused by a different facet. By sharing ideas and viewpoints we each hear unique aspects that wouldn’t necessarily come to mind. This is the reason we are told to relate it again and again, even to the point that the Hagadah tells us, “The more one tells about the Exodus, the more he is praiseworthy.”

I would like to venture yet another level to the Rebbe’s deep insight. We each have different levels of understanding within our own minds. Nothing is static, we evolve as we mature. The mind is a multi-faceted organ that observes reality at a multitude of levels. Hence yesterday’s understanding won’t match today’s, by repeating known facts again, we allow them to take on new shapes. As we grow our thoughts become more discerning, and Hashem’s love for us takes on a greater meaning.

Just think for a moment, which Yied doesn’t have his or hers own Hagadah of life? Who hasn’t been witness to Hashem’s love in their reality? We all have stories, worthy of telling our children, of how Hashem has taken us out of our personalised Mitzrayim. It would be fascinating for your family to know who they are, what their elders have lived thru, and how Hashem has touched their lives. Humans are communicators, it is this that sets us apart from all other creatures. We should share our stories, I tell you of Rav Naftali’s Dayanu, you tell others of your experiences. Together we create a tapestry of testimony that becomes the igniter of our bored souls. The Peasnetza Rebbe Ztl often talks about the human need for excitement, that the neshomah needs a frisson to awaken it from its slumber.

Tatti’s should become story tellers, after all the Hagadah is our best selling story of all time, and give the young visions beyond the mere page.

As an old storyteller, I can tell you that our stories have the potency to awaken not only the listeners, but the tellers as well.

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