



Pesach Seder Parenting Rabbi Hershel Reichman

On Pesach, parents have a special *mitzvah* of, “*Vehegadata livincha*,” to tell over to our children the story of our exile in Egypt and our redemption. The Torah speaks about four different categories of children. This teaches us that Pesach is a time to focus on all our children no matter how they think or behave. Pesach commemorates the birth of the Jewish people. The key to Jewish continuity is our children. Without our children following in our ways our nation will inevitably disappear. We have to focus on our children. The *mitzvah* of, “*V’shinantem livanecha*,” to teach our children Torah ensures our continuity. Pesach is a special time to speak with them about the great miracles Hashem did for us.

The four children the *Hagadah* speaks about

fall into two categories. There is the *chacham*, the *tam*, the *rasha*, and the *sheino yodea l’sheol*. The wise child can be taught the laws of Pesach. He can be dealt with like an equal. However, the other three are not Torah scholars and need a special approach. I asked Rav Aharon Soloveitchik which of the four children we should emphasize at the Seder and he said the *sheino yodea lishol*. One should talk to the child who doesn’t know how to ask because the *Hagadah* says, “At *petach lo*,” talk with the one who does not know how to ask.

It’s important to make Pesach an exciting time for our children. One should avoid expressing anything negative such as how hard or expensive the holiday is. We should show

enthusiasm and try to involve our children in the preparations. Take the boys to the matzah bakery and have them participate in the baking and the buying of *matzot*. Take the girls along to shop for the special foods for the holiday. Get the children excited about cleaning the house. It should be fun and enjoyable because we are doing it in honor of Pesach. Express excitement about finding the *chametz*. On *bedikat chometz* night, give the children flashlights and have them join you in the search for *chometz*. The next morning when you go to burn the *chometz*, take the children along and have them help throw the *chometz* in the fire. The goal of *V’hegadata livincha* is to make our children excited about the *mitzvot* of Pesach. This will ensure Jewish continuity.



Pesach Seder Parenting Part II

Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Young children are key players at the *Pesach Seder*. We emphasize two elements for them, the *Mah Nishtana* and the *Afikomen*. *Mah Nishtana*, asking the four questions, is an old tradition that goes back to the times of the Gemara when the *Hagadah* was first introduced. The *Mishna* says, "*V'kan haben shoel*. Here the child asks." Whichever level the child is at and in whatever way he says it, give the child the attention and honor he deserves. Make sure to reward him. In the times of *Chazal*, the children were given nuts and roasted goodies to keep them motivated at the *Seder*. It's a good idea to have a bag of

candies ready to reward a child who asks a good question. This is how we encourage our children to participate. If they get an immediate reward it encourages them to continue asking more questions and that is one of the essential *mitzvot* of the night. The Rambam rules that the proper way to fulfill the *mitzvah* of "*Vehegadata livincha*. You shall tell your son," is through questions and answers and the ideal way is when the child asks.

The second highlight of the *Seder* for children is the game of the *Afikomen*. The children steal the *Afikomen* and at the end of the meal when it comes time to eat it, the father makes a deal

and promises to buy the children a gift if they return the *Afikomen*. Fathers vary in how they play this game. Some are generous and giving and make it easy for the child. Others try to strike a tough bargain. Personally, I feel that we should make it a pleasant experience. The goal is for the children to enjoy the *Seder* and look forward to it as a special time. This helps them to have a good feeling about Judaism and want to be a part of the Jewish nation which is the whole goal of, "*V'hegadata l'vincha*," that our children should associate the *mitzvah* with warm and happy memories and that Jewish continuity should carry on.