



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Takeaways from the Seder

Many years ago, when I was teaching at YCQ (Yeshiva of Central Queens), I attended a teaching seminar, where I 'suffered' through a model lesson about teaching social studies. I had been teaching Jewish Studies, Math and Science - why was I spending an hour in a social studies class?

Then it dawned upon me. It wasn't just a social studies class - it was an experience that taught me things that I could apply to my own subjects.

In a way, that is the Seder Experience. In addition to the Seder itself, and the mitzvot of the night, there is also a lesson - an important lesson, about how to transmit Torah and knowledge from one generation to the next, and from people who are more knowledgeable and experienced to those less so - throughout the year.

This includes realizing the benefit of question & answer in the transmission of knowledge, understanding the need to answer questions on the level of the questioner, and a lot more.

And we need to learn how to have Seder-like experiences, all the time.

On another note, to choose a specific aspect and takeaway from the Seder, it would be this:

The Four Children of Seder fame, are not just four different people - they are each of us.

A person might be well-informed and learned in many different things - qualifying, so to speak, as a CHACHAM, and yet have some aspects of knowledge - both Jewish and general, on which he or she can be labeled a TAM, being able to ask simply - What's this? - or words to that effect. And very possibly, be the One who does not even know how or what to ask, in other areas of knowledge. And maybe, hopefully rarely, the same individual might scoff or challenge an idea or teaching in a way that might put him into the category of RASHA.

Most of us are the Four Children rolled into one. The percentages of each Child will differ from person to person, but all ARBAA BANIM can be found in each of us.

Carrying this idea a little further, the four aspects of the person are not static - they are dynamic. When we teach the SHE-EINO YODEI'A LISHOL to ask, he becomes a TAM. And with the right answers on his level, he can advance to CHACHAM - in the specific area being presented and explored.

Also realize that the CHACHAM becomes a SHE-EINO YODEI'A LISH-OL when he thinks or feels that he fully understands a particular topic. At that point - AT P'TACH LO, he has to be shown that there is more to know and guided and prompted to ask more questions and eagerly absorb more knowledge and answers.

Thus it should for actual children (age-wise) and so should it be for all of us, regardless of age. It is not whimsical that we are B'NEI YISRAEL (and B'NEI ADAM) - we are all HaShem's children - BANIM ATEM LASHEM ELOKEICHEM. **PTDT**