



THE PESACH DIMENSION

THIS SHABBAT IS, IN MANY WAYS, FOCUSED ON PESACH. ALTHOUGH THE TORAH reading¹ is about the offerings in the Temple, most synagogue sermons will be about Pesach, which begins on Monday evening. Following the Afternoon Service on Shabbat day, there is a custom to recite the main text of the Pesach Haggadah, helping one prepare what one is going to say at the Seder Nights. Part of the Mitzva of the Seder Night is to present positive teachings at the table, for the benefit of all. The following is offered for the same purpose:

THE FOUR SONS

The Haggadah tells us about the four sons (or daughters): the Wise Child, the Rebellious Child, the Simple Child and the Child who does not know how to ask. These are usually understood as four personality types, or varieties of attitude. There is also an interpretation which sees them as four different generations.

The Wise Child means the Jew who came from Russia, Poland or any other ‘home ‘ community where the Jews had been settled for centuries and had a strong Jewish lifestyle. This Jewish person and his

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or her spouse had great love and respect for Torah. Both husband and wife had probably received a traditional upbringing, in an atmosphere of Jewish knowledge, wisdom and piety.

Their children, the 'Rebellious' generation, grew up for the most part in an open society with a strong emphasis on material achievement and success. They had some knowledge of Judaism, but not enough. They rejected their parents' way of life, which seemed old fashioned. "Times have changed", they thought.

Their children form the next generation, that of the Simple Child. This generation is confused. They have memories of their grandparents, of the silver candlesticks and the full Kiddush cup on Friday nights. But their own parents, the generation of the Rebellious Child, ran a different kind of home, with different values. For the Simple Child, as the years go by, the memory of the pious grandparents becomes ever more remote...

The fourth generation, the Child who does not know how to ask, was born after his or her great-grandparents had passed on. This Child's early memories are rather of Grandfather and Grandmother the Rebellious Children. Nothing real about Judaism has been passed down. This Child hardly knows how to phrase questions about Judaism, and has no-one to ask.

Whatever one's interpretation of the Four Children, the Haggadah presents them as all being present at the Seder. The Lubavitcher Rebbe speaks also of the Fifth Child - who is not there at all². This person is unconscious of the fact that it is Pesach, and was not invited to a Seder.

The great responsibility of our generation is to find the Fifth Child, says the Rebbe, and to invite him or her to enter the warmth of Jewish life. The return of the Fifth Child might well inspire the other Children listed in the Haggadah to renew or increase their own relationship with Judaism. In this way the direction of decline will be reversed, and the entire Jewish people will come back to life.

1. Leviticus chs. 6-8. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Torah Studies* (translated by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks), p.171.

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SEDRA TZAV – SHABBAT BEFORE PESACH

ENTHUSIASM IN YOUR HEART

“I’m so excited!” Adam told his friend David. “My aunt and uncle are coming from America tomorrow with my two cousins and they’re staying for the whole of Pesach and for an extra couple of days after.” David, Adam and David’s older brother Sam were on their way to the park near their homes, to play a game of football.

“That’s awesome, man,” David said, scornfully, “You’re gonna have such fun! You’re sooo lucky!”

“Well, we’re going to have a fun Pesach as well,” Sam told David, “Grandma is coming and we’re having guests for both Seders.” “Oh, the Seder,” David grumbled, “The only part I like is Mum’s chicken soup and the four cups of wine.”

Sam laughed, “I think you’re a little bit young to be an alcoholic just yet!” Adam and David joined in his laughter. “But, really,” David continued, as he kicked the football along the side of the road, “It’s so boring. So many loooong paragraphs we have to say. I just can’t wait to start eating. I suppose I like the Maror as well, though. It’s a bit of fun watching everyone trying to eat it...”

“Oh, come on,” Sam encouraged, “It’s a festival. Be happy. Make it fun for the rest of the family. They always like your jokes and stories.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, I guess,” David said reluctantly, “I don’t know why you’re so enthusiastic about it.”

“Well actually, it’s funny you say that. Wanna hear something interesting my teacher taught us this week?” Sam said.
“Go on. Just don’t make it as loong as those paragraphs in the Haggadah!” David answered.

“I’ll do my best!” Sam laughed, “Basically, in this week’s Sedra it talks about all types of offerings the priest and the Jewish people offered up on the Altar in the Temple. And it says that the fire on the Altar always had to be lit. It could never go out. So, my teacher told me an interesting explanation. He said that our heart is like the Altar and our enthusiasm is compared to the fire. The same way the fire had to be permanently lit, so too, our enthusiasm for Judaism should always be there permanently in our hearts.”

“How do you do that?” asked David. “How do you keep being interested and turned on?”

“Well, I suppose one way is trying to find out more about it,” said Sam.

“Yes,” Adam said. “Look, Pesach is **our** story. It’s how we became a people. We came out of Egypt and then got the Torah at Mount Sinai – and here we are today, 3,300 years later! It’s amazing!”

“Yes, you have to see the bigger picture,” said Sam. “Even in the most difficult times, there were Jews who still had their enthusiasm for Judaism and their Jewish identity lit in their hearts. But you have to work at keeping it switched on....”

“I guess you’re both right,” David decided, “I’ll try to be get more out of it. Actually, it is fun. I always like the singing at the end...”

“That’s my bro!” Sam slapped David on the back, just as they were entering the park. “Now, I’m sure your enthusiasm is burning **really** strong now for this game, so I’m gonna race you both to the football field!”

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