

Introduction

There is a mitzvah on the Seder night to recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Having recently completed observing the holiday of Purim, we are struck by the extraordinary contrast between Purim and Pesach, specifically in how they relate to the time honored tradition of “storytelling.” Megillas Esther is a dramatic account of the unfolding events that threatened the Persian Jewish community. Its sophisticated literary style builds characters, creates suspense, and introduces shocking twists and turns. Aside from being one of the revered Sifrei Tanach, it is a storytelling masterpiece. In sharp contrast, we encounter the Haggadah, our story guide on a night when we are commanded to relate our most formative national experience, and transmit that epic to the next generation. The Torah relates this incredible saga in all of its dramatic detail, and yet the construct of the Haggadah lacks even the most fundamental elements of a “great story.” It is a sophisticated collection of biblical interpretations, halachic symbols, imagery of praise, and ritual performance. With a night so devoted to transmitting this most sacred story, why isn’t it structured in a manner that relates the experience in a dramatic, clear, and profound way?

The answer can be found at the outset of the Haggadah, as we are introduced to the Arbah Banim. Tonight is not a ritual in storytelling — there is no megillah to read. Tonight is a night of Jewish education and inspiration. In that regard, to truly reach each and every child, Chazal provided not a text,

but a framework for the experience. Chazal understood that different types of children would require different approaches in absorbing the core elements of the *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim* experience. Therefore, the Haggadah is structured to provide the template for parents and educators to convey each and every aspect of *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim*. Yet it does not constrict that effort in a particular approach so we can indeed reach every child. To reach every child, we must understand their unique differences and form an individualized approach.

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In this edition of the Benjamin and Roser Berger *Torah To Go*, we turn to renowned educators to explore methodologies and approaches in relating to different types of children. It is our hope that these insights will provide us with perspectives and guidance for Seder night, and in how to reach these students throughout the year.

In the course of presenting the goals of this issue, we asked the authors of our section focusing on learning styles to have in mind the following questions (special thanks to Dr. Rona Novick, Dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration for her assistance in formulating these questions):

- What about the learner, the teacher, the material and/or the setting creates challenges and/or opportunities for each type of student?
- How do we respond *both* to those students at the marked extremes

(i.e. gifted, or struggling) without neglecting the student in the middle, the average learner?

- How much of students’ challenges do we believe are in their control, or are their responsibility to change?
- What are the best conditions under which each type of learner functions? What are their biggest challenges?
- What is our own personal learning profile, and how does that impact how we work with learners different from ourselves?
- Should/can our schools and educational programs meet the needs of all students, no matter how diverse?
- How can parents support their child — regardless of their learning profile?

Additionally, we are pleased to present a section that focuses on the methodology of teaching the Haggadah. The divrei Torah are geared toward specific age groups and the authors provide us with methodologies and techniques to convey these ideas.

This Pesach commemorates the 25th yahrtzeit of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, whom we know simply as “The Rav.” A few weeks later, we will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. To commemorate both events, we are presenting two articles dealing with The Rav’s thoughts on Religious Zionism. Additionally, the fellows at the YU Israel Kollel in Jerusalem share their reflections on the last seventy years, each covering one of the seven decades.

Wishing you a chag kasher v’sameach,



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