



Preparation for Pesach

Some points have been written in jest, the main focus is to understand the spirit of what can make a difference, and to adapt the preparations to suit all the participants of the Seder, and ensure a positive experience.

The points in this article are just ideas, and you may feel that some are more suitable than others, use them as you feel is appropriate for your specific situation.

We have all inherited the way we manage the 'Seder night' and for the most part it flows wonderfully, and all the participants of the 'Seder' come out of the experience uplifted and having fulfilled all the mitzvot of the Seder night with joy and satisfaction.

Some families have a child [age 9-99] who:

- 1) - is hungry even before the start of the onset of the Seder, or during the Seder, long before Shulchon-Oruch.
- 2) - has a gift called ADD or ADHD or are simply impatient, and it is difficult for him to focus for hours in any text ['Haggadah'].
- 3) - doesn't exactly understand the Haggadah with its many intricacies, and gets 'bored', and can cause him to start harassing the other participants.
- 4) - has a challenge 'waiting' idly, during the less essential ceremonies [such as multiple 'Mah-Nishtanahs' or the 'distribution of the karpas, matzah or moror, etc.] and can lose interest.
- 5) - is challenged by the obligation - as if there is one - to look inside the Haggadah for a long time.
- 6) - has a difficulty with 'uncertainty' [typical whilst negotiating the distribution of the Haggados or the arrangement of the seating, etc.].

It is very important to us that all those present on Seder night:

- 1) - will observe the mitzvah of 'Simcha' on Yom Tov (OC 529 2).
- 2) - will be happy to stay at the Seder table, to observe the many mitzvahs [don't forget that without the kids, the father cannot perform his mitzvah of v'hi'ga'de'ta le'bin'cha (Parashas Bo)].
- 3) - comes away with a positive experience [possibly making up for less positive ones of previous years].

Useful tried and tested 'segulas':

- 1) - try to get a rest in the afternoon [adults and children].
- 2) - to prepare plenty food that will be available from the afternoon of Erev-Pesach, until the end of the 'Seder' [and if a child sneaks into the kitchen in the middle of the Seder to taste the Yom Tov food ... take it as a compliment].
- 3) - to try and avoid guests that trigger your children negatively.
- 4) - to draw up a schedule [hang it up] that will include the expected and estimated time of: going to Shul / coming home from Shul – Kadesh / Mah-Nishtano / Rochtzo / Afikomen! / Bed time!
- 5) - to prepare a 'seating plan' in advance that will be agreed upon by all participants. [Don't forget that there are children for whom it is very important to sit on the right or left side of a certain leg of the table, and at the same time not to sit next to, opposite, or diagonally across from, a brother, sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law. There is always someone in the family who knows how to arrange family politics].
- 6) - to prepare the Haggados in advance for each of those present, and that everyone be satisfied with his haggadah, [size of the text, number of pages, type of pictures, etc.]
- 7) - to prepare – in advance – 5 bags for each person. (1) Matzah. (2) Matzah of Korech. (3) Moror. (4) Moror of Korech. (5) Afikomen. When people start heading to wash for Rochtzo, within a minute, 4 bags are distributed to each person [the bag of Afikomen is distributed at the end of Shulchon-Orech]. [Ask a Rabbi what is considered a 'ke'zayis' - it's a bit unfair that the kezayis of Karpas is so small but the kezayis of matzah is so big – so as not to impose unneeded chumros on those who find it difficult, such as swallowing a Chazon Ish size of two kezayis of matzah at

once after having chewed it for a maximum of 2 minutes].

- 8) - to prepare in advance 'cups' for 'plates' for everyone. Make sure that everyone is happy with the type and size of the cup, etc.
- 9) - to practice well before Pesach how to break a matzah into two – Yachatz - so that the ceremony does not have to last too long. It's a shame to lose them at the beginning.
- 10) - to buy gifts for everyone. (a) Before Yom Tov everyone [including the adults] will receive some kind of gift that will make them feel good already upon the onset of Yom Tov [especially the women who deserve a new piece of clothing]. (b) 'Afikomen' gifts, to 'everyone' [not only to those who 'stole' the afikomen], so that everyone will want to stay until the end.
- 11) - to prepare a small container with salt water and a karpas in it, for each place, [and don't forget a tiny little 'fork', then it will look really perfect]. Of course there will also be a large bowl with 'karpas' in the middle of the table for all the 'starving' participants [eating a kezayis or more is not an avairah!].

We will also try:

- 1) - to avoid any criticism, [not even to ourselves], to any of those present, no matter what! [And of course we will try not to get angry at all]. [Don't forget that there is no 'obligation' to sit with a 'hat and jacket' at the Seder table, etc.].
- 2) - to make sure that when the cups of wine spill it will not trigger us, [every home where wine is spilled and one doesn't get angry, gets special brochos (Taz OC 296 1)].
- 3) - not to get upset when a child get distracted and stops following inside the hagadah!

Magid

- 1) Regarding the 'speed' and 'length' of the 'magid', it is good to take into account the attention span of those at the table (OC 472 2, Mishna Berura 3, Shar Hatziyun 2). A shorter Magid with happy Children, is a worthwhile investment. We don't want the children to say 'dayno' even before they have fulfilled any of the mitzvot. [the wives will appreciate that their hard prepared food will get appreciated. Let's remember that to enjoy Shulcho Orech is a Biblical Mitzvah]. Whoever 'reads' the entire Maggid [and understands it, at least the main parts], has surely fulfilled the mitzvah of sipur yetzias mitzraim. You can add a bit of animation to the appropriate parts, and make comparisons to real life situations that compare to golus and geulah. [it is worth asking a rabbi what types of divrey Torah are considered Sipur Yetzias Metzraim so as not to lose precious time on and not fulfill the nights' duties].
- 2) that all the children will say Mah-Nishtano together once! [Many of them don't really know the difference between Mah Nishtano', 'Mo'oz Tzur' and 'Shoshans Yaakov'. [A child who insists, can say is themselves during Shulchon Orech].
- 3) to distribute sweets [candies – in the USA], or coupons [that can later be converted into some 'prize'], for every 'question' / good behavior. Remember; to be generous.
- 4) think before the Seder night what 'message' we want to convey, and focus on that for the duration of the 'Magid'. [it's worth giving a very short but concise introduction to each paragraph - age appropriate - so that everyone can understand what's going on. This could even be a halachic requirement].
- 5) Remember, the mitzvah is to let the fathers talk to their children not vice versa! The older more mature children can say their Divrey Torah during the many other Yom Tov meals. [Sometimes, on the contrary, asking a child to prepare something to say can encourage his involvement in the Seder].

We will try:

- 1) - to transmit 'calmness' and 'happiness' from the beginning of the Seder till the end!
- 2) - to make sure that every child comes away from the Seder feeling great and cherished. [Leaving our own personal Mitzraim and accepting the yoke of Torah and Mitzvot should make us feel positive]!

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