How to have a successful Pesah Seder?

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THE MISSION

Friday April 22 at night, and Saturday night April 23, will probably be the two most important nights of the year. During those nights we will fulfill a very special Mitsva: □□□□□ □□□□, teach our children the story of Pesah.

I think we need to define first our true role in the Pesah Seder. If I had to sum up this idea in one sentence, I would say: "In the Pesah Seder we are not going to *read* the Hagada, we are going to *teach* it." In those two nights, we parents become educators. In the following lines we will explore what can we do to capture the attention of our audience, and teach the Hagada at the Pesah Seder.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

My first recommendation is to divide the Hagada, so that everyone, children, family members and guests, participate of the Seder.

For that, we must do our homework NOW.

1. First we have to divide the Hagada into sections or texts, like, "Abadim hayinu", "The 4 sons," "The 10 Plagues", etc.
2. Once you divide the Hagada, you have to decide who can be the best candidate for each part of the Hagada. "Ma Nishtana" for example, is obviously a must for the kids. "The 4 sons" can be read, translated and / or explained by an adult. "The 10 plagues" can be played, etc.
3. Once we are clear about our strategy for the Seder we have to send an email, text or whatsapp to each family member and guests, and assign them each part of the Hagada we want them to read or explain.

For the adults, for example, you may want to ask them to prepare a paragraph of the Hagada in Hebrew and English, and briefly discuss some of the ideas of the text. We should recommend them to search material for these texts, asking Rabbis, Tora scholars, and / or searching ONLINE (BH tomorrow I will mention some recommended links). Apart from preparing the texts, adults can also present some interesting subjects

such as “Why do drink 4 glasses of wine?, Why do we eat reclined? What does the Haroset represent” ?. etc.
Young children should be asked to sing (and perhaps explain) parts of the Hagada that are usually sung as “Ma nishtana” or “Had Gadya”, etc. A good idea is to ask younger children, from 3 to 7 years old, to draw (before Pesah) some parts of the Hagada, bring their drawings to the Seder, and explain to their audience the significance of their artwork. This will make them feel very important.

THE SEDER MUST NOT BE BORING

Let us not forget the most important premise of tonight THAT CHILDREN SHOULD REMAIN AWAKE UNTIL THE END. We can ask older children to act and play certain parts of the Hagada, for example, the ten plagues. To make “visible” the 10 plagues we can bring plastic frogs, animal masks for beber, ping pong balls for “hail”, black sunglasses for “darkness”, etc.
We can also organize educational games for children, apart from Afiqoman, like a Pesah treasure hunt. But the game has to be brief and limited to the place where the Seder is taking place. I also recommend, especially when there are many children in the Seder, to have 20 simple questions and answers ready, with 20 small prizes, to reward the correct answers. Each time the Seder is about to spin out of control, or is getting bored, or when everyone’s attention is needed, you can ask one of those questions, showing the prize first. In that way you will regain control over the Seder whenever necessary. Examples of questions: “Who can say the 10 plagues? What was the name Moshe Rabbenu’s grandfather? Who can mention 3 foods that are Hamets?”

THE SECRET

I don’t think I need to tell you now what the secret of a successful Seder is. But, just in case you did not notice it, here it goes: *anticipation and preparation*. We cannot improvise and divide the texts at the Seder night, or expect our guests to participate in an intelligent way, spontaneously, without giving them time to prepare.
Start TODAY, divide the Seder, knowing in advance who will be your guests, divide the roles, organize the plays, the texts, the songs, ask the children to do the drawings, buy the ping-pong balls, etc. and write an email to your guests and family, describing their specific mission.

BH, we will continue tomorrow

If any readers has any other ideas to share, or a link with good educational materials on the Seder, please send it to "rabbibitton@yahoo.com"

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