More ideas and educational material for a succesful Seder

As we explained yesterday, our mission in the Seder night is to “teach” the Hagada, not only “read” it. To teach the Hagada, among other things, we must make the Hagada relevant, even for those of our guest who might be unfamiliar with Jewish history. We must show that the story of the Hagada is not part of a forgotten past, but surprisingly contemporary. With this idea in mind, we will analyze now a short passage from the Haggadah. This four words paragraph describe the strategy the Egyptians used to enslave us without any internal opposition.

The pasuq says: □□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ (Deut. 26: 6). Usually this verse is translated as “the Egyptians did bad to us”, in the sense of “they treated us badly”. But you should notice that this word yare’u is written in the Hif’il, a transitive verbal construction. When understood in this way, this word means: “And the Egyptians did US bad” , in other words, “they made us look bad”, or in just one word” They “demonized” us. As my son Ya’aqob writes in his commentary to the Hagada, Pharaoh “the dictator, singles out the People of Israel as an irrationally evil entity, who is to blame for all the misfortunes of this dictator’s subjects. The propaganda of Pharaoh is nonsensical. Basically, he tells his people: “The ‘other’, this People of Israel, is very cunning. We must be more cunning than they are. If not, then if and when we are attacked, the Israelites will join our enemies, out of sheer malice. Their goal in joining our enemies will be to harm us, nothing more. In fact, after they attack us, they will leave the land! “. ‘The Jews are bad’. They are irrationally bad, repeated Pharaoh numberless times… Pharaoh succeeded in eradicating the positive impression Joseph had left on Egypt just a few years ago. Without Joseph, Egyptians would have perished in the worst famine to have ever affected them. At the time, they acknowledged it: “you have saved our lives!”- they admitted to Joseph. But Jewish contributions to society

can be forgotten as swiftly as the time it takes for an irrational message of hatred to reach the ears of subjects in a dictatorial system. “

This phenomenon, demonization> anti-Semitism, was initiated by Pharaoh, but was repeated countless times. In 1492 Queen Isabella of Spain expelled the Jews , who had been so instrumental in making Spain prosperous, and who even helped the Queen in the war against the Mores. Before expelling the Jews, we were demonized throughout Europe, not only as “deicide” (murderers of a god) but also as poisoners of wells, usurers, and murderers of gentile children for ritual purposes, i.e. baking Matsot with gentile blood …

In 1506, in Lisbon, Portugal there was a great drought. And the crowd blamed the Jews for the drought. More than 2,000 Jews were tortured and massacred “for causing the drought.” Unfortunately, the list of episodes of this sort is very, very long. And unfortunately, it did not end there in the Sixteenth Century. Just look at the website: www.memritv.org , and you will see that in the Arab world, Jews are still demonized and accused of all the world’s ills. Here is an example.

Today, this demonization is systematically applied against the State of Israel, which is the “Jew” among the nations of the earth”. Israel is vilified, and falsely accused of all imaginary evils. The rise of anti-Zionism in the world is not, as is often rationalized, the consequence of the “demonic” actions of the State of Israel, rather, anti-Semitism is the cause of the systematic demonization of the State of Israel.

As the reader will appreciate, the subjects and ideas of the Hagada, besides describing our history, are absolutely current and relevant. This was just one example.

Now, when you explain the Hagada and its historical events, do not forget that the main message of Pesah, is to strengthen our faith in HaShem (Emuna). Despite the demonization, slavery and tortures we suffered, HaShem protected us, saved us from enemies more powerful than us, and rescued us with great miracles. It is true that in every generation a new enemy comes to wipe us off the map. But HaShem rescues us, He saves us from their hands. HaShem is “the main protagonist” of the Seder night. And that’s why the Hagada does not mention Moshe, lest anyone think that a human being saved us and freed us from Egypt but Him.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE SEDER

√ To find games for children, including a huge list of questions for Pesah you can visit this website.

√ For a beautiful idea to cross the sea at the Seder, and other creative way to make your children enjoy the most special night of the year, see here what Mr Raymond Kassin emailed me yesterday. Thank you.

√ Rabbi David Sutton of New York, sent me his Hagada companion in English, which emphasizes our duty to strengthen our Emuna . See here

√ For more advanced students, I recommend this fantastic commentary on the Haggadah written by Rabbi Don Ytsjaq Abarbanel (1437-1508). See here . This Haggadah begins with 100 questions, or discussion topics (she'arim), which are solved or addressed throughout his commentary. Do not miss the introduction, where Rabbi Abarbanel tells his incredible (and tragic) personal history.

√ Recommended Hagada 5777: See this Hagada from rabbi Israel Yaaqob Algazi (1680-1757). See how he explains in Ha Lahma Anya our obligation to be kind and generous with the needy as He was with us when he took us out of Egypt.