

The Not-So-Simple Child

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel

The Passover Haggadah presents a dramatic format for dealing with questions relating to religious observance. It presents four children, representing different attitudes toward Jewish belief and ritual, along with the framework for how to answer each of the questioners.

The "rasha" (wicked child) is antagonistic to Jewish tradition. He/she does not feel part of it, and asks: what's the point of all this ritual? Why do you do these things? The Haggadah realizes that there is little to be gained by entering into argument with such a person, or to try to convince the "rasha" through logical discussion. Rather, the Haggadah provides a different kind of response: I do these things because God brought ME out of Egypt. I will not debate with you; but I will tell you why this is so meaningful to me. Through my personal testimony, perhaps you will get a sense of why Jewish belief and observance are so significant and meaningful.

The child "who does not know how to ask" (every child knows how to ask

questions!) is one who is so uninterested in Judaism that he/she isn't even curious enough to ask a question. The response is identical to the response given to the "rasha"--I give my personal testimony of why being Jewish is so important and meaningful, of what the laws and traditions mean to me. If I can give an enthusiastic and sincere story of my own commitment, perhaps the child's interest will be aroused.

The "hakham" (wise child) asks about the laws. He/she accepts Judaism and wants to know every detail of the halakha. The response is: we teach this child all the laws and customs. The "tam" (simple or naive child) asks: what is this? We answer: Because with a mighty hand God took us out of Egypt. There seems to be a disconnect here. How is this response relevant to the question? How does it help the child understand what is transpiring at the Seder, or the broader issue of what is the meaning or purpose of religious observance altogether.

I think we need to re-examine the question and answer relating to the "tam". Although "tam" is usually translated as "simple" or

"naive", the word also has a much different meaning. It means pure, unblemished, whole. Our forefather Jacob is described as being "tam" and so is Job. Noah is called "tamim", from the same root. The "tam" of the Haggadah isn't simple at all, but is actually the most profound of the four children.

The "tam" accepts Jewish belief and ritual, but his/her question isn't about what to do--but about why. The "tam", in search of wholeness, is not satisfied with an intellectual discussion of the laws and customs. The "tam" wants to understand how these laws and customs increase one's closeness to God, how they enhance spirituality. The "tam" is saying: yes, I'll do what the religion requires, but I need something more. I need to know the inner spirit of what the religion demands of me.

The response is: if you are seeking the inner meaning and you want to deepen your spirituality, then you need to understand: God is great, God is a presence in our lives, God's mighty hand took us out of Egypt, God's mighty hand continues to play a role in our lives today. The laws and traditions of Judaism aim at one thing: to bring us

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Prayer Schedule

PESAH

SHABBAT

Friday, April 22nd

Shaharit 6:30 am

Minhah & Arvit 6:30 pm

Candle Lighting 7:11 pm

Saturday, April 23rd

Shaharit 8:30 am

Tehillim 6:00 pm

Minhah & Arvit 6:30 pm

Motzei Shabbat 8:15 pm

EREV YOM TOV

7th Night / Sunday, April 24th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Birkat Ha'Ilanot Trip to

Underwood Farms

Meet at the farm 11:00 am

Minha and Arvit 6:30 pm

Light Candles 7:13 pm

8th Night / Monday, April 25th

Shaharit 9:00 am

Maschiach, Part I: A Class

with Rabbi Batzri 6:00 pm

Minha and Arvit 7:00 pm

Light Candles after 8:17 pm

8th Day / Tuesday, April 26th

Shaharit 9:00 am

Maschiach, Part II: A Class

with Rabbi Batzri 6:00 pm

Minha and Arvit 7:00 pm

Havdallah 8:18 pm

TALMUD TORAH PESAH BREAK

Mon., April 18 to Fri., April 29

Wednesday-Friday

Shaharit 6:30 am

EREV SHABBAT

Friday, April 29th

Shaharit 6:30 am

Minhah & Arvit 6:30 pm

Candle Lighting 7:16 pm

Torah Readings

Parasha 362-367, 695-696

Haftara 1015-1016

closer to God. Every time we perform a mitzvah, we bring God into our consciousness and into our lives. The more connected we are with God's presence, the deeper and more meaningful are our lives. If we will develop our spiritual natures, we will be better, happier and wiser people. God's mighty hand is reaching out to us every moment of every day.

The Kotzker Rebbe once said: When a person needs to cry, when a person wants to cry--but cannot cry: that is the most heart-rending cry of all. When a person feels the deep need to cry out, but is emotionally stifled--the person's life is not "whole". I would paraphrase the Kotzker Rebbe's words: When a person needs to feel close to God, when a person wants to feel close to God--but cannot feel close to God: that is the most heart-rending feeling of all. This is dilemma raised by the "tam": We are living at a time of spiritual malaise, of "existential vacuum", of "spiritual homelessness". I want to feel close to God--but I feel distant from God. How can I come closer? How can I achieve spiritual wholeness?

The answer: remember always that God is a presence in our lives. Every mitzvah is an entry point to a deeper spiritual awareness. Take time to think quietly and alone. You can open your heart and emotion and intellect. You can cry out. You can feel God's closeness. If you will open yourself to spiritual growth, you will find the redemption and wisdom that you seek.

For us to be able to respond to the four types of "children", we ourselves need to have the

Community News

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in memory of

Yehezkel ben Avraham Tizabi, z"l

by Laleh & Joseph Tizabi
and Family

SHABBAT MITZVOT

We offer for donation the following Mitzvot.

1. Petichat Hechal opening of the ark; **2. Carrying of the Sefer Torah & Sefer Haftara**; **3. Hakamat Sefer** lifting of the Torah; **4. Mashlim*** The seventh aliya to the Torah who recites Kaddish; **5. Mafir*** The last aliya to the Torah which includes the Haftara (read by the clergy unless member reading is preapproved). We suggest a minimum donation of \$126 or multiples of \$18 or \$26. You will receive confirmation before Shabbat to confirm if you will receive the aliya. Members may reserve in advance by calling the office. Non-members reserving aliyot should contact the office for availability at 310.474.0559. We appreciate your support.

commitment, knowledge, sincerity and integrity to give authentic answers. We need to understand the nature of the questions--and the questioners. We need to make our case honestly and powerfully. We need to explain the laws and traditions. Perhaps most importantly, we need to know how to respond to the "tam"--the person seeking religious wholeness, spiritual fulfillment, intellectual purity.

We need to reflect not only on "what", but on "why".
Shabbat Shalom & Hag Sameah

In Memoriam

It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and to donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend prayer services in honor of loved ones.

Monday / 21 Nisan

Ester bat Batia
Hanini Horesh Suleiman

Tuesday / 22 Nisan

Eliyahu ben Ezra Avraham Hayim

*To update, please call the office
at 310.474.0559.*

Refuah Shlemah

Yonatan ben Alizah • Mazal Tov bat Sulha Mitana • Matilda Louisa • Yaheskel ben Regina • Ayala bat Naomi • Khayah Noa bat Sara • Haim ben Mordechai • Pnina bat Esther • Yosi ben Esther • Victor ben Latif • Ramah Regina bat Farha • Aziza bat Sara Judith bat Malka • Ofek ben Yochai • Efrayim Zev ben Fayga • Sulha Matana bat Mozelle • Gershon ben David • Farangis Miriam bat Touran • David ben Leah • Avraham Haim ben Miryam • Yaakov ben Freda • Rachel bat Mazal Tov • Avraham ben Rabbie • Mazal Sigalit bat Rivkah • Orit bat Tikvah • Yaakov ben Aliyah • Chana Leah bat Reiza • Victoria Cohen • Avraham Moshe ben Miriam

Save the Date!

May 14, 2011



Shabbat Kahol Lavan Israel Independence Day

*Wear Blue and White for our
Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebration*

- Remarks from the Israeli Consulate and Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC
- Beautiful Prayers and Israeli Songs with Rabbi Hagay Baztri
- Festive Kiddush w/Israeli Food

*Kahal Joseph in collaboration with
the Sephardic Educational Center*