



## RABBI SHALOM Z. BERGER, ED.D.

English Language Programming Coordinator at  
Herzog College

# The Mitzvah of Intergenerational Connections

Intergenerational connections are integral to Judaism and central to our Pesach traditions. Commenting on verses in Devarim, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches (Kiddushin 30a) that when a grandparent studies Torah with their grandchild, it is as though they received it from Mount Sinai. The experience of handing a tradition of belief from one generation to another is presented by the Kuzari as the strongest proof we have of Matan Torah.

The reverence that we have for our elders, whose knowledge and life experience is so important to us, has made this past year so difficult. Many families have suffered the loss of elderly loved ones, and the Jewish people as a whole has been devastated by the passing of so many significant teachers and mentors.

Two individuals with whom I had personal connections were among them, and I

would like to share some of their thoughts about the importance of intergenerational learning and about our current reality.

I first met Rav Adin Steinsaltz z”l when I became involved in his effort to open the library of Jewish knowledge to a wider English speaking audience. I began writing a short essay in English on every page of Gemara (accessible as “On Today’s Daf” at [www.steinsaltz.org](http://www.steinsaltz.org)), and I became Senior Content Editor of the Koren-Steinsaltz English Talmud. Every meeting with Rav Steinsaltz was an experience of joy and learning, as he laid out his vision to impact all Jews through his work. Here is his view of the Pesach Seder and its purpose:

*The Passover seder is in general an act of transferring memory from the older generation to the younger one, but its main emphasis is on the children. The Haggada is oriented first and foremost toward children; its very name, which literally means “telling,” refers to the act of telling our national-historical narrative to our descendants, as it says, “And you shall tell (vehiggadeta) your child” (Exodus 13:8).*

רפואה שלמה  
יהודה מאיר בן יקירה  
צפורה בת שרה  
אפרים אברהם בן רבקה

*The text of the Haggada, like its content, is quite largely influenced by this overarching purpose.*

*In light of this emphasis, the tendency to seat the children at the seder table, immaculately groomed and completely silent throughout the evening, besides being undoubtedly unpleasant for the children, completely misses the original point of the seder. The children are not merely after-thoughts to the grand scheme of the seder; they are the seder's chief intended audience.*

*From: "The Steinsaltz Passover Haggada"*

Although I had met Rabbi Norman Lamm z"l when I was a student at Yeshiva University, my personal relationship with him came at a later stage in his life, when my son married his granddaughter. I was privileged to witness the love and wisdom with which he and his wife Mindel z"l raised their family.

Rabbi Lamm's sermons and teachings are now in the public domain, and it is amazing that his insights, spoken decades ago, remain so pertinent and meaningful in the current age. His thoughts about one of the Ten Plagues ring particularly true:

*The darkness imposed a rigid and horrifying isolation upon the Egyptians. They did not see one another. All communication between a person and his friends ceased. He had no family, no friends, no society. How lonely! What a plague!*

*Darkness can indeed be a plague, but the same darkness can be a blessing, for solitude means privacy, the precious opportunity when one escapes from the loud*

*brawl of life and the constant chatter and claims of society, into the intimate seclusion of one's own soul and heart, and he gets to know himself and realize that he is made in the image of God. Loneliness can be painful, but it can also be precious.*

*We ought to seek opportunities for this solitude of contemplation whenever and wherever we can. The Egyptians made of it a plague of isolation, an inability to see one's fellow, a picture-window through which others can look but be blind to them. However, we can make of this solitude an atmosphere of holiness, a creative opportunity to discover ourselves and the voice of God that speaks to us, a window which does not allow others to peer within but which enables us to see our fellow man and be with him. May we learn to make use of that darkness and bring great light into the lives of all of us.*

*From: "The Royal Table Passover Haggadah"*

Once again this Pesach, many grandparents will spend Seder night without their families. It is more important than ever to find ways to connect with our grandchildren through Torah study – whether in person or virtually.

Wishing all of us a Pesach filled with passing on our traditions. ■

**All your jewelry needs in one place!**

A 5th generation skilled craftsman will fix, refurbish, polish or restore your family heirlooms, Kiddush cups, candlesticks, and any gold/silver jewelry · Deliveries directly to/from your home in Jerusalem area

**Details: Santo - 052-228-9627**