



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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As we begin to look ahead toward *Layl HaSeder* next week, my daughter has already started to hint at potential *Afikoman* presents. Indeed on the *Seder* night, many have the custom that the *Afikoman* is hidden for the children to find, or to take it and “steal it” in exchange for a finder’s fee or a present upon its return.

Considering that the entire experience of *Layl HaSeder* is designed to engage and teach our children, one must ask, what are we teaching our children with this custom of hiding the *Afikoman*? How is it that we encourage our children to either steal this half piece of *Matza* or hold it hostage in exchange for a prize?

The *Ateret Yehoshua*, the *Rebbe of Dzhikov, zy’a*, suggests that the source of this custom is actually the challenging biblical account of *Rivka Imeinu*, who disguised her son *Yaakov* as his older brother *Eisav*, in order to seemingly deceive an elderly and frail *Yitzchak* to bestow upon *Yaakov* the blessings of the first born.

What is the significance of this troubling episode? How could it be that *Yaakov Avinu* would come to receive these blessings in such a way? How could it be that *Rivka* would facilitate this entire episode?

In the subsequent *pesukim*, *Eisav* approaches his father, having prepared his favorite foods, in anticipation that his father will indeed bless him, he is shocked to hear *Yitzchak*’s reply:

“*Ba Achicha B’Mirma*, *vayikach birchatecha*.” Your Brother came cunningly, and took your blessing. “

The *Ateret Yehoshua* offers a fascinating insight- the word *B’mirma* is equal in numerical value to the word *afikoman*.

When *Eisav* approaches his father with this meal, *Yitzchak* answers him that it is *Pesach* night, and I have already eaten a meal which your brother served me, which included the *Afikoman*- I therefore am no longer allowed to eat from your meal, as one is prohibited to eat any additional food on *Pesach* night, once they have consumed the *Afikoman*.

This novel approach of course takes into account the midrashic suggestion that each of the *Avot* fulfilled the entire *Torah* through *ruach hakodesh*, even though they had not received the *Torah* and were not commanded to do so.

On the *Seder* night, the *matza* which is set aside as the *Afikoman*, is one half of the *matza* which is broken for *Yachatz*, at the beginning of the *Seder*. *Yachatz*, is an acronym for the words: *Yadav, Chelkat Tzavarav*- his hands and the smooth of his neck- a reference to the parts of *Yaakov*’s body, which *Rivka* covered with fur



Mazal Tov to
David & Cookie Klaran
and family on the birth of a granddaughter



to disguise him as *Eisav!*

So what are we to learn from both this episode of disguise and deception, as well as its connection to the *Afikoman of Layl HaSeder*?

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger *shlita* points out that there is an important message hidden within this custom. *Yaakov Avinu*, the ultimate *Ish Emet*, did not feel it was right for him to receive the blessing, he was not the *bechor* and therefore did not see himself as deserving to be blessed accordingly. *Rivka Imeinu*, encouraged *Yaakov*, to step out of his comfort zone, and recognize that indeed he was deserving, and to have the courage to come forward and grab hold of that which he truly deserved!

So too, many of us may feel that we are unworthy or not deserving to learn the depths of *Torah*, to delve into *penimiut hatorah*- the inner secrets of *Torah*. Rabbi Weinberger suggests that on the *Layl HaSeder*, we too must step out of our comfort zone like *Yaakov Avinu* and hide or steal the *Afikoman*, to realize that yes we too, are worthy to learn the secrets of *Torah*.

Yehi Ratzon as we begin to look ahead and prepare for the awesome celebration of freedom which is part and parcel of the entire experience of *Layl HaSeder*, may we indeed be blessed to rid ourselves of the shackles of insecurity which may enslave us, and may we merit to have the courage and confidence to serve *Hashem* as we are truly meant to.... ■

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