



RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"l

ORTHODOX
UNION
Enhancing Jewish Life

To Perpetuate Faith, There Is No Place Like Home

Originally published on Fox News

Our son first met his distant cousin when they were both students in an advanced Jewish studies program overseas. Walking home from their study hall together in the last days of winter, they began to compare notes on how their fathers would conduct the Passover seder. They were shocked to discover that their long-separated families chanted much of the Passover Haggadah, the story recited during the festive meal, to identical beautiful but obscure tunes. Though their great grandfathers had been driven apart by world wars and forced emigration more than a century earlier, not only their faith but even the shared religious flavor and music of their family home was alive and well four generations later.

As remarkable as this is, it is not unusual. It is why Jews everywhere will put such emphasis on gathering their families around their seder tables this Passover, knowing that it is around those tables that

they will forge the ties of their children to the faith they so cherish. This assumption is woven into the Passover narrative itself, as the seder commemorates the night before Moses led the Jews out of Egypt. Instead of departing the land directly from the fields and construction sites where they had labored, God insisted that they first spend that entire night in their family homes where they could reconnect to both family and faith as they offered and partook in a meal of a sacrificed lamb or goat. It was in their homes around the renewed family table that they would find God and God would find them. The home – not the Temple or the synagogue – was the setting in which the foundations of faith were laid and it is the setting we replicate each year in our desire to perpetuate that faith, to ensure that future generations continue the tradition.

What does the future hold for our tradition and religion in general in America? This haunting question gnaws at clergy and parents across faith communities. Studies continue to show serious rates of decline in attendance at religious services across many faiths and denominations. Even the steadying of this decline found in

**Condolences to Pesach Derdiger
and family on the passing of his**

MOTHER a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

the recent Pew Religious Landscape Study is obviously short term, as that data shows overwhelming gaps in religious observance between younger and older Americans. How do we address this decline?

Much can and must be accomplished with engaging and relevant religious services, programs, and teachings and by truly compassionate, moral, and inspiring faith leaders. Clergy and institutions cannot allow themselves to become or remain stale and must instead promote the truths and traditions of faith along with fresh and compelling ideas and experiences. But – as decades of research have shown – an even more impactful predictor of our children's religious future is the extent to which we weave our faith into the fabric and atmosphere of our homes and families.

This was underscored by a recent qualitative study conducted by the Center for Communal Research of the Orthodox Union exploring attrition and connection in American Orthodox Judaism that discovered that even amongst those who reported that they had left Orthodox Judaism, most continued to maintain the rituals, traditions, and practices they observed at home, towards which they maintained warm and fond feelings. For example, those who violate Orthodox norms of the Sabbath by driving or using their phones continue to recite the Friday night blessings over wine and challah bread, or to hold a Passover seder meal. The extent to which connection is forged at home should lead parents to ensure that their religious home life is warm, full, and meaningful and that it leaves their children with positive associations that fortify religious bonds.

Houses of worship, religious schools and institutions play a crucial role in building faith communities, creating the enduring framework for worship and conveying religion's fundamental truths, but the most consequential houses of faith are our own homes. An ancient Talmudic teaching notes that the Temple altar of days bygone has been replaced by the dining room table around which family and others are welcomed and cared for, where we sing the praises of God and the joys of our faith, and where the table talk teaches and explores Torah and its values. That is our seder table, our family table, where – if we play it right – we will plant the seeds for the perpetuation of our faith and the faith of our fathers and where the songs of faith that we sing today will resonate for generations. ■

This is the final piece that we will be publishing from Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l. The pieces shared over the past months were drawn mostly from pieces that were previously unpublished. This final piece is one that captures ideas that were near and dear to Rabbi Hauer – the central role that family plays in the development of faith. May we be inspired by his words and actions and perpetuate his legacy. Yehi zichro Baruch.

JUST CALL SHMUEL
שמואל עושה הכל

DOG WALKER + LOCKSMITH + CATERING
MOVING COMPANY + EXTERMINATOR + USED CARS

"If Shmuel can't do it, it probably doesn't need to be done!"
— Shira K. Kalamon ★★★★★

✉ justcallshmuel@proton.me