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The Seder: The Question is the Answer

At the time of this writing Am Yisrael is at war. The State of Israel in Eretz Yisrael is valiantly defeating the enemy under the watchful eye and direction of The Shomer Yisrael. As well, the Torah that we read, learn, live and love is the real answer to the antisemitism that we experience world wide.

Ask anyone what piece of art comes to mind when they think of Leonardo De Vinci or one of the Renaissance Masters invariably it will be the Mona Lisa painted in 1515 and it only became famous 400 years later when it was found missing from its place in a French museum. An Italian handyman, Vincenzo Peruggia stole it. Twenty six hours later it was discovered missing. By the time the thief was found, the painting was major news. The only reason Peruggia chose the Mona Lisa was because it was unknown and its loss would not be discovered so quickly. The missing Mona Lisa became famous through its absence.

By the time the Pesach Haggada became the central text of the Seder, Moshe was already the most famous man who ever lived on the planet. In fact it was largely the events described in the Haggada which made him famous. From Egyptian

bondage to the receiving of the Torah at Har Sinai continuing with the journey through the desert towards Eretz Yisrael, Moshe led the way.

This begs the question that has been asked by countless commentaries , why is Moshe's name absent from the Haggada? His name does appear once in a pasuk, but interestingly that very verse does not even appear in the Rambam's Haggada!

Moshe about whom the Gemarah (Sota 136) comments “Moshe did not die... just as he served Hashem in his lifetime, so does He serve Him now” is missing from the Haggada.

Rabbi Soloveitchik records his childhood frustration about the missing Moshe.

“Moshe's name was eliminated from the pages of the Haggada as if he had never existed. As a small child, I asked why Moshe is not mentioned in the Haggada, and the answers my father gave me - which were similar to the explanation I have given here , - were futile. Simply, I cried. Finally, my father, in order to placate me, found the name of Moshe in the Haggada. It is not in the Haggada proper but in a proof text: “They believed in the L-rd and in His servant Moshe (Shmot 14:31). This calmed my

mind somewhat but I still felt that we were committing an injustice against Moshe” (Shiurei l’ Zecher Avi Mori)

In fact the Vilna Gaon in his comments on the Haggada clarifies that this very verse is making it clear that the story is about the Almighty (with the assistance of Moshe). **The redemption of the Jewish People was not Moshe the man but Hakadosh Baruch Hu.**

There are three historical facts recorded in the Torah that will perhaps provide us with some direction in answering the question. Firstly Moshe died and secondly Moshe did not enter Eretz Yisrael. Moshe (at least physically) did in fact die and was buried and finally Yehoshua replaced him.

The Seder experience of Sipur Yetziat Mitzrayim is not simply a history lesson between parents and children. It is among other things a Leadership Training Program. The central motif of the child – parent moment is formed as questions and answers (The Four Questions).

But more, the Rambam instructs us to perform certain rituals in order to evoke a question from the children. Well known is the instruction to remove the Seder plate from the table and then return it. “In order for the children to ask”. How does this dialogue go?

Question “Abba why did Imma take the Seder plate into the kitchen?”

Answer “Excellent! So you would ask the question”.

Clearly absurd.

Derech Sh’eila UTeshuva is about encouraging the child to question. It is about developing a curious, questioning child.

As previously mentioned, the Rambam insists that the mitzva of Sippur Yitziat Mitzraim has to be in the form of questions and answers because it is designed to encourage independent thinking. **In fact of the four sons in the Haggada the קטן child is not called the katan but the אינו יודע לשאול "the one who does not know how to ask a question" is the true definition of a child .**

Isadore Rabi was an American nuclear physicist who received the Nobel Prize in 1944 for his breakthrough with magnetic resonance (microwave ovens!). Yitzhak was the child of Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side of New York. When he received the Nobel Prize he spoke about his mother and her role in his achievements and of all immigrant parents who dreamed about the future educational achievements of their children in the New World they would say to them when they came home each day from school. “What did you learn today? **My mother every day that I came home from school had a different approach “Yitzchak, did you ask a good question today?”**”

Paroah’s daughter Bitya set the stage for Yocheved to nurse baby Moshe. Rashi comments that because Moshe would one day speak with the Almighty he exclusively had to be nursed by a Jewish woman. The Shulchan Arusha codifies the preference of a Jewish nursemaid for all Jewish children.

The Vilna Gaon comments that this halacha is based on the baby Moshe story. Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky considers that this is not a logical conclusion. Moshe would eventually speak directly

with Hashem. What does that have to do with future generations of Jewish children? Majestically, Rabbi Yaakov explains that Rashi's comment does in fact apply to every Jewish child. Who knows which child will grow up to in fact, converse with the Almighty . In raising and educating our children we must strive for excellence.

The Seder conversation between parents and children is the opportunity to inspire them.

Moshe is purposely removed from the Haggada to ensure that the next generation of Jews will continue the work of Moshe. Learning and teaching **Torat Moshe**, engaging in leadership positions as Rabbis, teachers, lay leaders or Torah conversant parents.

The Seder conversation is designed to bring out the best in our children. Self confidence and commitment to continue **the Mesora of Torat Moshe**. To realize that Moshe Rabeinu may no longer be here physically, but we have the ability and responsibility to be "Moshe" Jews. To continue his spiritual legacy which is very much present.

This is the meaning of Chazal's statement that Moshe did not die. His spirit resides in every generation. **Moshe's absence from the Haggada is perhaps his greatest contribution to the Haggada experience.** ■

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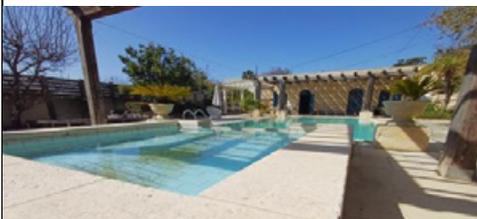
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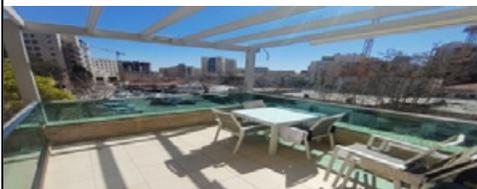
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