

## The Passing of Rabbi Kanievski ל"קצוק, 'Chinuch Moments' and Preparing for Pesach

Dear Parents,

How should we respond to the petiro, the passing from this world, of the Gadol HaDor, the greatest Torah scholar and Torah leader of our generation?

Now that question needs to be addressed in different ways:

1. How should we, personally, as adults, respond to such an event?
2. How do we address this with our children? How do we explain it to *them*?

The first question really means, how is this going to impact on my own life?

The second question needs to be broken down:

- a. what does it mean when we describe someone as the Gadol HaDor?

We need to explain this because until our children understand what 'Gadol HaDor' means, they certainly won't be able to grasp what it is to lose one.

b. and then, once we have explained the concept of 'Gadol HaDor' we don't dive into talking about losing one but rather first we have to address what it means to have a Gadol HaDor in the world in the first place. How does the Jewish nation benefit from his presence and his influence over the whole generation?

c. and once we have explained what the Gadol HaDor is, our children will, we hope, have some chance of understanding what it is to lose one, what a tragedy that is for Jews everywhere.

Now, that might be where a lot of people would stop – which is to say, at the point where they have explained how sad everyone is and what a terrible loss this is to the whole generation.

But that's certainly not appropriate – what have we really gained from simply telling our children how sad they have to be? In terms of what good Chinuch demands of us, until this point in our conversation with our children, what have we said that will constitute positive and constructive guidance for their lives as Jews?

No, we have to very quickly move from the doom and gloom and turn the event into a powerful Chinuch opportunity – in fact, I would suggest that *every major event* is a powerful Chinuch opportunity (and that includes things happening in the wider world, too).

The point at which this discussion really gets going is where we guide our children to see *everything* through Torah spectacles, through Torah lenses. What I mean by that is, we need to train them to appreciate that *the Torah requires them to respond in a Torah way to everything that they encounter in their lives.* And this is true right across a wide spectrum.

At one end of this spectrum, for example, might be a situation where your daughter realises she has been given too much change; does she keep the money? Does she return it? Does your daughter

naturally think about questions of ‘Yashrus’ – doing the right thing? Is she ever-conscious of her responsibility to act in a way that brings about a ‘Kiddush Hashem’?

And at the other end of the spectrum might be the question of how your son is going to look through his Torah lenses at events in Ukraine, or at questions of Climate Change; and then how does he think he should respond personally to such issues? Is he going to raise tzedokoh to help those fleeing from Ukraine? Does he think the Torah requires him to recycle paper goods and avoid buying plastic straws?

And so, ‘lehavdil,’ back to the passing of the Gadol HaDor. Tell your children to put on their Torah spectacles and suggest appropriate responses.

You could get them started with a few suggestions: perhaps to begin saying brochos more carefully, or even saying brochos more often that they know they should be saying but aren’t always careful to do so; could they give more tzedokoh...or *some* tzedokoh, or begin to actively create opportunities to do chessed; or they might decide to begin behaving more respectfully to others, and so on.

But perhaps more powerful than offering suggestions for your children’s responses... instead tell them what *you, yourself* have decided to do in response to the news.

Now this brings our two questions together, so that they merge into this two part question:

**“How am I going to respond to the news of the Gadol HaDor’s passing, and thereby inspire my children to respond as well. How am I going to lead my family in responding to this major event for Klal Yisroel?”**

Perhaps you will share with your children that you are going to try to attend an additional shiur; or you’ve been meaning to volunteer for Gift or some other charitable organisation and have decided now is the time; or perhaps you have realised there’s not enough Torah speak around the Shabbos table, or that you haven’t been encouraging the singing of Zemiros; maybe you’ve decided it’s time that the family begins working harder on avoiding Loshon Hora...

And so, by showing that you have already been reflecting on this yourself, your children may well be inspired to do a little reflecting of their own.

*But the point is this:* regardless of whether our children do actually respond in some proactive way, if they hear us making our commitments and then see us following them through, we have taken advantage of a significant Chinuch opportunity, a big Chinuch moment, and the effect on our children is likely to be powerful and enduring.

So look out for those Chinuch moments. Because one day, once they have left home, there’s no greater Yiddische nachas than hearing your grown-up child tell you: *“I wondered what I should do, and then I did X because I knew that’s what you would have done.”*

As Rabbi Sacks ztz”l wrote:

*“You achieve immortality not by building pyramids or statues – but by engraving your values on the hearts of your children, and they on theirs, so that our ancestors live on in us and we in our children, and so on until the end of time.”* The Chief Rabbi’s Haggadah (Essays), p. 14

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Now that we have discussed taking advantage of important 'Chinuch moments' – we should note that Pesach, with its Seder Nights – or one Seder, of course, in Eretz Yisrael – provides us with one of the most important Chinuch opportunities in the whole year.

The words "Vehigadto Levincho" give us the mitzvah to engage with our children in the annual Chinuch experience par excellence - the Pesach Seder. The Seder is all about immersing ourselves and our children in the deepest, most impactful form of learning about Torah and our heritage.

But in order to be really well equipped for leading the Seder and teaching our children about Yetzias Mitzrayim – the Exodus – and the mitzvos of the night, we actually need to start thinking, planning and preparing early.

Now I'm not going to say any more at this point. Instead, I'm going to hand you over to **Rabbi Moshe Hauer**, Executive Vice president of the Orthodox Union in America. Rabbi Hauer gives us some wonderful guidance in the form of personal ideas from his own Seder. Simply search for "*Rabbi Moshe Hauer, My Table is an Embassy of My Father's.*"

I'm sure you'll enjoy what he has to say.

But watch it right through, because there are some beautiful, personal insights here.

Thank you, and...

Behatzlochoh!

J. Richards

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