

## Day to Day

## Seeach Sod - Enabling Those With Disabilities to Experience Torah

All of the *neshamos* of *Am Yisrael* stood at Har Sinai. Seeach Sod ensures that all of those *neshamos* are given an equal opportunity to lead meaningful Jewish lives. The organization helps over 1,000 children and adults with disabilities experience Torah and *mitzvos* to the very best of their abilities.

Thanks to a greater awareness of disability issues, there are many organizations that help provide support and developmental therapies for people with disabilities. However, they place less of an emphasis on the *spiritual* development of these individuals. For Seeach Sod, the spiritual needs of their participants are as important as their physical and educational needs.

Rabbi Shimon Levy, Seeach Sod CEO, summed up their approach: "Our goal is to give each and every child the feeling that they are no different from any other. We do this by enabling each child to go through the same experiences as his or her counter peers."

As Shavuot approaches, Seeach Sod is busy preparing for the holiday. Rav Yosef Lindner, the *Mashgiach* at Otzar Yerushalayim, Seeach Sod's yeshivah, said, "Around Shavuot time we make a special effort to make the learning fun and experiential. We use music and bring in special speakers and actors."

Like students in the regular education system, the Seeach Sod kids gain a great sense of Jewish identity throughout

the holidays. "The students really enjoy these activities, and through them gain an understanding of Shavuot and a sense of enthusiasm for the *chag*, like all other students in mainstream education," said Rav Lindner. "That is really what I see my role as: To make our students at Seeach Sod feel as normal and regular as possible."

The adult men have special Erev Shavuot father and son learning sessions (like Avos Ubanim). These learning sessions bring many blessings. Not only do they help Seeach Sod participants prepare for the holiday, they also give participants the pride of learning Torah like other people and create a close bond between father and son. Parents have said they find these learning sessions very moving and that they help them build positive relationships with their children.

The boys in the yeshivah program also have regular *chavrusa* learning with *talmidim* from the yeshivos of Belz and Gur. In preparation for Shavuot, they learn *Mishnah*, *Gemara*, and *halachos* relating to Shavuot and *Mattan Torah*.

Another enjoyable activity that takes place at Seeach Sod to prepare the younger students in the Talmud Torah for Shavuot is a mock *hachnasas sefer Torah*. As well as bringing them into the atmosphere of Shavuot, it also emphasizes the *kedushah* of the Torah. Meanwhile, the teenage and



adult women at Seeach Sod are busy preparing for Shavuot months in advance. As part of their vocational program, the women create beautiful "flower" arrangements made from scented soaps, which they themselves sell in malls and shopping centers. The women gain tremendously from this activity, which gives them the dignity of earning a living, a social peer group, and the satisfaction of seeing happy customers buying their stunning arrangements.

Every department within Seeach Sod tries to incorporate the holidays into their activity. For example, the home economics lessons are related to the upcoming *chag*. For Shavuot, the students learn how to make cheesecake, which they enjoy at home with their families. These practical

activities are a highlight for Seeach Sod participants and create a real sense of excitement around the holiday.

A sense of affinity and kinship to Jewish tradition is one of the gifts Seeach Sod nurtures. Rav Lindner explained, "Seeach Sod gives each individual student a real quality of life, independence, and a feeling of connectedness to their community and society in an atmosphere of genuine *simchas chaim*. Through teaching our students in a manner suitable to their capacities, they are made to feel like mainstream children their age. This is invaluable."

This Shavuot, we prepare to stand at Sinai again. Help support the learning of these precious *neshamos* at Seeach Sod as they bring their pure Torah into the world.

## Women in the Workforce ... *Vataas B'chefetz Kapaha* Eating an Elephant

SHAINDY BABAD

"How do you eat an elephant?"

Rifky's email last week was all about doing just that.

"I know I need to get out of my job! The atmosphere there recently soured. It seems that management is under huge pressure. The office staff doesn't know what is going on behind the scenes. Whatever it is, it doesn't seem too good.

"Here are some clues: There hasn't been coffee in the kitchen for a month running. Salaries are paid late. We are being reprimanded for minor issues that no one paid attention to in the past. Even if everything goes back to normal, the truth is, I've wanted to change tracks and advance. I am a conscientious worker and have honed my secretarial skills. This is probably the last opportunity I have. With agism a real issue, at 38 I am concerned that every passing day is working against me. Where do I start? I've been working as a secretary ever since I can remember. What else could I do? It seems just too much. How is this done?"

Rivky, the answer lies in eating elephants. One bite at a time.

Things might be shaky at work. Thinking about your next opportunity while still employed has many advantages.

Consider first the resources you

have to work with. Your choices will be considerably impacted by circumstances such as the urgency to maintain income, financial reserves available for training, availability of a support system while you invest time in transitioning, and employment opportunities in your location.

Having considered these parameters, it's time to dream. What speaks to you? Did you always have a hobby that could become a job or business? Did you get consistent compliments about a skill you were good at? Perhaps you've been dreaming of doing something different and have had your eye on an idea for a while? Don't rule anything out. Jot down the different ideas that come to mind. Many people like to use a career direction test, but at your stage in life, you probably know a lot about yourself. Let yourself listen to that inner voice.

There is another list to make. With varied potential directions, it is important to think about your past experiences and the skills you have acquired at home and at work over the years. Spending time considering which tools you already have in your toolbox will save you time and provide direction. Don't underestimate the power of unconventionally gained skills. Did you nurse a family member back to health? That gave you a taste of medical knowledge. Perhaps you'd like to use that

to enter a medical related field? Did you juggle many bosses at your current job? That gives you the skills for prioritizing, excellent communication skills and time management. Are you the family shopper because you have a knack for finding the outfit that flatters each person? Many of our key strengths are learned in various life settings.

Next, research the requirements for job opportunities in the fields you jotted down before. A career counselor can help. Look at job opening advertisements. The skills required will provide a checklist of the skills needed for a particular position. It is important to check the training options in your area for skills you may be lacking. Paying attention to the classifieds and business ads will also give you a general feel for demand in your location. Don't be afraid to talk to people. You may just get important advice or even a relevant lead!

Working with your original list, narrow down the choices that seem most viable based on the skills you have, and the training and job opportunities available. The right direction may jump out at you. Or not. If you have a couple of options, it's OK to spend some time looking into each before deciding. I highly recommend interviewing people working in your proposed field. (What is easy? What is hard? How important is getting a diploma?)

And then take your first step. Remember, you don't need to eat the elephant all in one day! Working one step at a time, lay the groundwork for your next position. Start a course. Volunteer in a position that will give you practice and experience in or close to your chosen field. Attend events where you can network with people in the industry you are considering.

One step at a time – and you'll never find a whole elephant on your plate!



*Temech is a nonprofit organization that promotes employment, entrepreneurship and professional development for women in Israel. Shaindy Babad is the CEO of Temech. Shaindy joined Temech in 2008 after working in high-tech and as a serial social entrepreneur. She also advises women, companies and organizations aiming for success.*

*We want to hear from you! This discourse is for and about you, me, all of us. Please send your comments and thoughts to hamodia@temech.org*