

## Planning Memorable Moments that Seem to Just Happen: From Purim to Passover

Rav Aubrey Glazer



How do we make time count? Plan accordingly. Sounds simple? Not really. Priya Parker has a transformative approach to planning meetings that shifts them from mundane gatherings into meaningful experiences and we might glean something from her approach to how we plan our meaningful experiences. Parker suggests in her book, *The Art of Gathering* that every meeting should serve a distinct purpose, and it's not just about getting people in a room—it's about curating an environment where something unique and significant can happen. So when it comes time for your Purim banquet to your Passover symposium, start by asking, "What's the deeper need we're addressing here?" Peel back layers to get to the core reason for bringing people together. Define a bold purpose that goes beyond generic goals. Instead of "having a costume competition" it becomes "exploring how we can unmask our true selves to better serve our community." One of her key insights is the art of guest selection as well as reimagining the role of the host. As the host, you steward the group's experience, responsible for guiding the flow and fostering connections. Craft a thoughtful opening that sets the tone or design interactive elements that encourage authentic engagement, whether with the *megillah* or the *haggadah*.

Parker also encourages 'good controversy.' Instead of shying away from disagreements, she sees value in embracing different viewpoints as a way to spark innovation. It's about creating a safe space where honest dialogue can happen, and new ideas can emerge from the friction—imagine how much richer your seder will be if it is thoughtfully curated in this way. What draws me to Parker's method is her intentionality. Every element, from the purpose to the closing remarks, is crafted to enhance the collective experience. It's a reminder that Purim or Passover don't have to be just another holiday on the calendar—they can be opportunities for connection, inspiration, and impactful change.

Exploring and applying Parker's principles might just revolutionize the way we think about gathering people together. I feel that is operating as well in reconsidering the prophetic words of Malachi 4:6 when he states: **"He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents..."** The prophet emphasizes the importance of reconciliation and restoring relationships between generations. While it is traditionally the set-up for Passover when we read this *haftarah* on *Shabbat ha-Gadol*, I extend it beyond because it really highlights the transmission of traditions, values, and convictions from one generation to the next.

I was delighted recently to find further resonance of this truth with the Heath Brothers' who argue in *The Power of Moments* that defining moments shape our lives and how we can create such moments. They suggest, akin to Parker, that it is crucial to be "scripting the critical moves" which involves identifying and detailing specific actions that lead to success. This approach emphasizes clarity and precision in planning and execution to achieve desired outcomes. Moreover, in *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, the Heath brothers proffer "the elephant and rider analogy" to describe the human mind. The rider represents our rational, conscious mind, while the elephant symbolizes our emotional, instinctual side. Successful change requires aligning the rider and the elephant by providing clear direction (for the rider) and emotional motivation (for the elephant). While both the prophet Malachi and the Heath Brothers emphasize intentionality and the importance of taking specific actions to achieve desired outcomes, notice how Malachi focuses on the intergenerational turning of the hearts, which requires deliberate efforts to reconcile and strengthen relationships. Similarly, scripting the critical moves involves planning and executing precise actions to achieve success. Both approaches value clarity and intentionality in fostering meaningful connections. It is not only something we can apply to Purim and Passover, but to our larger communal family at Beth Abraham as we continue to carry forward our important work in strategic planning. Thanks to Tara Feiner and Norm Weissman, we are continuously realizing the importance of alignment and motivation by returning to our hearts, that signifies emotional and spiritual alignment between generations, fostering unity and continuity. Even the odd elephant and rider analogy highlights the need for alignment between rational plans (the rider) and emotional motivations (the elephant) to achieve lasting change in a sacred community like ours. Both approaches recognize the importance of harmonizing different aspects of ourselves to create meaningful and lasting connections. We can learn from the prophet Malachi insofar as we emphasize the importance of reconciliation and strengthening intergenerational relationships in our communal family, much like the intentional planning and execution highlighted by the Heath Brothers and their alignment of rational and emotional aspects emphasized in the elephant and rider analogy. Each perspective offers a unique lens through which to view the value of intentionality, alignment, and fostering meaningful connections. Let us all be engaged in this process of carrying forward our sacred traditions while remaining curious and open to support space for the unfolding journey, together.

An advertisement for a Lifelong Learning Class with Rav Aubrey Glazer. The background is a photograph of a forest with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves. In the foreground, on the left, is a large, detailed image of a pocket watch. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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