

Tomorrow night, the St. Louis Cardinals open the season against the Chicago Cubs. In honor of our neighbors to the north, I'd like to tell the following story:

A man walks into a bar with his dog. He asks the bartender if he can switch to the Cubs game because he and his dog are huge Cubs fans. The bartender puts the game on, and soon a Cubs player hits a single. The dog goes crazy, running up and down the bar yelping and barking. The bartender says, "Wow! Your dog is really a Cubs fan! What does he do when they hit a home run?"

The man says, "I don't know. I've only had him for two years."

St. Louis is a terrific baseball town with knowledgeable fans who appreciate the history of the game. Real fans know that when it comes to baseball, most athletes just play and retire. However, a select few of the game's greats end up leaving a legacy that transcends their sport. In the history of the game, what baseball player do you think left the greatest legacy?

In St. Louis, discussion of old-time baseball begins with 'Stan the Man.' Stan Musial played his entire career for the Cardinals, where he is respected and revered more than any other player in their history. Musial is remembered as both an amazing athlete and a true gentleman. Bob Costas summed it up best when he said, "All Musial represents is more than two decades of sustained excellence and complete decency as a human being."

What about "The Great Bambino"? With multiple nicknames and a stadium and curse named after him, Babe Ruth's legacy speaks for itself. One of the most recognizable names in all of sports history, Ruth showed his Hall of Fame baseball ability both as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox and a power-hitting outfielder for the New York Yankees.

My pick for the baseball player who left the greatest legacy is Jackie Robinson. Handpicked by Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Robinson was the first black athlete in this country to play professional sports. He went on to have a Hall of Fame career, and his career not only opened the door for other black athletes but helped change society. Jackie Robinson was also the only athlete in sports history to have a day where every player wears his number, No. 42.

Legacy is a word that gets thrown around a lot in sports, often incorrectly. What is the difference between a legacy and a resume?

The dictionary defines legacy as *something received from a predecessor*. But that definition is far different from the popular meaning. These days, legacy -- at least in terms of athletics -- mostly refers to an athlete's collection of awards, records and championships.

Awards, records, and championships. Are those a legacy? No. Those are just lines on a resume. An athlete's *imprint on the future* is his legacy.

Here's a resume: In high school, you had a 3.8 GPA and were captain of the JV tennis team. You went to a good four year college, got an M.B.A. and ran a \$22 million company. You learned to snorkel, took some really great vacations, and visited 45 different countries. You were born; you blinked; and it was over.

What is a legacy? It's what you leave behind and your imprint on the future. Of all the things that we can leave an imprint upon, what is most important?

Last night in the Haggadah we read the following passage:

*And we cried unto the L-RD, the G-d of our parents, and the L-RD heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil and our oppression" (Deut. 26:7)*

The term for toil -- *amalyanu* -- refers, the Haggadah says, to our children. What we leave behind is our children. Our imprint on the future is what we leave behind **to** our children

There's an old Jewish custom that parents write their children *tzvaot*, 'ethical wills.' It's based on the idea that the most important legacy we can give our children is not money or possessions, but spiritual ideals.

Give your children too much money or material gifts and you will spoil them. They will grow up unhappy and unfulfilled, and in the long run they won't even thank you. It will damage them and your relationship with them.

The Torah tradition is right. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says the best thing any of us can give our children are four things: values to live by, ideals to aspire to, an identity so that they know who they are, and a religious and moral heritage to guide them through the wilderness of time and the insanity of the world.

Children grow to fill the space we create for them, and if it's a huge space, they will walk tall. Ideals are big; material possessions are small. Ideals are what make life meaningful. People may envy others for what they earn or own, but they admire others for what they are and what principles they live by -- and it's better to be admired than envied.

This is what Pesach is about. Judaism sets the bar high. Pesach is a demanding, challenging holiday. And Judaism is a demanding, challenging religion. But that is the greatness of Judaism and its holidays. On the night of the Seder there's a special mitzvah to recline with one's children and tell them the Exodus story. It's a time to rededicate ourselves to repairing our relationships with our children. And Pesach is the ideal time to think about what we'll leave behind.

I'd like to conclude with the following story:

A mother was ready for a few minutes of relaxation after a long and demanding day. However, her young daughter had other plans for her mother's time.

"Read me a story, Mommy," the little girl pleaded.

"Give Mommy a few minutes to relax. Then I'll be happy to read you a story," the mother replied.

But the little girl was insistent that Mommy read to her now. Hoping to buy a few precious minutes, the mother tore off the back page of the magazine she was reading. It contained a full-page picture of the world. She tore it into several pieces and told her daughter to put the picture back together, and then she would read her a story.

A very short time later, the little girl announced the completion of her puzzle project. To her astonishment, the mother found the world picture completely assembled.

When she asked her daughter how she managed to do it so quickly, the little girl explained that on the reverse side of the page was the picture of a little girl. "You see, Mommy, when I got the little girl together, the whole world came together."

We have a responsibility to put our world together. On Pesach, we're reminded that 'putting our word together' means thinking about our legacy. Not our resume -- our awards, records, and championships -- but our legacy. *Es Amalaynu*: our toil, our effort. Our children.

What we leave behind is our children, and the next generation. Our imprint on the future is what we leave behind **to** our children: Values to live by, ideals to aspire to, an identity so that they know who they are, and a religious and moral heritage to guide them through the wilderness of time and the insanity of the world.