

The 15 Steps of the Seder

A Kabbalistic Guide to
Our Understanding of
Passover/Pesach

By Heschel Greenberg

Foreword

This booklet has been written—with G-d’s help—as an aid to the Seder participant, not only to know how to follow the Seder and understand its order, but also to provide exposure to some underlying, and perhaps unfamiliar, themes that will enhance the Seder experience.

This book can be used either before the Seder as a preparation for it, or during the Seder. Either way it is my fervent hope and prayer that it will inform the Seder and serve as its spiritual guide. And even though just eating the matzah, bitter Herbs, drinking the four cups of wine and reciting the Haggadah possesses intrinsic value and will be a positive experience, it is nonetheless important to infuse the body of these Mitzvos with their soul.

I am indebted to my esteemed colleague Rabbi Simon Jacobson, whose article on this very topic inspired me to follow in his footsteps. And while I have borrowed a few ideas from his essay, for which I am grateful, most of the material here explains the fifteen steps of the Seder using a different approach. As our Sages say: “There are seventy faces to the Torah.”

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Ben and Mrs. Sherry Fitt שיחיו for their efforts in editing this book. May the Almighty bless them with His abundant blessings.

I dedicate this booklet—in its expanded second edition—to the memory of my dear parents, Rabbi Meir ben Reb Yehoshua Falk ע"ה and Rebbetzin Baila Malkah bas Harav Yaakov Aryeh Halevi ע"ה Greenberg for the Aliya of their neshomos. And may we see the imminent arrival of Moshaiach and the final Redemption, followed by *Techiyas Hameisim*, the Resurrection of the Dead, when we will all be reunited with our loved ones and celebrate Pesach/Passover in the Beis Hamikdash/Holy Temple with our righteous Moshiach. Amen!

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Introduction

ORDER AND JEWISH EDUCATION

The Seder, as its name suggests, is an orderly ritual; so orderly, in fact, that even before we start the Seder, an outline of its steps introduces virtually every edition of the Haggadah to show us the way.

One reason for the emphasis on order in the Passover Haggadah relates to the special relationship of Passover to children. Many of the things we do on Passover night at the Seder were designed to reach the children and respond to their questions.

Indeed the basis of the obligation to recite the Haggadah is the Biblical verse that states: “You shall relate it (*v’higadita l’bincha*”—the root of the word *v’higadita* is the same as Haggadah) to your child.” In another verse, the Torah states in relation to Passover, “If your child shall ask you ...”

Many rituals of the night are intended to arouse the curiosity of children and to provoke them to ask questions. A highlight of the Seder is the asking of the “Four

Questions” by the children. We are even told to start the Seder as early as possible (immediately after night-fall), so the children will not fall asleep.

Passover is thus a patently educational experience. And in education, order is extremely important. To facilitate this order, the fifteen items of the Seder are listed at the very beginning.

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN

When we speak of Passover and children, it is not only about our own children, it is about all of the Jewish people. When the Jews were liberated from Egypt they were considered to be children in the spiritual sense of the word. The Prophet Ezekiel thus characterizes the Exodus as the birth of the Jewish people. Every year, the experience of the Exodus recurs, and every year, we become children again.

The focus on children in the Seder is repeated once more when we discuss the Four Sons (actually, four children) that covers every category of child.

In truth, the characteristics of the four sons are within each of us. There is a part of us that is intellectually cu-

rious; we want to know everything (the Wise Son). There is a part of us that is rebellious (the Wicked Son). There is a part of us that is simple and sincere (the Simple Son). And there are times when we just don't care; we are indifferent (the Son Who Cannot Ask Questions).

The Passover Seder is geared to all the children and to all of the moods and mindsets that each of us experience.

The Rebbe taught that there is even a fifth child. He or she is the one that doesn't even come to the Seder. That child needs special attention. We must go beyond our comfort zones to seek out this child and bring him or her into our home to celebrate the Seder with us.

THE KABBALAH OF FIFTEEN

On a more spiritual and mystical level, the Rebbe explains that the fifteen items listed here have the numerical value of the first two letters of G-d's name, the letters *Yud* and *Hei*. These two letters represent the Divine attributes of *Chochma*—conceptual knowledge—and *Binah*—analytical knowledge.

The hint here is that, although Passover in general and Matzah in particular are expressive of a faith that transcends knowledge, nevertheless, the message of the Seder is that this faith must be translated into knowledge.

This theme is echoed in the very name, Passover Seder. Passover connotes transcendence; going beyond the realm of logic. Seder, on the other hand, means “order.” The challenge of Passover is to take the transcendent and introduce it into the orderly realm and system of logic.

THE RESPONSE TO THE WISE SON’S CHALLENGE

Indeed, this tension between transcendence and knowledge is at the heart of the question posed by the Wise Son. He asks: “What are these testimonies (*Eidos*, or symbolic rituals), statutes (*Chukim* or suprarational commandments) and judgments (*Mishpatim* or rational commandments) that G-d commanded you?”

His question, according to the teachings of Chassidus, is a deep one. He is not just asking about the rituals of Passover. He is really asking:

Why do you make distinctions between commandments and categorize them? Why do you differentiate between the commandments that are suprarational (*Chukim*) and the other symbolic and logical ones? Are they not all equally G-d's will? Should they not all be performed with an equal submissiveness that defies logic? Do we need to have them explained rationally?

The answer the Haggadah gives him is also profound:

“Tell him all the laws of Passover.” The word Passover connotes transcendence, a “passing over” of all the parameters of logic, and yet there are well-established laws associated with Passover. In Hebrew the laws are called *halachos*, which can also be rendered as “pathways.” Even the most suprarational and transcendent laws must be channeled to travel through the pathways of our minds. The most spiritual and G-dly commandments must find expression within all of our faculties.

The Fifteen steps of the Seder—which represent the intellectual faculties of *Chochma* and *Binah*—are the pathways by which we can reconcile the conflict between transcendence and structured rational thought.

UNLOCKING THE ENERGIES OF FREEDOM

Synthesis of the transcendent with the logical is the key to unlocking the profound energies of freedom unleashed during the first Passover. One of my goals for this book is to provide the reader with a greater understanding of the spiritual power of this dichotomy – so that we can unlock a deeper spiritual understanding of the Seder and the meaning of Passover. The proper synthesis of these two opposite forces will enable us to break the boundaries of the present exile and usher in the period of true and complete Redemption through Moshiach.

Kadesh

Sanctify



Recite the Kiddush

A SPECIAL KIDDUSH

We open each Seder with recitation of the Kiddush, just as we do at the onset of every Shabbat and major Jewish holiday. During the Kiddush, we declare the sanctity of the Holy Day into which we are entering. Passover is no exception. Before we begin to engage with the specific character of Passover we must first of all acknowledge that it is a Holy Day.

However, since the Kiddush wine is only the first of the four cups—a Passover requirement—it conveys a uniquely Passover message; a message both plain and simple: we must sanctify ourselves and make ourselves holy before we enter the inner precincts of the Seder. To fully appreciate the Seder, a spiritual journey towards freedom in all respects, one must make an effort to be sanctified.

WE ARE HOLY!

On a deeper level, *Kadesh* declares that we too are holy. The blessing of the Kiddush ends with the words: “Blessed are you G-d Who sanctifies Israel and the Festivals.” The Talmud explains that G-d first made us holy and then—endowed with His holiness, we established

the Holy Days and made them holy too.

Hence, the first order of business is that we know we are holy. Without this knowledge we cannot make the Passover holy.

But, the question arises, how can we say that we are holy? By the time the Israelites left Egypt they had become so debased and degenerated that they were deep in the spiritual abyss; they had reached the lowest level of impurity.

And as we relive the Passover experience in an orderly fashion we must focus on the need to cleanse ourselves. Only once we have accomplished that step may we talk about being holy. And, indeed, the next item for the Seder is *Urchatz*—wash and cleanse. But shouldn't that have been the first item of the Seder; first cleansing and then sanctifying?

PASSOVER IS NOT NORMAL!

The truth is that under **normal** circumstances, we would speak of cleansing ourselves **before** we sanctify ourselves.

But Passover is not “normal.” On Passover night, we

“pass over” the conventional approach and we jump into the advanced levels of holiness right at the beginning.

There are times when we do start at the beginning. That is certainly the case with Rosh Hashanah and the month of preparation (Elul) that precedes it. Passover, by contrast, is when we are raised up and pass over the usual limitations, obstacles and constraints. The Rosh Hashanah season requires us to commence with our own efforts. This is hinted at in the Biblical verse in the Song of Songs: “I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me.” The “I” refers to us and the “beloved” refers to G-d.

However, Passover is represented by a sister verse that reverses the order: “My beloved is to me and I am to Him.”

During Passover, G-d “plucks” us out of the Egyptian morass and elevates us to the highest levels of holiness.

There are times that we cannot afford to wait until we are cleansed; we must begin with holiness. Passover is such a time.

The opening part of the Seder—the *Kadesh*—thus essentially declares:

“You are holy! Don’t get bogged down and caught up with your lowliness. Focus on your “highly-ness” and holiness instead.”

“Don’t assume you are not able to jump over all the obstacles. You can do it precisely because you are holy; a word in Hebrew that actually means different, apart, or beyond the norm. On Passover we truly are beyond the norm. The rules of incrementalism in effect for the rest of the year are suspended for the Seder.”

G-D MAKES THE FIRST MOVE

The famed and beloved Chassidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, states that the Biblical phrase “And G-d passed over the entrance” can be understood to mean that G-d passed over the request he has of us to “open up a small entrance the size of the eye of the needle so that I can open up the width of the Temple’s vestibule.”

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak bases his interpretation on the Midrash that explains the Biblical verse in the Song of

Songs: “Open up My sister the bride” to suggest that G-d asks us to open up and arouse ourselves to get closer to Him even if the opening is no greater than the eye of a needle. G-d then promises that He will reciprocate with a much greater opening. On the night of Passover, G-d passes over even that minimal request of His that we initiate the relationship. On the night of Passover, G-d does not wait for us to be aroused; He comes to us first.

U'rechatz



Washing the Hands

SIMPLE REASON

After reciting the Kiddush, we wash our hands before dipping a vegetable in salt water, the next item of the Seder.

The simple reason for the washing of the hands is to comply with a legal opinion that when we moisten a piece of food in water we must first wash our hands. Otherwise, our hands can become susceptible to certain forms of ritual impurity. Although daily normative Jewish practice does not subscribe to this opinion, on the night of Passover we change our customs, to provoke the youngest child's question: "why are we doing things differently tonight?"

"YOU MIGHT BE HOLY, BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO CLEANSE YOURSELF..."

On the higher spiritual level, we wash our hands now, after reciting the Kiddush prayer, to acknowledge our understanding that notwithstanding our inherent holiness—attained due to G-d taking us out of Egypt and sanctifying us—we must now focus on applying our own effort to cleanse ourselves.

As holy as we may be, we dare not delude ourselves into thinking that we are already so perfect and holy that we need not focus on our imperfections. Our holiness is G-d given; we must now do our part.

KNOWING OUR PLACE

“Who is a wise person?” the Talmudic Sages ask. A traditional answer is, “One, who knows his place.” Just as we must know our faults, we must know our virtues. Conversely, as much as we must know our qualities and strengths, we must not be oblivious to our shortcomings.

SMALL ACHES AND PAINS

While it is true that we are defined—especially on Passover—as essentially holy, this does not preclude the existence of superficial negative elements with which we must deal.

In discussing the current state of the Jewish people, the Rebbe once employed a medical metaphor in which the doctor declares the patient to be essentially healthy, but with some minor aches and pains that must be addressed.

THE LINK

The two first items of the Seder “*Kadesh*—Sanctify” and “*Urchatz*—wash” are linked with the conjunctive letter *vav*, meaning “and.” These are the only two items of the Seder linked in this way. This unique connection underscores how we cannot just recognize our essential holiness without simultaneously realizing that we must also cleanse ourselves of our peripheral impurities.

It is also instructive that this hand washing happens before we dip the vegetable (*Karpas*) in saltwater. The washing of our hands at this point acts as a protective measure for the act of dipping.

REBELLING: BUT LEAVING OUR EGOS BEHIND

The reason traditionally given for this “dipping” is to do something unusual and different on this night. Passover, paradoxically, is about transcending order even while we are in the midst of the most orderly ritual of Judaism known by the very word for order itself: Seder!

But before we act “rebelliously” and break our conventional bounds, we must cleanse ourselves of any trace of an egodriven rejection of authority.

There are two diametrically opposite reasons that people rebel. One is ego-driven, and the other aims to drive away the ego. This latter, noble form of rebellion, arises from dissatisfaction with the constraints that stifle a person’s spiritual growth. It represents the desire to break out of the obsession with one’s own ego-driven comfort zone.

We, therefore, must wash our hands, literally and figuratively, to ensure that our motives are pure and that our act of “passing over” is untainted by ego.

CHOCMA AND BINAH INSEPARABLE

On a deeper *Kabbalistic* level, the reason for the *vav* connecting *Kadesh* and *Urchatz* was explained by the Rebbe in the following manner:

These two items correspond to the Divine attributes and their parallel soul faculties of *Chochma* and *Binah*, conceptual and developed intellect, respectively. These two attributes are referred to by the Zohar as “two

friends that never separate.” For the seminal point of knowledge (*Chochma*) to become relevant, one must have the capacity to elucidate the concept (*Binah*), otherwise it remains an abstract idea.

On the other hand, developing, expounding and expanding on an idea by fleshing out its details is only successful when one does not stray from the original concept.

Hence, these two attributes are necessarily intertwined, unlike the distinct emotional traits that can be mutually exclusive. For example: One can be kind and not judgmental. Kindness (*chesed*) does not lose any of its powerful love force when it is left unchecked by one’s faculty of judgment (*gevurah*). In contrast, *Chochma* **does** suffer, and risks being dissipated, when it is not introduced into *Binah*; *Binah*, by itself, goes in the wrong direction when it is not guided by *Chochma*.

THE CONNECTION

We must try to understand how to connect the two attributes of *Chochma* and *Binah* to the two items of *Kadesh* and *Urchatz*.

Perhaps the connection is that *Kadesh* represents opening ourselves to the higher divine forces—the *Ein Sof*—Infinite light of G-d—that radiate on the night of Passover. The part of our soul that is most receptive to the Infinite is *Chochma* because of its self-effacing aspect. Its interest lies solely in opening itself up to that which is above it (See, Tanya Chapter 35).

On the other hand, *Binah* is the process by which we apply our most rigorous tools of analysis. This facility enables that which we have received to flow downward and permeate our entire personality. Without the analytical faculty of *Binah*, our faculties and senses are not capable of retaining the powerful light of *Chochma*. *Chochma* on its own is either too abstract and distant or too powerful and overwhelming for us to retain it unassisted. *Binah* tempers the intensity of *Chochma* and enables it to effect change in us.

Urchatz is the process by which we allow the G-dly light that the *Chochma* of our soul accessed (*Kadesh*) to flow downward and spread throughout our entire personality and, thereby, cleanse us. It has this capacity only as long as it is connected to the much holier power of *Chochma*.

Our down-to-earth lesson from this is that we all have noble goals and aspirations. We must apply all of our energies to implement these lofty goals. In so doing, however, we can become so engrossed in and obsessed with the process that we lose the altruistic and noble vision we had at the beginning.

By analogy, it is like people who are so captivated by the scenery on a trip that they forget their original purpose and veer off course.

The inextricable bonds between *Kadesh* and *Urchatz*, and *Chochma* and *Binah* guarantee that we will not deviate from our singular purpose: marching towards the ultimate Redemption.

Karpas



Eating a Vegetable
Dipped in Salt Water

DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT

The third step, *Karpas*, consists of dipping a vegetable in salt water. (Customs vary as to which vegetable is used. In some communities a piece of onion or potato is taken, while others use parsley.)

As stated in step two, *Urchatz*, the reason we do this is to make this night seem unusual and different to our children. Passover is all about transcending the routine order of our lives.

More specifically, by dipping a vegetable at the beginning of the Seder, we provoke the children to ask, “Why? Why are we doing something that we never do at any other Holiday meal?” And once the child asks this first question, he or she is introduced into the mood of asking questions.

As stated in the introduction, the entire Seder revolves around the children asking questions.

THE CHILD IN US

In truth, as already indicated above, the “child” that we are trying to provoke and

inspire also includes the child within us. To arouse that child we must do things differently. Otherwise, the child will not be inspired for, sadly, we get bored so very easily.

The notion that on Passover we must change course and do things differently is alluded to in the name *Karpas*, which the *Avudraham*, (a medieval authority of Jewish law and custom) says is a composite of two words: "*Samach Perech*." The word *Perech* denotes tortuous, backbreaking labor; *Samach* means 60, an allusion to the 600,000 (60 times 10,000) Jews that were subjected to this type of torture.

What exactly was so tortuous about their labor? The Talmud explains that the Egyptians subjected the Israelite slaves to psychological torture by forcing men to do women's work and women to do men's work. In other words, the oppressors forced us to change our way of doing things by going against our nature.

PARALLELISM

Kabbalah teaches us that every negative phenomenon

is matched by a parallel positive one, and vice versa. This teaching is based on the verse in the Biblical book of *Koheles* (Ecclesiastes) in which King Solomon states: “One opposite the other G-d made.”

It thus stands to reason that if our slavery involved going against our nature, so too, should it be the pathway to our liberation. We must transform and channel the methods the Egyptians employed to persecute us into a powerful liberating energy.

Instead of being forced to go against our nature as slaves to a tyrannical power, we voluntarily and joyfully change the course of our own spiritual life, by jumping over the stumbling blocks that keep us from progressing.

TRANSCENDENCE AND THE CHILD WITHIN

At this point, there seem to be two distinct explanations for doing these differently this night. The first is to express the transcendent nature of Passover. The second is to pique the curiosity of the children and the child within us – so they will begin to ask these important questions.

Upon deeper reflection, we can see that these two explanations intersect.

Our personalities are multi layered. We have the conscious, structured levels of our personality and we have the less accessible inner superconscious and transcendent part of our soul.

These two dimensions are the adult and child dimensions of our soul, respectively. Our conscious rationality covers and often obscures the childlike innocence and transcendence that we have embedded deep within our psyche.

On the night of Passover, we act in a transcendent manner to awaken the transcendent aspect of our personality—the child within.

The questions we ask are not simply based on our need to have answers. The questions themselves enable us to rise above the conventional approaches to the Seder. The questions provoked by doing things differently are what keep us from being limited by the rational exercise that is the Seder.

The Seder was not meant to limit us; rather its objective was to elicit the transcendence of our child, and to

channel it into the framework of our structured system of logic.

THE APPETIZER

Another simple reason given as to why we dip the vegetable into salt water is given by Rabbi Reuvein Margolies (a twentieth century scholar) that it is intended as an appetizer to whet our appetite for the Matzah and other Seder items.

How do we reconcile this with the foregoing explanation that the dipping is intended to stimulate the child when he or she sees that we are doing something differently?

It may be suggested that whetting our appetite has two layers of meaning. On the most basic level it is meant literally. It is a Mitzvah to eat the Matzah with relish and eating the “appetizer” will contribute to that end.

On a higher level, however, the idea of eating an appetizer is meant spiritually. We must whet our appetite and arouse our sense of curiosity to learn more about the Seder and Passover in general. Dipping the veg-

etable is intended to arouse the childlike inquisitive nature of those attending the Seder—whether they are children in the chronological sense or not.

SALT WATER TEARS

It has been suggested that the salt water was intended to remind us of the tears our ancestors shed as slaves. Tears are usually associated with intense emotional pain.

This, too, ties in with the general idea that the slavery to which we were subjected was more than just physically painful; it was also emotionally painful because it forced our ancestors to go against their very nature.

SELF-NULLIFICATION

On a deeper level, the idea of dipping is related to the idea of self-nullification. Indeed, both the word for dipping (*Tibul*) and the concept of dipping are related to the idea of self-nullification, which in Hebrew is *Bitul*. The letters of the word *Tibul*, when rearranged, form the word *Bitul*.

When we dip something into something else we indi-

cate that we want to surrender the taste of one thing to the taste of the other. Dipping therefore symbolizes self-abnegation.

This process of self-nullification is a necessary prerequisite for going out of exile. Exile is not just subservience to another person or an external tyrant like Pharaoh; it is about allowing ourselves to become alienated from our true inner selves.

In Exile we follow a self-centered passion for people, ideas and things contrary to our true, inner desire to be connected to G-d. Anything that takes us away from fulfilling this deepest desire of our souls is bondage. One can truly be said to be a slave to one's desires and habits that are destructive and go counter to what we really are all about deep down.

It is fascinating to discover that the Hebrew word *Karpas* is the same as the three words from Isaiah that describe the Messianic Age: כָּמִים לִים מִכְסִים. These words appear at the end of the verse: "And the earth

will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the **sea bed is covered with water.**”

These words describe the age in which we will be completely immersed—*Tibul*—in the waters of knowledge. We will then experience total freedom because we will be completely immersed in and subordinate to a Higher reality.

INTERWOVEN

Upon reflection, we see that all of these interpretations are interwoven. When we change direction and begin to do things differently it represents a departure from our ingrained habits that reinforce our ego’s influence over us.

When we remove the stifling influence of our habits and our ego’s desires, we uncover the intrinsic and pure feelings of the soul—the child within us.

Yachatz
℘

Breaking the
Middle Matzah

SETTING THE TONE

The fourth—yet still preliminary—step is the breaking of the middle Matzah.

We break the Matzah at this point because it sets the tone for the rest of the Seder. The Haggadah will be recited not as a story of old, but as an experience that we will relive in the here and now.

To make that experience real it is necessary to have a broken Matzah before our eyes. Matzah in general is described as the “bread of affliction.” Breaking it and leaving the smaller piece in front of us at the Seder, helps us appreciate and empathize with the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt.

WHY DO WE BREAK THE MIDDLE MATZAH?

The three stacked Matzot correspond to the three types of Jews: *Kohanim*, *Levi'im* and *Yisraelim*. We break the middle Matzah—the Levi—because the Levi represents the Divine attribute of judgment, which is associated with the act of division.

HUMILITY

In addition, the Matzah is known to be a symbol of humility because it is not allowed to rise. As explained elsewhere, humility is most crucial during Passover (one reason there is such a strict abhorrence of *chametz*, where flour and water have been allowed to rise; the symbol of an inflated ego).

In the context of the Seder, we can also understand why humility is so important. To empathize with others, one cannot be narcissistic and self-centered. Having the broken Matzah in our presence, with its clear message of humility, helps us feel their pain and imagine ourselves as if we too had just left Egypt.

But it is not sufficient to have the Matzah inculcate in us the spirit of humility and empathy.

Humility is not just about the absence of an inflated ego. It is also about recognizing that all we have is half a Matzah.

POOR AND RICH SIMULTANEOUSLY

The Talmud refers to Matzah as the “Bread of afflic-

tion,” but that description is sometime recast as the “poor man’s bread” because a poor person has only a **piece** of Matzah to eat.

Here is one more Passover paradox: recitation of the Haggadah with a broken piece of Matzah before us is designed to make us feel poor. Yet our reclining to drink the four cups of wine and eat the Matzah is an expression of freedom and wealth. We left Egypt endowed with great wealth that we recognize on this night even as we express our empathy and identify with the poor.

We are inherently poor even as we are the richest people on earth.

There are multiple lessons in this realization that we are poor.

In addition to the obvious, that it enhances our ability to empathize with the impoverished slaves in Egypt, this realization of our fundamental poverty also carries with it the humbling message that no matter how much we know, there is much more that we do not know.

Recall that by keeping the smaller piece of Matzah at

the Seder, we are leaving the larger piece—the Afikomen—for the end. The lesson this teaches us is that while we are poor now poor in the sense that we have but scant knowledge (as the Talmud says, “There is no one poor except one who is poor in knowledge) we know that a spectacular richness of knowledge will be revealed in the future Messianic Age.

Even as we reflect on and relive the past suffering and impoverishment, we can look confidently to the future for the total transformation of that poverty into wealth.

IMPOVERISHED BUT NOT DEPRESSED

To be crushed and humbled can cause depression and take away our drive to get out of exile. It is essential, therefore, that our humility be connected to a profound sense of purposefulness and optimism. This is achieved by breaking the middle Matzah (our humility) and saving the larger piece to savor at the Seder’s conclusion (symbolizing our bright optimism for the future).

The knowledge that marvelous things await us will further whet our appetite for greater efforts to get out of

exile. Our overarching goal is to be able to enter the Messianic Age, when all the fountains of knowledge will be fully revealed. The first step on our journey to reach that milestone begins with the Seder experience of the Exodus from Egypt.

Maggid



Reciting the
Haggadah

EMPATHY

The tone has been set. We know that we are holy. We know that we have the need to cleanse ourselves by allowing the holiness we absorbed to course through our entire beings to wash and cleanse us. We must be prepared to change our nature in order to awaken the child within us. We must have a sense of humility and the recognition that we have the smaller piece of Matzah at present. We will only have the larger piece of Matzah in the future.

Now we must work with what we have; a small piece of Matzah. We are in the process of getting out of Egypt. This we accomplish by reliving the experience as we recite the Haggadah and fulfill all of the Passover Mitzvot.

We start the recitation of *Maggid* by announcing that we have poor bread in front of us, “the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt.” This is to verbally set the tone for the Seder that follows. We are able to empathize with those who were slaves in Egypt and all subsequent suffering. These words are intended to instill a sense of humility that all that we have is a minimal understanding symbolized by the Matzah.

A BELATED INVITATION?

That is followed by an invitation to all, including those who are poor and needy, to join us. Obviously, as commentators point out, it is a bit late to start inviting guests. Moreover, the invitation is made indoors so that anyone who is still outside will not be made aware of our invitation.

The invitation is intended as an invitation to ourselves and to all those who are present as well. We should not approach the Seder as onlookers, but as participants. The Seder is our experience of liberation from slavery to freedom and our journey from spiritual impoverishment to spiritual enlightenment.

NOT AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

This is followed by a statement that, while we are now here and not free, we will eventually be free in the Land of Israel.

The fact that we are impoverished, and in a spiritual exile, does not mean that we are engaging in an exercise in futility. Equipped with this “poor” piece of Matzah and the recitation of the Haggadah we will get out of exile. Notwithstanding the meager resources we

seem to have—a small, broken piece of Matzah and all that it symbolizes—it is still the food of faith that will serve as the seed that will yield the ultimate goal of the future Redemption.

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Never Stop Asking Questions

We begin with asking questions. As Jews in exile, it is our responsibility to ask questions. We must not rest until we acquire the knowledge that now eludes us. And we should not stop asking questions until we have the ultimate answer—total Redemption!

After the child (and the child in us) asks the Four Questions, we begin the answer by telling the story of Exodus.

NOT JUST A STORY

The story begins with the bitter Egyptian exile and ends with the liberation.

Maggid is not just telling a story of past events; it is re-living and reexperiencing them, recognizing how they play themselves out in our lives today. It is recounting the physical and spiritual degradation of our people and how drastically it has changed for the better.

It is simultaneously the story of our own struggles in our own *Mitzraim* and how we can unleash the power of liberation for ourselves and for the entire world **this very night.**

It is the story that no matter how low we may have fallen, we can be liberated and elevated; and we will be liberated.

And it is a story that relates to every Jew. No matter which child you think you are, the story of the Exodus conveys a meaningful personal message and opportunity for freedom for you.

Rachtzah



Washing the Hands

REACHING HIGHER

Before we partake of the Matzah, we wash our hands a second time.

If washing the first time was about removing the impurities that we accumulated in Mitzraim (the spiritual state of confinement), the second washing is about realizing a higher level of purity. At this point, we are ready to enter into a new phase in the process of liberation. And, whenever we enter a higher order of spiritual awareness, we must go through a cleansing process so that we are not distracted by a lower and less sophisticated mindset.

TWO REASONS FOR MATZAH

When we review the words of the Haggadah about Matzah, we discover that two very different reasons are given for this commandment.

In the first introductory paragraph, the Matzah is referred to as, “the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt.” Much later, in the Haggadah, we read that it was the revelation of G-d that compelled us to leave Egypt and the haste of our departure did not allow the dough to rise.

Upon reflection, it appears that the first reason relates to our initial impoverished spiritual state, whereas the second reason relates to a more advanced stage in our development.

At this point, we are ready to eat the Matzah now that we have reached the more advanced understanding of its significance. We have now climbed the spiritual ladder, having recited the bulk of the Haggadah, part of Hallel (Psalms of praise), and having consumed the first two cups of wine that signify liberation.

Now we are ready to experience the higher form of Matzah; the Matzah that elevates us to a higher level of consciousness.

We, therefore, wash our hands again, not only because we are eating a kind of bread, but to indicate that we are now ready to reach a higher level of consciousness, one that necessitates cleansing ourselves of the perceptions that we had when we were at the lower level.

FASTING TO FORGET

Ionian sage, Rabbi Zeira made aliya to Israel so he could study under the Israeli Sages, he fasted for forty days so that he would forget the Babylonian Talmud.

Chassidic masters explain that he did not want, G-d forbid, to forget parts of Torah. Rather he wanted to block out the methodology of learning characterized by the Babylonian Talmud. He did not want the inferior Babylonian methodology of study to distract him while he attempted to adopt the superior and more abstract approach of the Jerusalem Talmud.

Similarly, as we graduate into a higher phase of spiritual liberation, we wash away the perceptions we had when we were still on the lower, impoverished, rung of the spiritual ladder.

Just as we have no right to remain slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, a Jew must not remain ensconced in a lower level of consciousness when he or she is ready to climb to the next level.

EGO NOT A PROBLEM

In addition, it was explained that the reason the first washing is needed, before dipping the vegetable, is to

ensure that our reversal of the usual order will not merely be an expression of our ego, which wants no part of an organized system. It is necessary then, as we are spiritual novices and the potential for ego-caused problems is at its height.

But now, we've gone through these preliminary steps. We have experienced the initial taste of freedom. We no longer need to obsess over our inflated ego. Now we are ready to ingest the Matzah that will elevate us to a higher level of spiritual consciousness. And, as stated, before we do that, we must go through another purification/elevation process.

Motzi



Reciting the
Blessing HaMotzi

INTERNALIZATION

After washing our hands, we begin the process of internalizing the message of spiritual freedom by eating the Matzah. However, before we partake of the Matzah, we must recite two blessings. The first blessing is referred to here as “Motzi,” in which we praise G-d for the “bread” by saying: *HaMotzi lechem min ha’aretz*, “who brings forth bread from the earth.”

THE EARTH DOES NOT PROVIDE

The purpose of this blessing—which we recite every time we eat bread—is to recognize that all of our sustenance comes from G-d. We cannot internalize the higher spiritual power of Matzah if we think that it is a part of a natural process.

In other words, to quote a famous Chassidic maxim: “One cannot climb upward if they are still tied to the ground.”

If a person’s perception of reality derives from the earth, i.e., that it is all part of a natural cycle that is fixed, there is no room for true advancement.

Indeed, we cannot experience true freedom if we be-

lieve that we are forever confined to a mold that we call nature.

It is not that we shun nature. On the contrary, we see it as G-d's system. We therefore pay homage to G-d the Creator of the system and not to the system itself.

Only by recognizing—as we do in the blessing of haMotzi—that it is G-d who extracts the bread from the earth; that G-d controls nature, can we hope to experience true freedom.

IT'S THE SPARK!

Moreover, this blessing reinforces the understanding that even when we eat at other times of the year, it is not the food with all of its nutrients that nourishes us, but rather the Divine spark within the food and nutrients.

This is the mystical meaning of the verse: “It is not on bread alone that man lives, but on the word of G-d.” The “word of G-d” here refers to the Divine spark within the bread. Our hunger for food, the Ba'al Shem

Tov teaches us, derives from the soul's desire to access that powerful spark of holiness within the food.

Reciting the blessing releases the more sublime energy embedded in the Matzah. We extract that energy when we fulfill the mitzvah of eating the Matzah. One cannot unleash the more potent energies within the Matzah, without first revealing its most basic energy. One cannot build a structure if there is no foundation.

The Motzi blessing thus lays the foundation for the eating of Matzah and its effects.

Matzah



Reciting the Blessing on the
Matzah and Eating It

THE MITZVAH OF MATZAH

In the next step of the Seder, we recite a blessing that praises G-d for giving us the Mitzvah/commandment to eat Matzah. In other words, we thank G-d for giving us the ability to connect (the other translation of the word Mitzvah) to Him and His liberating energies.

By eating the Matzah, we ingest that which the Zohar called the “food of faith” (the first Seder) and “food of healing” (the second Seder), because it nurtures our faith and introduces us to a higher level of G-dly awareness. This, in turn, enables us to heal our spiritual maladies.

NOT JUST A PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Although eating Matzah is a physical and culinary exercise, it is endowed with more potent spiritual energy than any subjective spiritual experience. This is because spirituality, in and of itself, is not synonymous with G-dliness. No spiritual being—even the most sublime angels—can grasp G-d. Conversely, physicality is no obstacle for G-dliness. G-d, and only G-d, determines who can grasp Him and connect with Him and how we can accomplish that goal.

Generally speaking, **every** Mitzvah we perform connects us to G-d. As already noted, the very word Mitzvah can be translated as connection or bond. The only way we can connect and form a bond with G-d is through His designated method, not through techniques of our own design, not found in the Torah.

To be sure, all of our sincere and positive emotions and spiritual feelings are praiseworthy and encouraged. But, their value is apparent only when they are attached to the fulfillment of G-d's will—the performance of the Mitzvot.

EATING G-DLINESS

Of all the Mitzvot, only Matzah contains such powerful G-dly energy that it can actually be ingested physically, mirroring the way it is internalized spiritually. At its most basic level, Matzah is what nurtures our faith in G-d. And on the higher plane, it enhances our understanding of Him.

Matzah, eaten during the Seder, after dark, instills within us a G-dly energy, that gives us the opportunity to be aware of His presence in ways that nothing else can.

It is important to note that eating Matzah at any other than the times designated by Jewish law does not generate any spiritual power. The Torah makes it clear that one must partake of the Matzah on Passover “night.” Night is defined as the time after dark.

Matzah. At its most basic level, it is what nurtures our faith in G-d. And on the higher plane, it enhances our understanding of Him. There is one condition; It must be eaten at the prescribed time in the prescribed amount in accordance with the dictate of the Torah.

Matzah that isn't eaten doesn't have that capacity.

MATZAH AND CHOMETZ: SO SIMILAR BUT YET SO DIFFERENT

Even the word Matzah has significance.

The opposite of Matzah is chometz. There is but a subtle difference between these two substances. Matzah consists of flour and water; chometz consists of flour and water. The difference is that that chometz allows the ingredients to inflate. Matzah is the state of humility and self-effacement; chometz represents an inflated ego.

This difference is reflected in the actual words Matzah מצה and chometz חמוץ, which share the letters *mem*-מ and *tzadik*-צ. What distinguishes Matzah from chometz? It is the third letter in each word. In chometz it is a *ches*-ח and in Matzah it is a *hei*-ה. These two letters are also almost identical. The difference is a little opening on the left leg of the *hei* that is absent in the *ches*.

The point is that the subtle change between a person who allows his or her ego to inflate and one who is humble makes a world of difference. Humility can transform a person from being an objectionable human being—as chometz is objectionable on Passover—to one who is capable of realizing the highest spiritual ideals.

The opening at the bottom of these two letters—the *hei* and the *ches*—suggest the potential for decline. In the *hei*-humility model, though, there is an opening on the top.

In simple language, this means that a person who is humble can reverse course; his decline is not inevitable. He can always free himself from the downhill spiraling of his emotional and spiritual life. The person who has

a chometz personality, tragically, is unlikely to feel that he is trapped and therefore will not seek to escape.

Put in the context of the freedom that we experience on Passover, it can be said that the chometz personality cannot extricate himself or herself from his or her state of confinement—the state of *Mitzraim*—because he or she is so locked in to themselves. Only a Matzah-humble personality can transcend self and truly be liberated.

Maror
℘

Eating the Bitter Herbs

WE'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET

After we have internalized the dynamic and liberating force of G-dly awareness, it would seem that we should be able to revel in our newly found freedom.

And while that is true, it is incumbent upon us not to forget that there are some negative things about our own character and behavior that should make us feel some dissatisfaction and “bitterness.” We can’t simply dismiss them out of hand because, if not addressed on some level, or if we become indifferent to our shortcomings, they might come back to haunt us.

While we have already ingested and internalized freedom, we must remove the obstacles that could make the experience of freedom short-lived.

SHOWING EMPATHY

There is another matter that, if not dealt with, can mar our joyous experience of freedom—the fact that others are not yet free. There are others who are still mired in their own physical or spiritual exile. No matter how high we fly and how liberated we feel, we are not truly free as long as other Jews are still in exile.

There is a parallel to this in the Torah's commandment for the Jews who entered Israel to bring their first fruits to the Temple. Now, despite the fact that this commandment should have become operative as soon as they entered and produced their first crop of fruit, it did not actually take effect until all the land was conquered and settled.

The Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 9) explains that the reason for this is connected to the joyous nature of this Mitzvah. We bring *Bikkurim*-First Fruits to express our gratitude and joy for all the bounty and abundant goodness with which we were blessed. And so long as there were other Jews who could not rejoice with their first fruits since they had not yet settled their individual parcels of land, no Jew can feel the full measure of joy necessary for the fulfillment of the Mitzvah.

Similarly, here, no matter how free we feel, because we are able to tap into the liberating energies that are generated this night, we still feel the bitterness because this liberation spirit is not yet universal.

DON'T WALLOW

A Jew, however, is not allowed to wallow in bitterness even if it is due to the awareness of one's transgressions or the pain and suffering of others.

To temper our sense of bitterness and to indicate that we cannot wallow in it, we dip the *Maror* into the sweet charoset.

DON'T LET BITTERNESS GET IN THE WAY

Another way of understanding the purpose of eating the *Maror* is to view life's difficulties as **part** of our celebration of Passover. Even when things are bitter we do not let that get in the way of our Passover celebration.

Moreover, we try to extract meaning from our bitterness that can actually enhance our sense of freedom. And as long as we are in exile, bitterness is a reality; a reality that we must learn from and integrate into our own experience of liberation.

To be sure, exile does not have to manifest itself in the same form it took when we were slaves in Egypt or in other periods of persecution we've endured.

The mere fact that we are living in an imperfect world, our Holy Land surrounded by enemies that plot our destruction—G-d forbid—and the fact that G-d’s presence is not revealed, means that there is *Maror* in our lives. It is our task to see through the darkness and make it part of our Passover experience.

SWEETENING THE BITTERNESS

According to the Kabbalistic teachings of the Ari, *Maror* has the same numerical value as the Hebrew word *ma’ves*, which means death.

When we chew the *Maror* it actually has the spiritual power to “sweeten” the negative energy and transform it. Thus, the Talmud rules that one cannot just swallow the *Maror* without chewing it. The act of chewing is the process through which the pain of *Maror* is ameliorated.

HIDDEN SWEETNESS

When we reflect on the things in life that make us bitter, we have to realize that in the end, we will see how they were really the manifestation of G-d's hidden kindness (*Tanya, Chapter 26*).

While it is true that in the present period of exile the bitter things are truly painful, we know that in the period of Redemption, the bitter will be transformed into sweet.

On the night of Passover—the season of our liberation—we live simultaneously in the past, present and future. We alternate between bitterness and expansive joy. During the Seder we have the enhanced capacity to bring an end to the bitterness of exile and to see its transformation into the sweetness and joy of eternal and complete Redemption.

Koreich



Eating a Sandwich
of Matzah and Maror

THE DIVINE SANDWICH

The creation of a sandwich is attributed by some to an 18th century English aristocrat. As Jews, we know that it goes back at least two thousand years to the days of Hillel the Sage.

The original *Koreich* sandwich included the Paschal lamb, Matzah and *Maror*. The fact that the Matzah of joyous freedom and the *Maror* of bitter slavery are combined poses a conceptual problem. How can one express both the joy of freedom and the bitterness of slavery simultaneously?

OVERRIDING THE SYSTEM

The answer is that normally it is impossible. At best, one can float from one mindset to the other. However, that is true when we deal with conventional forces. When we are part of the system, we cannot break the rules of the system in which Matzah and *Maror* are opposites.

But on the first night of Passover, we transcend the system and simultaneously feel the joy of freedom and the bitterness of the lack of freedom; we integrate the two.

Even though we do not have the Paschal offering, we

can experience its power by reciting the words: “And so did Hillel do in the days of the Holy Temple. He would wrap Pesach, Matzah and *Maror* and eat them together.” According to the Talmud, in the absence of the Temple, when we read and learn the words of the Torah about that particular Temple ritual it is as if we have actually performed it.

Thus, by reciting the description of Hillel’s eating of the sandwich, we are empowered to eat and thereby experience the liberating feeling of Matzah and the bitter taste of *Maror*, without compromising either.

TOUCHING THE SOURCE

From the Kabbalistic perspective, when we reach the ultimate Divine source of those opposite elements, we discover that they are not really opposites. They both derive from the same G-dly source that is the potential for both expressions. As we access the transcendent aspect of G-d, by eating the Paschal lamb or by reciting the words that describe what Hillel did, we reach the source of Matzah and *Maror*; we touch the place where the two intersect.

Shulchan Oreich



- lit. "Set Table" -
Eating the Festival Meal

THE CHAGIGAH OFFERING

A “set table” is a reference to the festival meal that we are obliged to eat every Shabbat and Jewish Holiday. But the festive meal of Passover is unique in that, in the days of the Holy Temple, the festival meal’s main course was the *Chagigah*-Festival offering, and the Paschal offering was the “dessert.”

The reason for this is that it was important that one not eat the Paschal offering ravenously, but rather as a free person who eats his meal like a king. In addition, eating ravenously could have led to breaking and eating the bones of the offering, acts which are prohibited by the Torah.

THE LINGERING TASTE

It was also important that the Paschal offering be the last thing one would eat so that its taste would linger on through the night.

The entire meal facilitated the Paschal lamb’s effect. Its final taste was that of the Paschal lamb. Why was it so important that the taste linger on?

The Hebrew word for taste “*ta’am*” also means reason,

for it is reason and rational explanations that contribute to the good taste and appreciation we have for the things that we do.

And so, although Passover is about transcendence and overriding the system of reason and logic, this transcendent mode finds its expression in our mind and heart through the physicality of lingering taste.

Thus, the entire “Set Table” is a prelude and preparation to the joy we must feel when we engage in an otherwise transrational Pass-Over experience.

Tzofun



Eating the Afikoman

GO NORTH?!

Following the meal, we eat the Afkoman (the larger half of the middle Matzah that we broke and then hid away in *Yachatz*). *Tzofon* means “hidden.” It also means “north,” where it’s cold and it symbolizes those areas which are seemingly devoid of spirituality. Indeed, the prophet tells us that “From the north (*mitzafon*) shall the evil come forth.”

There are two forms of evil: One that is overt and in your face. The other is subtle and insidious, sometimes hiding behind a veneer of righteousness. Clearly, the latter form of evil is much more difficult to eradicate because it is so difficult to find.

The Afkoman that we eat at the end of the meal is designed for precisely this purpose; to search for and expose the hidden evil and expunge it.

HIDDEN EVIL

In Passover terms, this means that even when we have successfully extricated ourselves from the internal *Mitzraim* (the Hebrew word for Egypt that also means straits or confinement, as mentioned above), there

might still be a deep-rooted spiritual *Mitzraim* that cannot be removed at the beginning of the Seder.

Only as we get to the end of the meal, having fulfilled all the other obligations, can we successfully reach and remove even that hidden evil.

Parallel to that hidden evil is the hidden good that will be revealed in the future, as King David states in the Psalms: “How abundant is the good that You have hidden (*tzafanta*) for those who fear you.” The same root for the word “north” and “hidden” is employed here in the context of the hidden good that will be revealed in the Messianic Era.

At this juncture, we are about to make the transition from the past redemption to the future. Here, it does not suffice to deal with our conscious faculties. We must begin to excavate and remove [even] the hidden sources of evil even as we touch the hidden and heretofore elusive forces of good.

How does one access the hidden parts of our consciousness?

The first answer is by observing the Mitzvot that are associated with Passover, specifically, the eating of the

Afikoman at the end of the meal. Whether we feel it or not, it empowers us to achieve that objective.

In addition, the power to accomplish this exists throughout the year, specifically, through the study of the inner dimension of Torah which touches the deeper unconscious level of our soul.

But, on the night of Passover, eating the Afikoman (that was hidden until now), in place of the Paschal lamb, gets us started and activates the hidden inner spark of our soul.

Beirach



Reciting the Grace
after Meals

NO MORE FOOD!

When we are ready to recite the *Birkat Hamazon*, as we do whenever we eat bread, the meal has come to an end.

In the context of the Seder, the *Birkat Hamazon* presents an even stricter implication:

Once we have recited the Grace after Meals, we may no longer eat anything. We may, and we are indeed obligated to, drink the remaining two cups of wine, but no food may be ingested.

The simple reason for this is that there is a requirement that the taste of Matzah linger on through the night. Eating other foods would cause that lingering taste to dissipate.

CHANGING FOCUS

And it is at this point, where we are finished with the eating of Matzah, that we are ready to make the transition into a new phase of the Seder.

This transition takes us from a liberation process, focusing on our past association

with slavery, persecution, poverty and exile into a liberation mode where the focus is on the future Redemption.

The future Redemption derives its power from the original Exodus. This is why we will still remember the Exodus from Egypt in Messianic times, as is stated earlier in the Haggadah.

But, unlike the original Exodus, the future liberation will be a “true” and “complete” Redemption. “True,” in this context, means that it will endure forever unlike the Exodus from Egypt that was followed by other periods of exile and persecution. And the term “complete” implies that there will not be one Jew left behind, and there will be no aspect of our lives—physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual—that will not be liberated.

ELIJAH’S CUP

It is at this point (either before the Grace after Meals or right after) that we fill the Cup of Elijah. Elijah (Hanavi) is strongly linked to the Future Redemption, and fortified by his presence at the table, we continue

following the Haggadah with the focus firmly on the future.

DRAWING DOWN

The word *Beirach* (to bless) also means to “draw down.” When we bless G-d, we are not suggesting that He needs our blessing. Rather, *Beirach* suggests that the blessings that G-d possesses should be accessed by us and “downloaded” into our lives.

The recitation of the *Birkat Hamazon* (*Beirach*), in the context of the Seder, provides us with a vessel we can use to carry all the spiritual energy that we have generated throughout the Seder.

This energy will leave its mark on our psyche and implant a seed in our bodies and souls that will take root and soon blossom into a full blown Redemption.

Hallel



Reciting Special
Psalms of Praise

THE SECOND HALF OF PRAISE

Although we have already recited half of the Hallel (the special Psalms of praise to extol G-d for His miracles) before the meal, it is not listed as a separate entry in the *simanim* (symbols) of the Seder.

The Hallel we said earlier in the evening was actually part of the Mitzvah of telling the story of the Exodus, which, itself, is also a form of praise. We guarantee that our story telling isn't just the telling of a story, by reciting the first part of Hallel, which references the Exodus from Egypt in a context of praise.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF PRAISE

On a deeper level, *Hallel* is more than just praise.

According to classical Jewish philosophers, we praise G-d because it helps us understand G-d's greatness and goodness. G-d does not need our praise; we need to praise Him.

The mystical Sages have taught us that *Hallel* has a deeper dimension. Its name derives from the Biblical

word *behilo*, meaning “to shine.” Much like human praise that assists in actualizing hidden qualities, praising G-d causes His light that is latent to shine brightly.

The Jerusalem Talmud states that the first part of *Hallel* corresponds to the Exodus from Egypt, whereas the second part of *Hallel*—that part which we recite after the Grace after Meals, alludes to the future Redemption.

Based on the Talmud’s differentiation between the two parts of *Hallel*, it may be suggested that the *Hallel* in the first half of the Seder is primarily for **our** sake; so that we appreciate G-d’s miracles and kindness.

In the second half of the Seder, however, where the focus is on the future Redemption that has been so elusive a goal, our recitation of *Hallel* is primarily a means to help reveal the hidden light of Moshiach and Redemption.

Nirtzah



G-d's Promise to
Accept Our Service

NO WORDS

Unlike the previous 14 steps, this last and final step does not manifest itself in any prayer or action. We have reached a point that transcends words and praise. After we have completed our Seder service, we are accepted favorably – *nirtzah* by G-d.

THREE LEVELS OF INSPIRATION

In Chassidic literature we find that there are three levels of Divine inspiration:

The first is the inspiration that precedes our efforts, and is intended to give us a jump start. If we feel sudden inspiration, we know that it is a result of what the Zohar calls an “arousal from above.”

Once a person takes the initiative and works at internalizing that inspiration it generates a reciprocal inspiration from Above commensurate with the effort expended by those “below.”

When this cycle is complete the twin forces of inspiration create a “perfect” atmosphere. We have the benefit of the Divine inspiration that is engendered by our human initiative and effort.

A third, follow-up force descends from on High. It is infinitely more sublime than anything we could have generated by our actions alone. This force cannot be summoned; it comes only of its own accord.

The sole prerequisite is that there be a “perfect location” on which it can “land.

A SMOOTH LANDING

Perhaps, we can use the following analogy. A plane with supplies is sent to help a stricken area. But it cannot land because the terrain is too rocky. When it eventually finds a smooth area on which to land, it cannot be said that the supplies came because of the smooth land. Similarly, the third “arousal from above” cannot be generated by our efforts combined with the reciprocal arousal from above it generates. However, when these two energies are combined, they create the smooth landing space for this additional unparalleled Divine energy to manifest itself.

When we finish the Seder, we have essentially provided the perfect atmosphere and the ideal landing space, so that the most sublime Divine energies can manifest themselves. In one sense, we cause it; in another sense, it comes, as it were, of its own accord.

This is the meaning of *Nirtzah*. Our Seder is complete and we are now elevated sufficiently to receive that which was unattainable before.

Next Year or Now in Jerusalem?

By the end of the Seder we have made the spiritual progression necessary to be ready for the final and complete freedom and redemption. This is why we conclude the Seder by declaring:

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

The Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak Schneersohn explained that this declaration should not be understood as a suggestion that we will have to wait until next year to be in Jerusalem. Rather it means that we will be there imminently so that when we gather again next year to observe the Passover Seder we will already have been in Jerusalem.

Passover Never Ends!

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, did not include at the conclusion of the Haggadah the customary passage “the order of Pesach is concluded,” because the Passover Seder never truly ends. Instead, it continues throughout the year.

To be sure, the illumination of every festival radiates every day of the year; but Passover extends continuously.

Every day, we must leave Mitzrayim (meaning our boundaries and confinement), transcend our previous limitations and reach ever higher levels of holiness.

PASSOVER NEVER ENDS.

Even in the days of Moshiach, we will still remember the Exodus from Egypt the starting point for our march towards the future and final Redemption from Egypt.

Every time we observe Passover we come a step closer to experiencing the true and complete Redemption, imminently.

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