

Let's Make a "Seder"

written by Refael Kramer
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We recall the exodus from Egypt every day, so what is so special about Seder night? Let's Make a "Seder"!

On Seder Night, we will gather around the Seder table to celebrate our exodus from Egypt. Let's make a "seder" (which in Hebrew literally means an "order") out of some ideas here. We recall the exodus from Egypt every day, so what is so special about Seder night? Let's make a "seder" (meaning, let's look at this topic more deeply) and we will understand the nature of the holiday of Passover and the Exodus from Egypt.

We are now just before Passover, the holiday of freedom, which recalls when we left Egypt many years ago, but it is also the time when we "leave Egypt" anew every year.

A question always bothered me when I celebrated on Seder night: How can we celebrate when we are still in exile? And another thing—our sages have obligated us to remember the Exodus from Egypt every single day. So, if we “leave Egypt” every day, then what is so special about Seder night?

We will now explore this topic in the light of Rabbi Natan’s illuminating explanation:

According to the Kabbalistic writings, when the Holy One Blessed be He wanted to take the Nation of Israel out of Egypt, the fact that Egypt was such an impure place and the darkness and Divine concealment there were so strong made it impossible for that a Divine enlightenment could take place in gradual fashion. The Nation of Israel was also in great danger of totally assimilating into the Egyptian nation. Therefore, the Creator brought about a sudden illumination of the great light of Divine Truth with such intensity that all darkness and concealment were nullified, and all of Israel were immediately convinced by the light of God’s Truth. This was the only way that it was possible to remove the Nation of Israel from Egypt.

The Kabbalistic teachings actually reflect a reality which exists on all levels of creation: in order for a person to recognize the Creator, he must first recognize the Divine Truth. Recognition of Divine Truth is a gradual process that comes through “proper advice,” meaning the Torah’s commandments. This the true advice is what has the power to bring a person to true recognition of the Creator. However, sometimes there is such an overwhelming concealment of the truth that if we wait for a person to gradually receive the proper foundations for recognizing the Creator, he may in the meantime disappear within the concealment and completely lose his connection to the Creator.

This is what happened in Egypt, and this is also what occurs on a daily basis. Indeed, the Exodus from Egypt occurs every

day, since every day the Creator gives us the opportunity to draw close to Him and avoid all types of diversions and darkness which hide God's Truth from us.

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In Egypt, G-d caused a awesome illumination of Divine enlightenment that completely nullified the darkness and concealment caused by the Egyptians. So too, every day the Creator, in His mercy, provides man with Divine enlightenment anew which enables him to come close to Him.

However, after this enlightenment appears, it then vanishes, and the person must strive to reattain this same enlightenment through his own efforts and personal advancement to actually achieve the level of awakening he had previously experienced.

Therefore, immediately after the Nation of Israel left Egypt, they began counting fifty days. This well-known *mitzvah* is called the Counting of the Omer, which is the beginning of the internal work that came after their awakening and which would bring them to be able to receive Divine enlightenment at the Giving of the Torah.

And this is also the enlightenment of the Exodus from Egypt that we can experience every day. The Holy One Blessed be He illuminates a person with Divine enlightenment every day and inspires him to do good. It is a person's job to take this enlightenment and develop it further with his own efforts and to yearn to implement the enlightenment that he received.

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*reason that we drink four glasses of wine on the Seder night,
for on Passover we merit receiving the light of Truth...*

This idea is expressed in the name of the holiday "Passover." It literally means skipping over—just as when a person skips over a certain stage. This is how the Holy One skipped over to the culmination, meaning that we were basically supposed to develop our recognition of the Creator gradually through the Torah's commandments and thus reach a level of true Divine recognition. However, the Creator knew that in Egypt, we would not have the power to gradually recognize the Creator because we were in danger of becoming completely lost. Therefore, He did an act of kindness for us and let us "pass over" to the end, enlightening us with an illumination of the truth before we had even taken the necessary steps required of us.

This is also the reason that we drink four glasses of wine on the Seder night, for on Passover we merit receiving the light of Truth which is above the level of our human intellect. (This was before we had received the "intellect" which is embodied in the holy Torah's commandments and advice). But G-d has mercy on us and gives us the power and enlightenment that we should be able to receive in holiness this enlightenment which is beyond the ability of our intellect to understand.

And with this high level of enlightenment, we merit to absolute truth and subsequently to faith and redemption. Thus, specifically on Passover there is an obligation to drink four cups of wine, because wine also has this aspect of lifting a person up beyond his mental capacity, and G-d gives us the ability to receive this in holiness.

Now we can better understand the idea of leaving Egypt: in the past, every day, and on the Seder Night. Egypt (*"Mitzrayim"*) comes from the word straits (*"maitzar"*), and until the future redemption it will not be complete. Even though we were physically redeemed from Egypt, the full redemption has not yet occurred. We are still surrounded by "straits" meaning difficulties. This is also the reason we eat bitter herbs (*"maror"*) even nowadays, because we are still limited by the fact that we have not yet experienced the complete redemption. Although we have not yet reached a state of complete tranquility nor have we been granted with our final inheritance, and even though we still experience all types of enslavement and troubles, we have nonetheless been truly privileged. The Creator has drawn us close to His service and has given us the Torah at Mount Sinai, and we maintain the ability to connect ourselves to the Creator through the Torah and the commandments we received.

(Based on *Likutei Halachot, Hilchot Pesach 7*)

Wishing all our readers and the entire Nation of Israel and Kosher and Happy Passover!