

איִפֶּקָה
Ayeka

Pesach Sessions



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Making the National Story My Story	3
Facilitator Guide	4
Participant Guide	6
II. Meaning of Matza	9
Facilitator Guide	10
Participant Guide	12
III. Why Maror	15
Facilitator Guide	16
Participant Guide	19
IV. Seder and Love	22
Facilitator Guide	23
Participant Guide	25
V. Moving into Adulthood	27
Facilitator Guide	28
Participant Guide	30

I. MAKING THE NATIONAL STORY MY STORY

MAKING THE NATIONAL STORY MY STORY

FACILITATOR GUIDE

In every generation a person is obligated to view himself as if he went out of Egypt, as it is written, “You shall tell your child on that day saying: It is because of this that the Lord did for me when I went out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:8) It was not only our fathers whom the Holy One redeemed from slavery; we too were redeemed with them, as it is written, “He brought us out from there so that he could take us to the land which He had promised to our fathers.” (Deuteronomy 6:23)

The Pesach Seder challenges us to do more than relate a past event or recount an historical narrative. It pushes us to go beyond experiencing feelings of joy and gratitude evoked by the story itself. The Haggada demands that we tell the story as a first person narrative; it challenges us to make the national story of the beginnings of the Jewish people into our personal one. The matza, the bitter herbs, the wine, and the songs are not props we use to evoke the feelings and responses felt by others. These are tools to evoke memories — our own memories.

In addition to the psychological challenge of trying to “re-experience” something I personally never experienced, we need to ask ourselves: Why does the Haggada makes such a great demand? Why isn’t telling the story enough? Why does it have to be my story?

In order to explore this question, I would like to begin with the question of why telling this story is so important in the first place. Many would answer that participating in a Seder and telling this story every year makes us feel connected to the Jewish people. Our awareness that we share a common history, and tell it on the same night using the same tools, gives us a powerful sense of belonging and connection.

Why is that so important?

I understand that we all have a need for community, an identity that is shared by others which links us to them. Whether it’s Ecclesiastes telling us “Two is better than one,” Aristotle’s description of man as a social animal, or contemporary psychologists and sociologists stressing the importance of being connected to a group, the consensus is that people have a primal and critical need to belong to something greater than ourselves.

But why the Jewish community? Why the Jewish people?

Jewish peoplehood is challenging for many of us. I have a real desire to be part of a community, but why not a community that shares values, interests, and opinions that I have chosen freely?

Why should my ethnicity or origins determine who my community is? Often Jewish peoplehood can feel more like a burden and less like an opportunity.

A second challenge concerns the negative legacy that many associate with Jewish peoplehood. Anti-Semitism and shared suffering often dominate the discussion about building a collective Jewish identity. It is hard to buy into a community that sometimes emphasizes its shared bond in the outside persecution it has experienced more than in its positive, inherent qualities.

I believe the challenge posed by the Pesach Seder — of making the story my story, of personalizing the national — is essentially raising the question of what my connection to the Jewish people is.

The Maharal writes that leaving Egypt represents the birth of the Jewish people. Unlike other peoples who slowly develop and then declare independence, the Jewish People emerged whole, in the flash of the moment when we left Egypt. The Seder reenacts this national birth.

Rav Kook writes that the ideal culmination of the Seder experience is the integration of my private self with the national identity. My individual voice emerges from the national voice, as if I am playing one instrument amidst a symphony. My voice and the national voice join in a form of supportive and complimentary harmony. How might this happen without demanding absolute conformity and denial of the individual? A deep relationship with the Jewish people does not necessarily lead to the loss of my uniqueness. To the contrary, telling the national story can be a tool for helping me discover my voice.

Of course, all of this may rest on a challenging and perhaps unanswerable question. What are the Jewish people trying to build together today? What vision are we pursuing as a collective? Is there a vision that honors our individuality but still inspires us as part of something greater? The Haggada concludes with the hope of “Next Year in the Built Jerusalem.”

What is the Jerusalem we are trying to build? I believe that the Seder challenges us to consider these questions, and prompts us to explore our personal relationship with the Jewish people.

MAKING THE NATIONAL STORY MY STORY

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SOURCES

Excerpt from Passover Haggada

In every generation a person is obligated to view himself as if he went out of Egypt, as it is written, “You shall tell your child on that day saying: It is because of this that the Lord did for me when I went out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:8) It was not only our fathers whom the Holy One redeemed from slavery; we too were redeemed with them, as it is written, “He brought us out from there so that he could take us to the land which He had promised to our fathers.” (Deuteronomy 6:23)

ציטוט מהגדה של פסח

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בְּעֵבוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. לֹא אֶת אֲבוֹתַינִי בְּלֶבֶד גָּאֵל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֲלֵא אִף אוֹתְנִי גָאֵל עִמָּהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: וְאוֹתְנִי הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם, לְמַעַן הִבִּיא אֶתְנִי, לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם (דברים ו: כג)

Maharal, Gvurot HaShem, Chapter 3

The Midrash (Shochar Tov, Tehilim 116) writes that: “Just like a shepherd that put in his hand and extricated a fetus out of the womb of an animal, so too God took the Jews out of Egypt.”

Just like a fetus that is inside the mother’s womb and then emerges as a whole human being, so too the Jewish People grew inside of Egypt and then were fully born as a people.

מהר"ל, גבורות ה', פרק ג'

במדרש שוחר טוב (תהלים קט"ז): “ויוציא אכם מכור ברזל” – כעובר שהוא נתון בתוך מעיה של בהמה והרועה נותן ידו ושומטו, כך הנסה אלוהים לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי.”

אמרו שהיו ישראל דומים לעובר במעי בהמה מחובר לאם . . . שהיו ישראל במצרים כמו העובר שנתהוה בבטן אמו ולבסוף יוצא כאשר נשלם הווייתו, כך בני ישראל היו מתגדלים ומתהווים בתוך מצרים עד שנעשו שלמים. . .

Commentary of Rav Kook on the Haggada

When one has now (at the conclusion of the Seder) plumbed the depths of the character of the national soul [one then realizes] — how the nature of the individual soul emerges from the nature of the national soul — and how the freedom of the individual soul cannot be detached and is integrally part of the national soul.

פירוש הרב קוק על ההגדה

כשכבר עמד על עומק האופי של הנשמה הישראלית, וידע את כח ההדרכה התורנית, איך שהיא תולדה נמשכת מטבע הנפש הכללית וטבע הנפש הפרטיט, איננו ענין אחר כי אם להיות חושקת מצד חירותו להיות נאגדת ונכללת עם הנטייה הכללית.

Closing line of the Haggada

Next year in the Built Jerusalem

משפט הסיום של ההגדה

לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What birthing symbolism do you notice in the story of the Exodus?
2. Rav Kook appears to see the goal of the Seder as being an integration of the individual with the collective or national. What do you think he means? How do you think the Seder is meant to accomplish this?

WRITING EXERCISE

1. How do you see your soul being entwined with the national soul of the Jewish People?
2. What would a “Built Jerusalem” look like to you?
3. Do you see yourself having a role in this building?

SPIRITUAL CHEVRUTA

1. How would you describe your relationship/connection with the Jewish people?
2. What would you like your relationship to be?
3. What might be preventing you from having this connection?
4. How would your life be different if you had the relationship or connection you wanted?

II. MEANING OF MATZA

MEANING OF MATZA

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Matza is the defining feature of Pesach. In our liturgy, Pesach is called the Holiday of Matzot. With matza the dominant symbol of the holy day, I ask myself: what is the eating of matza supposed to teach me? What passes through my mind when the matza passes through my mouth?

The Torah associates matza with the experience of being rushed or hurried: “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had taken out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay.” (Exodus 12:39) While the idea of being rushed or pushed out in a frenzy might appear to relate only to the actual leaving of Egypt, we find a similar idea related to the very first seder that the Jewish People prepared and ate during the night before they leave. Here they are told to eat that meal, matza included, with “loins girded, sandals on your feet and staff in hand, for you shall eat it *b’chipazon* (hurriedly).” (Exodus 12:11)

Beyond evoking the rushing out of Egypt, matza encapsulates the value of *chipazon*, to do something in a rush. Don’t look for complicated recipes and or interesting ingredients, don’t let the dough rise, just throw some water and flour together and let’s get moving! Two questions emerge for me when I consider this topic:

1. How is being in a rush a positive value that I should think about for seven days?
2. Haven’t I been told my whole life to slow down, take my time, and think about what I am doing? Doesn’t rushing lead to mistakes, carelessness, or lack of seriousness? I can understand recalling being rushed out of Egypt as part of experiencing the story, but...

How could *chipazon* be an educational value I am supposed to incorporate into my life?

One approach could be distinguishing between acting impulsively and acting with passion. R. Zadok HaCohen of Lublin offers a deep insight: We were not just slaves in Egypt; we were stuck in Egypt. Something momentous was needed to enable us to leave. We needed *chipazon*. He suggests that when we respond to a powerful need we generate a power and energy that allow us to break free and transform ourselves. *Chipazon* is about fully embracing the excitement of a powerful moment. It is about seizing an opportunity.

Analyzing and objective reasoning cause us to step back and create distance. We consider all

the angles, chew on all the possibilities, and calmly measure our options. Our first steps into freedom had to come with overwhelming excitement and desire. Pesach is about stepping into that moment and immersing ourselves in the experience. R. Zadok challenges us to see leaving Egypt like falling in love, not like making a financial investment decision. In our lives there are important decisions and actions that need to be spurred by a powerful moment, rather than by premeditation.

The *chipazon* of matza also teaches us to open ourselves to a different way of knowing. In his book, *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell suggests logic or conscious thinking may not always be the best way to know something. Trusting our instincts and listening to our gut feeling can offer us awareness and insight that rational analysis cannot provide.

Matza is the food of immediacy. On a night given over to talking about challenge, redemption, and gratitude, perhaps over-thinking interferes with our ability to experience.

Another theme connected to matza is humility. The MaHaRaL of Prague notes that whereas bread dough rises and gets all puffy, matza is bread in its most simple, basic form. Stripped down to the barest essentials, matza symbolizes the human being without titles, honors, accomplishments, degrees, or self-importance. Just us. I believe that *chipazon* also relates to humility. When we sense and accept the limits of our power we are open to trusting and needing something greater than ourselves.

The humility of the Jewish People to embrace the limits of their power and accept the reality that they could not redeem themselves opened them up to trusting God and rushing out of Egypt into the unknown. When we choose matza we choose to strip away, at least temporarily, the wrappings that make us feel safe, secure, powerful, and independent.

MEANING OF MATZA

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SOURCES

Exodus 12:11, 39

And you shall eat it this way; loins girded, sandals on your feet and staff in hand, for you shall eat it *b'chipazon* (hurriedly).

And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had taken out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay.

שמות פרק יב פסוק יא, לט

וככה תאכלו אתו מתניכם חגרים נעליכם ברגליכם ומקלכם בידכם ואכלתם אתו בחפזון פסח הוא לה' :

ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגת מצות כי לא חמץ כי גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם צדה לא עשו להם :

R. Zadok HaCohen, *Zidkat HaZaddik* 1:1

The first steps of Divine worship must be with *chipazon*, hurried, as we find with Pesach in Egypt that was eaten *b'chipazon*, unlike the Pesach of subsequent generations. In every beginning - a person must detach himself from all the drives and desires that hold him back.

He must sustain the moment of his momentous awakening to do God's will, and impulsively rush to escape from whatever holds him back.

ר' צדוק הכהן מלובלין - צדקת הצדיק אות א

ראשית כניסת האדם לעבודת ה' צריך להיות בחפזון כמו שמצינו בפסח מצרים שהיה נאכל בחפזון ולא פסח דורות. מפני שהתחלה לנתק עצמו מכל תאוות עולם הזה שהוא מקושר בהם צריך לשמור הרגע שמתעורר בו רצון ה' ולחפוז על אותו רגע למהר לצאת מהם אולי יוכל.

Excerpt from Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink*, p. 39-40

“We live in a world that assumes that the quality of a decision is directly related to the time and effort that went into making it... We believe that we are always better off gathering as much information as possible and spending as much time as possible in deliberation... We really only trust conscious decision-making.

But there are moments, particularly in times of stress, when haste does not make waste, when our snap judgments and first impressions can offer a much better means of making sense of the world. We need to respect the fact that it is possible to know without knowing why we know, and accept that — sometimes — we're better off that way.”

MaHaRaL of Prague, *Gevurot Hashem* Chapter 51

Matza is called “the bread of poverty” because it is low, not puffed up like leavened bread... The poor person does not have a lot of things, thus matza symbolizes simplicity

מהר"ל, גבורות ה' 51

יש לשאול למה נקרא מצה לתס עוני. וראיתי לקצת אשר רצו לפרש דברי הנדה הזאת דלכך נקרא עוני מפני שהיא נמוכה ואינה גבוהה שהחמץ כאשר נתחמץ הוא געשה גבוה ומצה היא נמוכה כמו העני.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. If the people knew when they were going out of Egypt, why do think God commands them to eat their meal ready to travel? What are they meant to be experience by leaving Egypt in a rush?
2. What might be holding the people back in Egypt that a “great moment of arousal” might be necessary?
3. What type of things do we know from intuition or instinct that we cannot know through intellectual analysis?
4. What do you think is the relationship between humility and simplicity?

WRITING QUESTIONS

1. In what areas of your Jewish life would you like to have more passion and excitement?
2. What do you think is holding you back?
3. How would your Jewish life be different if you had more passion and intensity?
4. What are some steps you could take to make this happen?

SPIRITUAL CHEVRUTA

Share whatever part of the writing exercise (that you feel comfortable with) with your chevuta.

III. WHY MAROR?

WHY MAROR?

FACILITATOR GUIDE

And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; in all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor. (Exodus 1:14)

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (Exodus 12:8)

The question of why we eat maror (bitter herbs) would at first glance appear to be an obvious one. The bitter herbs are meant to evoke our sense of the intense suffering felt by the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptians. The experience of slavery was more than economic oppression. Forced labor and exploitation were more than physically exhausting and painful. Our suffering under the Egyptians stripped our lives of the joys and pleasures that normally constitute a happy existence.

When I probe a little deeper, however, two questions emerge for me.

First, why would I want to evoke pain and suffering on a night when I want to feel celebratory?

I understand the place of remembering difficult times of our collective past, but is this night, a night meant for celebration and joy, really the right time? Would we want Holocaust Remembrance to have an official moment during Hanukkah or Purim? Why would I want to evoke a “downer” like suffering when I have just eaten the bread of freedom and sung songs of praise and gratitude?

My second question goes to the ritual itself.

How is eating lettuce or horseradish supposed to help me experience or relate to the bitterness of slavery?

Do I really believe that consuming a food I don't care for will somehow give me greater insight or empathy for genuine suffering? No matter how much fiery hot horseradish we put in our mouths, it seems to me we are not any closer to understanding the experience of the Israelites in Egypt.

I believe that our use of maror at the Seder is less about experiencing the hardships of Egypt, but rather an opportunity to experience and reflect how we can meaningfully engage sorrow and pain in both our personal and national lives. Suffering and sadness are part of everyone's story. It is the unavoidable price we pay for being vulnerable and limited. We need tools and opportunities to integrate the hard and painful parts of our lives into our story without allowing them to erase all the joy and gratitude we still want to experience.

The Baal HaTanya, R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, draws a fascinating distinction between two types of sadness.

The first he refers to as bitterness. Bitterness is a form of regret or sadness that emerges from a sense that things are broken, or less than ideal. This form of sadness is positive, he says, because it emerges from a place of idealism, hope, and a powerful desire to change. We are “bitter” because we sense that a vital and healthy part of ourselves is not finding expression in the world. It is precisely our capacity for hope and transformation that makes this type of sadness possible. Our sense of loss is informed by our appreciation for a whole.

The second type of sadness is depression. This type of sadness “closes our hearts” with despair, numbs our feelings, and blocks out all joy. From this perspective, perhaps we eat maror to explore how to move from a sadness that holds us back to a sadness that can lead to growth and change. When dealing with hard things I often find I am choosing between allowing sadness to dominate my mood versus trying to ignore it and put it aside altogether. The narrative of the Seder refutes this false dichotomy. We don't deny the difficulties and pain, but maybe we can put it into a wider context that includes joy and gratitude. We make room for sadness without letting it take over. We eat the maror with the matza.

Another approach emerges from a comment of R. Yeshayahu Horowitz in a derasha about Pesach. Citing the Talmudic requirement to chew the maror as opposed to just swallowing it, he interprets that by chewing the maror with our teeth we sweeten it. As opposed to denying difficulty or sadness we must engage it and reflect upon it. Although it is hard to be grateful for the painful moments in my life, I am sometimes surprised at what they teach me about myself and who I am.

Both as individuals and as a people, we are products of our challenges as much as our successes; sadness as well as joy.

While I cannot deny the hard feelings associated with the difficult or sad moments of my life, I can “sweeten” them by accepting them as an essential part of my story. The suffering in Egypt and the memory of that suffering was part of what made the Jewish people.

Our eating of maror and talking about slavery might also carry with it a lesson about the negative power of shame. I don't like sharing my stories of pain or difficulty. They often feel like stories of failure. It often feels like my pain is a result of my inadequacy in managing my life or lack of success. If I were a better person, more capable, wiser, more powerful, my story would be all about happiness. Sadness becomes associated with failure. By including the pain and humiliation in our national story of birth and redemption we are reminding ourselves that pain, sadness, and

difficulty are part of everyone's story. I don't need to paper over it or pretend it's not there. My challenge is to include fully the hard parts of my story, both individually and nationally, and still feel joy and gratitude. Our plates include bitter herbs right next to the matza and the wine.

WHY MAROR?

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SOURCES

Excerpt from Passover Haggada

This maror that we eat for what reason? Because the Egyptians embittered our fathers' lives in Egypt, as it is said:

“They made their lives bitter with hard service, with mortar and with bricks, and with all manner of service in the field; all their service which they made them serve with rigor.” (Exodus 1:14)

ציטוט מהגדה של פסח

מרור אלו שאנחנו אוכלין, על שם מה--על שם שמררו המצריים את חיי אבותינו במצרים, שנאמר
”וימררו את-חיייהם בעבדה קשה, בחמר ובלבנים, ובכל-עבדה, בשדה--את, כל-עבדתם, אשר-עבדו
בהם, בפרך” (שמות א: יד)

R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Likkutei Amarim* 31

In truth, however, the state of being contrite of heart and bitter of soul i.e., remorseful over one's remoteness from God — this state can by no means be described in the Holy Tongue (Hebrew) by the term “*atzvut*”. The word *atzvut*, meaning “melancholy”, stems from a root that means “constricted”. In this context, it refers to a numbing depression that constricts one's heart, blocking out all feeling. For “*atzvut*” means that one's heart is as dull as a stone, and that there is no vitality — arousal of feeling — in his heart.

But “bitterness” (*merirut*) and contrition are just the opposite, since the very fact that one is moved to be embittered is itself a sign of life, and expresses itself as bitterness.

ר' שניאור זלמן מלאדי - ליקוטי אמרים 31

אך באמת אין לב נשבר ומרירות הנפש על ריחוקה מאור פני ה' נקראים בשם עצבות כלל בלשון הקודש כי עצבות היא שלבו מטומטם כאבן ואין חיות בלבו אבל מרירות ולב נשבר אדרבה הרי יש חיות בלבו להתפעל ולהתמרמר.

R. Yeshayau Horowitz, *Two Tablets of the Covenant: Tractate Pesachim*

Maror: We must chew it, and with the chewing we sweeten the bitterness of them. Thus one who swallows the bitter herbs has not fulfilled his requirement until he chews them and sweetens them.

של"ה מסכת פסחים מצה שמורה

'מרור'. וצריך ללועסו, ובלועסו ימתק המרירות שבהן, ולכן בלע מרור לא יצא (פסחים קטו ב), עד שילעסנו וימתיקנו.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Seder asks us to experience the bitterness of slavery as part of telling the story? How does eating bitter herbs help you do it?
2. The Tanya describes two different types of sadness. What is your reaction to this typology?
3. Do you think wisdom or understanding can sweeten sadness or bitterness? What type of wisdom do you think is being suggested here?

WRITING EXERCISE

1. How do you relate to the sad or painful parts of your life story?
2. What would it take for you to change your relationship to these experiences in a more positive or transformative way?
3. What do you think is holding you back?
4. How would your life be different if you could change it?

SPIRITUAL CHEVRUTA

Share whatever part of the writing exercise (that you feel comfortable with) with your chevruta.

IV. SEDER AND LOVE

SEDER AND LOVE

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Instructions to facilitator: this session includes an experiential drawing exercise. Provide pastels and paper for participants.

If I invited you to do a Jewish program for Passover – and asked you to please bring a mattress, a bottle of wine, and some kind of aphrodisiac – you would probably look at me askance. Maybe even consider having me investigated.

But what do we do on Passover Seder night? We drink 4 glasses of wine, recline on pillows, and eat everyone’s favorite “aphrodisiac”– *charoset* – which is made from apples, wine, and nuts – the ingredients mentioned in the Song of Songs, the love song of the Bible.

What were the Rabbis who compiled the Haggada thinking?!

It would have been so easy to create a simple Haggada recounting the sudden and miraculous exodus from Egypt – quoting the appropriate verses and simply retelling the story. But those who invented the Haggada apparently had something else in mind. They didn’t want us to present an historical recounting of what happened. And they didn’t want us just to “relive” it sensually – by eating the bread of affliction, tasting the bitter herbs, and drinking to our redemption. There is something more going on here.

More than “re-live” the exodus, they wanted us to “re-love” it.

They wanted us to focus less on what happened and focus more on how we feel about what happened. They wanted us to dive into the “love relationship” of thousands of years ago – when the love was new.

How is this night really different from all other nights?

This is the night for love – for feeling God’s love for us. And it is easy to miss the moment. So the writers of the Haggada tried creatively to help us recapture its essence in the events of the Seder:

What do people do when they fall in love? What do new lovers do?

- They are romantic: Four cups of wine, reclining, and *charoset* set the mood. (The ingredients of *charoset* – a mixture of dates, apples, nuts, and red wine – are the foods mentioned in Shir Hashirim. It is as if we are eating Shir Hashirim!)

- They are large in spirit, generous: “Dinner on me tonight!” “Drinks on the house!” How do we open the Seder? – “Let anyone who is hungry come and eat!”
- They exaggerate: “He is the most loving, the most caring, the most giving.” What do we read in the Haggada? – “There weren’t 10 plagues – but 50! Not 50 – but 250!”
- They stay up all night talking: What do we do at the Seder? Stay up talking late into the night.
- They talk about their common visions, about starting a family, and about their ideal future together: At the Seder we talk about visions of leaving Egypt and being led to the Land of Israel, we talk about family – the 4 sons, and about our ideal future as a people – ‘Next year in rebuilt Jerusalem!’
- They write poetry to each other: How do we conclude the Seder? There is a custom to recite the love poetry of “Shir Hashirim” – the Song of Songs after the Seder.

What’s going on? Why don’t we just recite the verses in the Torah about the Jewish people leaving Egypt. Why all this carrying on?

Love evokes love.

God’s act of bringing us out of Egypt “on the wings of eagles” – was an act of love.

On Passover, we respond to God’s love with love of our own. The events of the Seder are meant to evoke our feelings of love.

God’s act of love for us evokes our love for God. So we respond by drinking wine, reclining, and eating an aphrodisiac. By singing, exaggerating, and reading poetry. This is the night we rekindle our love for God.

When couples who have been married for many years look at their wedding album and reminisce about their first moments together it almost always rekindles the love of their relationship.

The Haggada is like the wedding album evoking love all over again. The Seder night is the sensual reminiscing. Love is perhaps the most liberating and expansive of all emotions. It gives us the power to dare; the foundation to move ahead, and the courage to move out of our smaller limited selves. It is the message of Pesach.

Bottom line: the Passover Seder is intended to be an emotional experience of rekindling the love between God and the Jewish People.

SEDER AND LOVE

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SOURCES

R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Likkutei Amarim* 46

What is the meaning of the verse:

“As in water, face to face, so is the heart of man to man?”

כמים, פנים לפנים, כן לב האדם אל האדם.

There is good way, which is suitable for all and is “very close” indeed, to arouse and kindle the light of the love that is implanted and concealed in one’s heart, so that it may shine forth with its intense light, like a burning fire, in the consciousness of the heart and mind - with all his heart, his soul and might - from the depth of the heart, in absolute truth.

This way is: to take to heart the meaning of the verse: “As in water, face to face, so is the heart of man to man.”

This means that the face which a person presents to the water – the same identical face is reflected back to him from the water. So also with hearts of people. Loving awakens a loving response from another. Cementing their mutual love and loyalty for each other. Such is the common nature in the character of every person, when they are equal in status.

How much more so when a great and mighty king shows his great and intense love for a commoner who is despised and lowly among men . . . yet the king comes down to him from the place of his glory, together with all his retinue, and raises him and exalts him . . .and brings him into his palace, the royal palace, in the innermost chamber, a place such as no servant nor lord ever enters, and there shares with him the closest companionship with embraces and kisses and spiritual attachment with heart and soul - how much more will the love be aroused and doubled in the heart of this most common and humble individual for the person of the king. Even if his heart be like stone it will surely melt and become water, and his soul will pour itself out, with soulful longing for the love of the king.

In a manner corresponding in every detail but to an infinitely greater degree, has the Lord our God dealt with us . . . For the Holy One, blessed be He, forsakes the higher and lower creatures

choosing none of them but Israel His people, whom He brought out of Egypt . . . in order to bring them near to Him in true closeness and unity, with a truly soulful attachment on the level of “kisses” of mouth to mouth...

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What line or idea in this section resonates with you?
2. What does the idea that loving God “is implanted and concealed in a heart” reflect about human nature?
3. Have you ever experienced people responding in love after you conveyed your love to them - “As in water, face to face, so is the heart of man to man”?

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

Draw abstractly this moment of spiritual connection between God and the Jewish People.

SPIRITUAL CHEVRUTA

1. Share something from the drawing exercise.
2. Think of “small moments” in your daily life that bring you to sense God’s love.
Think of a significant moment in your life that brought you to sense God’s love.
3. Is there anything that makes you resistant to God’s love?
4. What is a comfortable way for you to express your love for God?

V. MOVING INTO ADULTHOOD

MOVING INTO ADULTHOOD

FACILITATOR GUIDE

For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not allow destruction to come upon your houses to smite you. (Exodus 12:23)

Up until this moment, the Israelites in Egypt, our ancestors, had been passive. For the last 210 years they had been slaves. During the last year, the time of the 10 plagues, they were “unslaved”. But most of them remained passive, silently observing the power plays between Moses, Pharaoh, and God.

Then they were asked to perform an act. Not a simple or private act. An act of defiance and rebellion: to slaughter a lamb (sacred in Egypt) and smear the blood on the doorposts of their homes.

Why?

So that God will know which homes were inhabited by Israel? Shouldn't God have been able to figure this out without an external sign?

The blood on the doorposts was not a sign for God, but for the People of Israel themselves. They had moved out of slavery, out of a childlike period of following orders and being told what to do, but they had not yet moved into adulthood. How does one move into adulthood?

Adulthood is not simply a matter of age and is not born of an automatic process. Critical self-awareness defines the state of mind and actions of an adult. While becoming an adult, an individual often dissolves and recomposes her/his relationship with self, other, world, and God.

In other words: being an adult means personal decisions which reflect an independent viewpoint of the world.

God confronts Israel with a decision, the choice of a lifetime. Where are they, emotionally and spiritually, at this moment? Will they be able to break with their past, with what has been familiar and expected, to plunge into an unknown and perhaps frightening future?

This dissolution and recomposition of self is an eternal paradigm of emerging adulthood. At some point in life, each person encounters the dilemma: “Will I simply continue the way I was raised, or

can I critically evaluate my past upbringing and clarify what I truly, independently, believe?”

This was the question now posed to the ancestors of the Jewish people. They had been slaves for generations and generations, and as awful as this may have been, at least it was known and familiar.

It is not by chance that this rite of passage was marked by the use of blood. This was a moment in which the People of Israel dipped into the force of life — the force of their lives — to “pass over” into their next stage of being.

Moving into adulthood is not a matter of age but of action. The proactive decision is always a challenging and fear-provoking test.

DURING THE SEDER

After reading this section of the Haggada:

What did we choose?

READ OUT LOUD

Up until this moment, the Jews in Egypt had been passive. Now they are asked to perform an act. Not a simple or private act; an act of defiance and rebellion.

The Jews had to place the blood on the doorposts, not for God but for themselves. They had moved out of slavery, out of a childlike period of following orders and being told what to do, but they had not yet moved into adulthood.

Moving into adulthood is not a matter of age but of action. The proactive decision is always a challenging and fear-provoking test.

MOVING INTO ADULTHOOD

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SOURCES

Exodus Chapter 12:21-28

21. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them: “Take lambs for your families, and kill one for the Passover sacrifice.
22. Then take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and place it upon the lintel of the door and the two side-posts. No one should leave the door of his house until the morning.
23. For God will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the doorposts God will pass over the door, and will not allow destruction to come upon your houses to smite you.
24. And you shall observe this thing as a law for yourselves and your children forever.
25. And it will come to pass, when you will come into the Land which God will give you, according to the promise He made, that you will keep this service.
26. And it will come to pass, when your children will ask you: ‘What does this service mean to you?’
27. That you will say: ‘It is the sacrifice of God’s Passover, for God passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and saved our households.’ Thereby the people bowed their heads and prostrated themselves.
28. Then the children of Israel went and did as God had commanded Moses and Aaron.

שמות פרק יב:כא-כח

כא. ויקרא משה לכל זקני ישראל ויאמר אליהם משכו וקחו לכם צאן למשפחותיכם ושחטו הפסח:

כב. ולקחתם אגדת אזוב וטבלתם בדם אשר בסף והגעתם אל המשקוף ואל שתי המזוזות מן הדם אשר בסף ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר :

כג. ועבר ה' לנגף את מצרים וראה את הדם על המשקוף ועל שתי המזוזות ופסח ה' על הפתח ולא ייתן המשחית לבא אל בתיכם לנגף :

כד. ושמרתם את הדבר הזה לחוק לך ולבניך עד עולם :

כה. והיה כי תבוא אל הארץ אשר ייתן ה' לכם כאשר דבר ושמרתם את העבדה הזאת :

כו. והיה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם מה העבדה הזאת לכם :

כז. ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לה' אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו את מצרים ואת בתינו הציל ויקד העם וישתחוו :

כח. וילכו ויעשו בני ישראל כאשר ציוה ה' את משה ואהרן כן עשו :

Midrash Rabbah, Parshat Bo, Exodus 17:3

Why did God have the Jews use blood to protect themselves?

In order to remind them of the blood of the circumcision of Abraham. Because of two instances of blood the Jewish People were saved in Egypt: the blood of the Passover offering and the blood of circumcision. As it is written in the book of Ezekiel (16:6), "I am telling you that on account of your blood(s) you will live." Which blood(s)? The blood of Passover and the blood of circumcision.

שמות רבה פרשת בא פרשה יז סימן ג

מה ראה הקדוש ברוך הוא להגן עליהם בדם?

כדי לזכור להם דם מילת אברהם, ובב' דמים ניצולו ישראל ממצרים : בדם פסח ובדם מילה, שנא' (יחזקאל טז) "ואומר לך בדמך חיי ואומר לך בדמך חיי", בדם פסח ובדם מילה.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What was your “adult moment”? Did you sense the presence of God at this moment? Were you frightened? Did you hesitate?
2. Have you ever felt God asking or urging you to do something in order to move to the next stage of your life? What was it?
3. Imagine you are placing the blood on the doorpost of your home. You have just dipped the branch in the blood of the Pesach offering. You are now walking to the door and reaching up with your hand. Describe your mood and thoughts.

