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PESACH



When To Speak About the War at Your Seder. And What To Say.

It has now been more than a half a year that Israel is at war. Tragically, it appears that we may be observing the 'holiday of freedom' while our beloved brothers and sisters are still being held hostage in Gaza. So many soldiers protecting our nation will not be home to celebrate with their families.

Our Seder this year takes on a unique complexion.

For this reason, it is fitting at our Seders to include special prayers, Tehillim, or perhaps a reading about the precious lives that were lost, or sharing a story of courage and faith in this regard.

WHEN ON SEDER NIGHT?

Is there an optimal time during the Seder to address the war? There are a number of places that have been suggested by rabbis and I share here one recommendation based on a chassidic teaching: A poignant moment to pray or share words regarding this painful period is early on at the Seder, when we break the matzah in half; *Yachatz*.

Why here?

An exquisite explanation in chassidic thought offered for this ritual suggests that the breaking of the matzah represents the

brokenness in the world. The broken matzah symbolizes the innumerable broken hearts, broken lives... the endless tears. The broken matzah signifies that the world is badly fractured and we need to know that in order to repair it.

Immediately following that ritual of splitting the matzah in two the larger broken piece is carefully tucked away. This half piece which is hidden is known as the *Afikoman*. And it is that broken matzah which will be brought back to the table at the end of the Seder. Everyone at the table then eats a piece of it.

Who brings the piece of matzah back to the table? The long held custom is for the children to search for it and they then excitedly present it to everyone.

There is far-reaching symbolism here. Who will fix the brokenness? If we, in our day, are unsuccessful in mending the deep fragmentation, we have faith that our children will. Seder night our children bring back the broken piece and make the world whole again. (The Night That Unites Haggadah p.66)

WHAT MESSAGE TO SHARE?

The Seder is best known for being a night of questions and answers. And yet, perhaps

the most important lesson to convey to our children Seder night is *not* that we have all the answers. Rather, we need to share that although in life we are faced with many questions, there will be questions which we simply cannot answer. But one thing we are sure of is that we have Hashem in our lives. And that Hashem is good and full of compassion.

When reaching the Seder's end we drink a fourth cup of wine. At this point we are no longer relaying the story of the exodus from Egypt, rather, we lift that cup of wine to acknowledge, with anticipation, the future redemption. As the Seder comes to a close we are making the following statement to our children (...and to ourselves and all those around the table): "I don't know when the Redemption will happen. I don't know how it will happen. But one thing I know beyond a shadow of doubt, my dear children, is that the Redemption *will* come." In a word, the night of Seder is a night of faith. (Ibid., p. 252)

THE SHAPE OF THE MATZAH

The Lubavitcher Rebbe cited the well known explanation that the three pieces of matzah placed on the Seder table correspond to the three distinct segments that make up the Jewish people - *Kohen, Levi* and *Yisrael*.

The Rebbe added that the *rashei tevot* - the first letters of each word - spell out the word *KLI* (כלי), a vessel. This teaches that every Jew must endeavor to be a 'vessel', a repository filled with sanctity and kindness.

The Rebbe shared his unique Pesach practice of choosing pieces of matzah for the Seder that were not completely flat, but pieces that, in some measure, were bowl shaped, so that they resemble a receptacle. The matzah signifies that we must fashion our own lives in such a way so that they are brimming with benevolence and generosity. We are to be givers. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach* of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 32)

Troubling times abound. We feel besieged by hordes espousing hatred. But we as a people know how to respond. We reach even deeper into our reservoirs of faith. Every Jew: *kohen, levi, yisrael*, must continue to contribute, each in their own way, to bring light to this darkness. We must continue to uplift one another and widen the path towards a better future. We continue to pray to Hashem for comfort and for salvation. ■

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book 'Torah United' (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.



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