



# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

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PESACH



## The Meaning Behind the Leaning: Lessons for Today's Times

Many of us are probably asking ourselves – how are we meant to celebrate Pesach this year? Obviously, we need to go through the motions of Matzah and Maggid, but how can we really feel free when our brothers and sisters are being held hostage in Gaza, thousands of soldiers will be away from their families over Pesach, and many displaced families will be forced to conduct the Seder away from the comforts of home?

There's a fascinating discussion in **Gemara Pesachim 108a** that can give us some insight into this question. The Gemara discusses when one should lean during the Seder. Since leaning represents freedom, the Gemara explains that we do lean for Matzah, since Matzah is the symbol of Yetziat Mitzrayim, of running out so fast that there was no time for the dough to rise. We don't lean during Maror since it represents the bitterness of slavery. The Gemara then asks – what about

the 4 cups of wine? Should we lean for them?

The Gemara brings down two opinions. The first opinion says that we don't lean for the first two cups of wine since they book-end Maggid. We can't possibly feel free when we are still in the midst of the story of slavery and Yetziat Mitzrayim. We only lean for the last two cups of wine, once the story is over and we are completely free.

But the second opinion says the opposite. We don't lean for the last two cups because by then the story is already long over, we've already forgotten how terrible it was to be slaves and we can't truly appreciate our freedom anymore. When do we lean? Davka for the first two cups, DURING the actual telling of the story. Why? Because even though at that point we are still slaves and things are still difficult, we slowly begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. As we watch the scenes unfold, we see each stage slowly leading to redemption. *Moshe is born and is saved from drowning and is brought up in the Egyptian palace....Moshe grows up and identifies with the Jewish people and Hashem appoints him to go confront Paroh....Hashem begins to bring the Makkot.*

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Even as we are still in the midst of terrible pain and suffering, we start to watch the beginning of a process. And it is davka then, when we still feel that bitterness, that we can begin to recognize our journey towards freedom, and it is then that we can and should lean.

After bringing both opinions, the Gemara concludes that we should follow both approaches and lean for all four cups. What's the message for us? We can learn from here how important it is to be able to thank Hashem and celebrate our freedom at both stages. During today's difficult times, even when things seem very bitter, we need to be able to recognize Yad Hashem, to note what is being accomplished, and to recognize that we are part of a process. But we can't end there, when the war finally comes to a successful end, we need to be able to continue to thank Hashem and appreciate all He has done for many years to come. ■



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