The Passover Seder
A Laboratory for our Jewish Identity

The message of the Haggadah addresses the free person, with an aim to helping us understand that we must take responsibility for the freedom we have been granted. Freedom is a condition, and we must fill it with meaningful content. When we study the scriptures, we can ascertain that from the moment the nation received its freedom, it started upon a path of errors, negative responses and actions (the golden calf, non-stop complaints and supplications to return to Egypt), all of this in order to escape the responsibility of assuming a new Jewish identity in place of that which others (Pharaoh) had given them. Now they found that they must decide upon their own identity.

I propose to you to use the Pesach Seder and the Haggadah as a map, to assist us in examining our own identity today. Following are some way-stations that will illustrate the exercise.

Station #1 - The Search for Leaven (Chametz): We must examine everything that ferments and causes rot of the raw material. We must check which items in our Jewish identity came from non-Jewish sources, and especially we must check those which may «rot» in the raw material; - the Jewish tradition, Masoret Yisrael.

Station #2 - Nullification of the Chametz: We must nullify any remnant of chametz that may have remained after the Passover cleaning. We must once again examine our identity. After having understood that it is impossible not to be influenced by external factors, we must try to nullify or minimize them.

Station #3 - The Seder Signs or the Arrangement of the Seder: A way to remember the correct order of the Seder night. To enable us to have a clear identity, we must create an order in our thoughts, we must arrange them in a row so that we can know what is the path that we must follow in our search/trek that we initiated today.

Station #4 - Ha Lachma Ania – the Bread of Affliction: In the Haggadah the text appears in its original language, Aramaic – a foreign tongue. In our journey this tongue will help us to never forget the feeling of being foreign, to never forget the consistent exile of our people. Add to that the hope, the yearning for the normalization of our people in a place where we are committed to building our identity, without excuses, as there are no more Pharaohs. Here there is responsibility, so therefore – “The next year in Jerusalem”
Station #5 - Ma Nishtana – Wherefore is this night different from all other nights?

On Seder night, we must ask ourselves not only how is this night different from all other nights, but in what are we different from ourselves – how did we change from the previous Seder night; how did we fortify our Jewish identity, how did we expand our knowledge of the history and tradition of our people?

Pesach reminds us of the exodus from bondage to freedom, it reminds us of the heavy hand of the tyrant who made our choices for us, and it reminds us that we must accept responsibility for our future/identity, which is in our own hands.

Let us start today. We should remember that there is no harsher slavery than the bondage of ignorance. Let us assume responsibility and strengthen our identity.

If not now, when?

*Chag Kasher veSameach*

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