

PESACH



THE PROFOUND POTENTIAL OF PESACH

Every Jewish Holy Day celebrated annually carries tremendous spiritual potential, the same as what was released when the historical events commemorated first occurred.

This potential is released during the same time period each year, allowing us to grow spiritually in specific ways.

On Pesach, we commemorate Hashem's redemption of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Pesach thus offers us as well the potential for redemption from our own personal forms of slavery or *avoda zara* (idolatry).

Each of us has our own areas in which we would like to experience liberation and redemption. For example, we may suffer from unhealthy habits, overdependence

upon our instincts, strong passions, physical desires, negative character traits, or addiction. These weaknesses often interfere with how we really want to live our lives and may get in the way of our Godly mission.

While we can work on improvement in these areas at any point during the year, the holiday of Pesach offers us an extra *ko'ach* (power or force) to achieve personal freedom in the areas that “enslave” us.

NEKUDAT PNIMIUT - THE POINT OF DIVINE ESSENCE WITHIN US

“This day will be a remembrance [*zikaron*] for you”

(SHEMOT 12:14)

“So that you remember [*tizkor*] the day you came out of Egypt”

(DEVARIM 16:3)

“Keep [*shamor*] the month of Aviv”

(DEVARIM 16:1)

“You shall guard [*ushemartem*] the matzot”

(SHEMOT 12:17)

...About Pesach, too [the words for remembering, *zekhor*, remember, and *shamor*, keep, are used].

Memory [*zikaron*] is a point within, one where there is no forgetfulness... This point has to be “kept” or guarded from flowing into the place where forgetting occurs...

Each Pesach, a Jew becomes like a new person, just like he was when he left Egypt, like a newborn child.

[On Pesach,] the point implanted by God within the hearts of the Jewish people [upon leaving Egypt] is renewed. That point is called *lechem oni* (the bread of the poor) because it is totally without expansion. Matzah is just the dough itself, before having

changed through fermentation.

Every Jew has this inner place, which is a gift of God. Our task is really to expand that point, to draw all our deeds to follow it.

This is our job throughout the year... But this holiday of matzot is the time when the point itself is renewed and purified from any defilement. Therefore, it has to be guarded from any “ferment” or change on this holiday.

THE SEDER

The Chidushei HaRim suggests that calling the ritual of this night “Seder” conveys a message of great significance. Miracles are not simply haphazard events – rather there is a methodical symmetry to the way Hashem arranges the wonders He does... A function of the Seder is to instill a sense of “order” to the events of the Exodus...

The Exodus occurred with such rapidity... that the Jews had no time to absorb its significance. Therefore, we are given an opportunity each year to relive the events we could not appreciate as they were happening by discussing them, performing mitzvot that commemorate them, and praising Hashem for them. The Seder is far more than a replay of the same rituals year after year; on the contrary, each successful Seder adds meaning to the original events and brings us closer to the Final Redemption...

The final redemption cannot take place until we fully understand the meaning of the Exodus. By finding a new meaning in the story of the Exodus each year, and giving seder – order – to our understanding of that first night of our freedom as a nation, we bring closer

Mashiach's arrival and the final redemption. This is the reason why the Haggada states that the mitzva to relate the story of the Exodus "all the days of your life" (Devarim 16:3) includes the time of Mashiach as well.

LEIL SHIMURIM - A NIGHT OF PROTECTION

The Torah refers to the night of Pesach as "*leil shimurim*," which can be translated as "a night of protection."

The protection generated by the Seder night is actually sufficient to last for an entire year, as the Torah says (Shemot 12:42), "A protection for all the children of Israel for their generations."

The *afikoman*, which we keep intact until the end of the Seder instead of eating it earlier with the required portions of *matza*, is symbolic of the protection generated this night that continues beyond this one night.

Our ability to persevere in the face of the challenges we encounter throughout the year is undoubtedly in the merit of this protection.

This message of the *Sefat Emet* is particularly pertinent for us this year. As we battle our enemies around the world in this prolonged war for our existence, we should celebrate this year's *leil shimurim* by thanking Hashem for all of the miracles we have experienced so far and pray that this night makes us worthy of increased divine protection for the rest of the year.

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