

CHABAD INTOWN



In each generation and each day one should see themselves as if they left Egypt – today!

Passover is all about liberation from the physical slavery of Egypt and the internal limitations that confine us, that hold us back from living fully, from living happily, from having deep relationships, from living freely without angst,

tension and frustration. Yup it’s a life-long journey, but either get on the journey or stop complaining. To quote my new favorite leadership guru Brene Brown, “if you aren’t in the ring getting your behind kicked, I don’t want to hear your opinion”!

Passover is also all about questions. The Seder after all is entirely built as an answer to four questions (not the Mah Nishtana). They are asked by the four sons in the Torah and we are answering their questions. See it in the text of the Hagadah; “the wise one what does he say? What are these laws, etc. You should say to him... etc.”

So this year I have a bunch of questions I’m asking myself and I’ll be asking them at my Seder. I’ll be giving some anecdotes and stories to support the perspective Torah provides, but these are the questions!

Enjoy. If you use them at your Seder, I’d love to know how it went.

General Question about the Seder

Liberation

Am I present?

Am I prepared to ask the hard questions that will liberate me, set me on a new path of freedom and liberation?

Kadesh –

Intentionally taking a cup of wine and saying a blessing over it. Sanctifying the Shabbat and the Holiday with the consumption of the wine.



Do I take things into my body with intention, food items but also information?
Do I allow for intentional filters to prevent the flow of whatever is going on around me to enter into me? Or do I have a consciousness of what is going on around me and that which I am allowing in?

Urchatz -

Washing is an act of cleansing. An intentional act of preparation.

Am I busy being stuck on my old views, my world perspectives? Do I take a break, do I pause to allow my earlier perspectives to wash away so that I can be present anew, so that I can be open to new experiences?

Carpas –

Eating the bitter herb in preparation for digging deep.

Am I prepared to swallow the pill, to invest the hard work in making change in my life? Do I know that liberation requires great effort, sweat and tears, but that it's worth every bitter day of that journey?

Yachatz –

Break the middle Matzah.

Am I ready to allow brokenness to be a positive in my life? Am I ready to accept that some things are just the reality of my existence and that I can't undo the past, but that this doesn't need to be a hindrance? Do I know that cracks allow for a lot of good things to come through?

Magid –

Perhaps the hardest part of the Seder, the hardest part of real liberation is revisiting our narrative. The story we've told ourselves or the actual story.

Am I ready to embrace my story and see it as Divine orchestration to create the setting, the stage, upon which the story of my life continues to unfold?

Ruchtzah –

Time to wash again! It wasn't enough the first time around! Well it was enough for last round of liberation, but there is more ahead.

Am I ready to take action to motivate me to accept that no matter how far along I've come there is more growing to do? There is more liberation ahead? That my relationships can get deeper, that my connections can be more profound, that I can wash away the things that are holding me back?



Motzi -

In this deeper level of growth, we are ready to be more intentional about what we take in. But first we must bless.

Do I take pause to recognize that everything around me is a blessing? That there is blessings in every step of the journey? That each physical object and each human experience that has come into my sphere is Divinely designed as a blessing for me whether I connect the dots or not?

Matzah -

It's not just any bread, it's Matzah.

Do I have the humility in my journey to recognize that success is out of my hands and that all I can do is show up and do my best? Do I have the faith (matzah is called bread of faith) that I can succeed because I'm being helped from Above?

Marror -

It's hard core bitter herb time! Just when I thought I had arrived, I slipped up again.

Do I recognize that slipping up is also part of the plan? Do I recognize that if all of my growth was headed upwards I'd lose compassion for others? Do I recognize that that doesn't excuse me and that I have to allow for the discomfort of falling short to help propel me forward?

Korech -

Sandwich time – in the times of the Temple it was a steak, horseradish and matzah mcpassoverdelight!

Do I recognize that at times, it's just a big mishmash of emotions and stuff; Matzah, bitter herbs, steak, humility, humiliation, frustration, pleasure, enjoyment, delight? And do I realize that that's ok too? That sometimes things don't appear to be exactly where they need to be and that I can let go and let G-d?

Shulchas Urech -

Celebrate success, enjoy a hearty meal, you've earned it!

Do I pause to celebrate my success? Do I celebrate that G-d put us on this earth for a purpose, and at least I'm conscious of that purpose and am engaged in the journey? Do I celebrate with humility; that I've accomplished what I've been put here to do? That my accomplishments are not anything more than doing my job, but that that is reason alone to celebrate?



Tzefon -

Do it again. Eat a piece of Matzah for dessert. Revisit core humility.

Am I conscious of myself a bit too much? Do I let my successes get to my head or am I aware how quickly the great ones fall? Am I ready to realign myself constantly so that I don't go down the slippery slope?

Bayrach -

Recognize the blessings in your life.

Do I pause to count my blessings or am I too focused on what I don't have? Do I recognize that in material matters I have more than the other fellow and in spiritual matters I am on a journey? Do I thank G-d that He has given me the spiritual and intellectual tools to be able to live a life of meaning?

Hallel -

Give gratitude!

Do I say thank you, acknowledge, over and over again for those who have contributed to my journey? Do I realize that without them I'd never have gotten this far in my journey? That each and every individual in my life were put there for me to succeed?

Nirtsah -

Acceptance. Our Seder service was accepted.

Do I accept that it was accepted? Do I accept myself; that I showed up, did my Seder with more or less intention, with more or less presence, with more or less excitement, but I did it! Do I accept myself each day for having done what I could with the tools that I was provided with for today? Can I go to sleep in peace knowing that I am worthwhile and accepted by Hashem?

Lishana Habaa Biyirushalayim! Next year in Jerusalem!

My best wishes to you and yours to find freedom and liberation this year. Have a happy and kosher, liberating Pesach!

With love,
Rabbi Eliyahu Schusterman