



INTRODUCTION: EXPRESSIONS OF FREEDOM IN OUR OWN LIVES

Seder night invites many unique rituals designed to shape an intergenerational experience of reliving one of the formative moments of Jewish history. The central mitzvah of the night is our obligation to tell the story of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. We do so, not from the disposition of our daily obligation to recall the occurrence and significance of the event, but with a more ambitious goal of reliving the moment and internalizing its eternal impact upon our people.

Among the more awkward moments within the contemporary Seder experience, is the mitzvah of *haseibah*,

reclining. The act of leaning our body towards the left while eating and drinking, does not come naturally to most of us, yet, it is a halachic expectation that remains codified as an expression of our contemporary experience of “freedom.” Some rishonim are of the opinion that *haseibah* is an added dimension to the mitzvos of the Seder, and therefore neglecting its observance is a missed opportunity of giving full expression to our feelings of freedom on this sacred night. Other rishonim believe *haseibah* to be so substantial that it becomes part of

the mitzvos themselves. Neglecting *haseibah* would actually undermine the integrity of the *achilas matzah* itself, and one would be required to eat it again, with the proper posture of *haseibah*. [These two perspectives are developed by Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, *Chidushei Maran Riz Halevi, Chametz Umatzah 7:7.*]

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו
כאילו הוא בעצמו יצא אתה משעבוד מצרים
... לפיכך כשסועד אדם בלילה הזה צריך
לאכול ולשתות והוא מיסב דרך חירות.

In every generation, a person must demonstrate as if he personally went out now from the slavery of Egypt ...

Therefore, when one eats on this night (Seder night), one must eat and drink in a reclined position, demonstrating freedom.

**Rambam, Hilchos Chametz
Umatzah 7:7**

How does *haseibah*, a demonstrative expression of freedom, evolve from a symbolic ritual of commemoration, to transforming the very nature of the mitzvos themselves?

Rav Yitzchak Hutner, in his work *Pachad Yitzchak*, Pesach no. 76, explains that our goal for Seder night is to not only relive the experiences of history, but to also express their impact and reality in our own contemporary lives. The mitzvos of matzah and maror are commemorative of what occurred in Mitzrayim itself. They assist in our broader ambition of the night, to remember and relive the experiences of history. However, the mitzvah of *haseibah* is the ultimate expression of the Rambam's vision of Seder night because it is a physical manifestation of the freedom that we experience right now. We lean, not just because the Jews of Mitzrayim were freed. We lean because somewhere within our own life, we can identify dimensions of redemption that G-d has brought us. We recline because we too are beneficiaries of the emancipation that

took place thousands of years ago, and its impact echoes throughout our own world, as we embrace the freedoms that we enjoy and use them to grow in our avodas Hashem. To

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negate this element of Seder night is to undermine the larger impact of the entire Seder experience. This element must impact the way in which we eat the matzah and drink the wine.

We live in a complex world. In certain regards, the Jewish community enjoys unprecedented affluence and wealth. Yet in the areas of antisemitism,

assimilation, spiritual apathy, and affordability, we encounter enormous challenges. We often experience the bitter taste of maror and avdus, while at the same time regularly encounter the joys of achievement that are found in the unprecedented gifts of freedom enjoyed by our generation. In this issue of *Torah To Go*, we strive to understand how to achieve a balance in this struggle. How do we internalize the core message of Pesach — freedom to serve Hashem — while also recognizing that the success and freedom of our world, presents many opportunities for leisure and enjoyment? What is our attitude towards leisure? Do we view it as indulgent or necessary? Do we experience it as a goal or a compromise? To what extent does the moment of *haseibah* at our Seder, reflect an appropriate disposition towards the life that G-d has blessed us with?

Please enjoy the array of insights and ideas related to this subject, Pesach, and Yom HaAtzmaut.

Wishing you and your family a chag kasher vesamei'ach,



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