

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR PASSOVER - 2023

- 1) Spirituality:
 - a) Neshamah – soul
 - b) Yetser Ha-Ra – destructive urge
 - c) Spirituality: “an inner life discipline that disarms the yetzer hara and cultivates the realm of the soul, as much as possible”
- 2) Spiritual Religion
 - a) Use of various rituals, practices, myths and texts for spiritual work
 - b) Not all religion is spiritual, and not all spirituality is religious. Religion ought to offer spirituality.
- 3) Judaism as a Spiritual Religion
 - a) Various practices and texts, or interpretation of those practices and texts, have a spiritual focus.
 - i) The main ones: Mussar (contemplative moral discipline), Tefillah (the life of prayer), Torah (study of Torah and other holy texts), Mo’ed (the sacred calendar).
 - b) Our focus here is: “Mo’ed” – sacred time.
 - c) Two main cycles:
 - i) The summer-fall cycle: month of Elul, the High Holy Days, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret
 - ii) The spring cycle: Pesach and its antecedents, Shavuot at the end.
 - iii) (other holidays)
 - d) Studying the holy days:
 - i) Historical
 - ii) Ritual
 - iii) Metaphoric, Poetic, Moral lesson
 - iv) Transformative dimension (what do I do now)
- 4) The Passover Cycle
 - a) Redemption to Revelation (Pesach to Shavu’ot)
 - i) The biblical story of Passover to the Revelation of Torah (Ex 1-20)

- ii) Rituals regarding Passover: chametz (leaven), matzah, haggadah (telling the story). See Exodus 12 and 13.
- iii) Some Metaphoric, Poetic, Moral lessons:
 - (1) Spiritual Liberation: Liberation from the Yetzer HaRa that allows us to flourish as human beings, living lives of “osher” (spiritual happiness, in Hebrew)
 - (2) The four special portions: Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, HaChodesh
 - (a) Shekalim – the half shekel – our fullness is just beyond the horizon. The blueprint for the actualized self
 - (b) Zachor – cognizance of the nemesis within
 - (c) Parah – the striving for purity – no chametz whatsoever
 - (d) Hodesh – the time is now
 - (3) Galut/Geulah – Exile/Redemption (redemption vs. Salvation)
 - (4) Chametz – the spoiler. Intolerance for the slightest amount
 - (5) Chametz and Matzah – חמץ \ מצה
 - (6) “In every generation, every person is obligated to see him/herself as personally having come out of Egypt”
 - (a) “Each person comes out of his/her own Egypt – continuously” – the soul in exile.
 - (7) “Shortness of breath” “kotser ru’ach” Exodus 6:9. Haggadah (telling at length) as a tikkun (spiritual remedy) for shortness of breath.
 - (8) Asking questions: “ki yishal bincha” -- “when your child asks”
 - (9) Symbols of Redemption – our own
 - (10) Even the wise must tell the story
 - (11) Kabbalistic idea: God’s presence exiled in Egypt – Zohar on Genesis 46:4. The “dibbur” (revelation) is in exile in Egypt – we are in galut so as to rescue the dibbur
 - (12) Freedom – cheirut . Midrash play : cheirut – charut. Freedom is the ability to live up to one’s moral and spiritual duties.
 - (13) The splitting of Yam Suf (Sea of Reeds). Story of Nachshon ben Amminadav (Midrash). Exodus 14:22; see Numbers 7:12