

On Friday April 2<sup>nd</sup> we will celebrate Shvi'i Shel Pesach which according to our tradition, is the day that the Israelites crossed over the split Red Sea while fleeing from Egypt. But why is this day so important to us? We already celebrated the rescue from Egypt on the first and second night of Pesach, why do we have an extra holiday for this part as well?

In the Hagada a few days ago we said, "in every generation, a person must see themselves as they themselves have left Egypt". This is of course a bit hard to understand as well, how can I see myself as leaving Egypt, something that happened thousands of years ago?

There are many traditions for Shvi'i Shel Pesach, some read the Shira near the sea, some stay up all night and study Torah. There is a special Tikun from the Kabbalist's of Zefat similar to Shavuot eve, in the Hassidic tradition we have a special meal towards the end of the holiday called "Seudat Ha'baal Shem Tov" named after the holy Baal Shem Tov who initiated this meal, called in Chabad "Seudat Hamashiach", because according to the Baal Shem Tov, this is the time that the light of the Messiah starts lighting, based on the famous text in Bavli Rosh Hashanah (10b) that states: "in the month of Nisan we were redeemed (from Egypt) and in month of Nisan we will again be redeemed."

To understand the importance of the Holiday of Pesach in general and in the last day/s of Pesach we have to learn the Kabbalistic / Hassidic interpretation of the relevance to our days. In the Kabbalistic teachings and later in the Hassidic texts, the story of Egypt with Pharaoh and Moshe is not only something that happened in the past, some ancient story that we lived through in the past and are here to celebrate now, but rather more the cycle of our current life that we are reliving all the time.

Egypt and slavery represent the enslavement we all have to our negative thoughts and behaviours; Pharaoh represents the evil power that controls our minds and keeps us enslaved. And that is the state of mind we fall into through bad choices or bad circumstances of life, we didn't choose it, we of course want to be able to do the right thing, but we become slaves of our own actions which in an endless cycle doesn't allow us to get out of that situation. This of course doesn't have to mean that we become evil people, but rather that we are trapped and like the Israelites, that came to Egypt because their brother was the second in command there and they just wanted food, but then got stuck there for hundreds of years.

Moshe represents the good in us, the positive ideas in our minds, hearts and souls that want us to do the right thing, that sincere moment when we look at ourselves in the mirror and deep down we know what we really should be doing. But we are still in the "in between" state, still stuck in our situation and although we know where we should be, we still need to gather the strength to get there.

On the beginning of Pesach, we celebrate the leaving of Egypt, we celebrate the being freed from the actual slavery. But from there we came into the desert and there are still many obstacles we have to go through to really be freed, we have the entire Egyptian army chasing us from behind trying to pull us back, and the sea in front of us totally blocking us, a situation seeming impossible to survive. Then we have the great break through, the crossing of the sea! Only then are we really free to start our journey to get on the right path, and that is what we celebrate on Shvi'i Shel Pesach. It's not enough that we free ourselves from Egypt, we have to take that great leap of faith, cross over to

the other side of the river or “burn the bridges” to really start our journey as free people. And that is when the light of the Messiah starts to light, that is when we achieve that inner light of Messianic times that starts shining from this night on.

Let us all, each and every one of us, have the strength to be released of our “personal Egypt”, to be freed from all the negative powers that are holding us back, so that we can start our own journey towards the “promised land” and the days of “Messianic times” within us.

Chag Sameach!