

KADESH

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

Welcome to a series of explanations on the Hagada shel Pesach, the Passover Hagada. These thoughts come from a book currently being prepared for publication about the Seder. The focus of the explanations contained in the book are on the "seder" or order, of the steps of the Seder, and on the order of the passages in the step of Maggid. Hence, the explanations you will see here will be for the most part explaining the order, or significance of placement, of the steps of the Seder. There will be times, however, when a thought about the step is offered, as opposed to an explanation.

The steps of the Seder are :

1. Kadesh
2. Ur'Chatz
3. Karpas
4. Yachatz
5. Maggid
6. Rochtzo
7. Motzi
8. Matzo
9. Marror
10. Korech
11. Shulchan Aruch
12. Tzafun
13. Barech
14. Hallel
15. Nirtzah.

Question: The first step of the Seder is Kadesh, in which we recite the Kiddush over wine, sanctifying the night and the holiday. What is the significance of beginning the night with this step?

Answer: The step of Kadesh, the sanctification of the holiday, is something that the nation of Israel can do only when they themselves are sanctified and holy. What is this sanctity and holiness?

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, the "Or Sameach" connects the sanctity of Israel and the holiday to a statement of our sages, Cha"zal. Cha"zal have told us that the four cups of wine we drink on the Seder night are representative of the four expressions of redemption, the "Arba L'Shonos shel Ge'ulah" that Hashem uttered regarding our redemption. R' Meir Simcha notes that we see a connection between Kedusha - holiness, and separation from illicit relationships - Arayot, from the Torah. This is true, as the portion dealing with Arayot is placed next to the portion known as "Kedoshim," which begins with a statement saying how the nation of Israel is to be holy and sanctified. As the B'nei Yisroel strictly adhered to the laws regarding these relationships while in Egypt, they were considered holy and sanctified. This "allowed" Hashem to utter the first expression of redemption - "V'hotzeisi" , "and I will take you out", as only a nation of sanctified people could be taken out of Egypt to then receive the Torah and Mitzvot.

As we are holy on this night, we can therefore proceed with the sanctification of the night, a step which itself symbolizes our holiness and sanctification. This first cup which we drink is that of Kiddush. The first expression of redemption was uttered because of our holiness. As we, the nation of Israel are holy, we were taken out of Egypt, and given this night, this holiday to sanctify. After we perform this sanctification, we are set to perform the Mitzvos of the Torah that we were commanded to do on this night.

Question: Why, if we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt on this night, do we not also bless Hashem for performing the accompanying miracles for "us" as we do on other occasions?

Answer: As part of Kadesh, we do recite the blessing of She'he'cheyanu, "Who has 'brought' us to this time," as we do on all holidays. Reb Amram Gaon explained that we do not say the blessing of She'Asa Nisim , "who performed miracles" as we do on Chanukah and Purim because on the night of Pesach we have the Hagada, in which we relate the miracles that occurred to us from the time of our bondage to the time of our redemption. This telling over of the miracles make a blessing for them unnecessary. Only on Purim, when we do not have Kiddush, a sanctification of the holiday, and a Hagada, containing a recitation of all the miracles, do we say this special blessing.