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Pesach

Meaning in the (dis)Order

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The *Seder* (Order), the 15 step process for conducting the *Seder* is anything but orderly. In fact, it is better described as choreographed disorder - a multisensory experience with prescribed starts and stops. *Kiddush* followed by washing, eating *karpus*, breaking the *matza* in half are all specified to take place before the central part of the *Seder*, the *maggid* (storytelling) even begins.

And, within the *maggid*, we find a multi-layered storytelling, switching unexpectedly back and forth in history. We begin with leaving Egypt, but then double back later in the *Haggadah* to our earlier history describing our idolater ancestors, then fast forward to reading *Arami Oved Avi*, the text recited by farmers bringing their first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem. We start the evening with one set of questions, the *Ma Nishtana* asked by our youngest children, only to have four more questions asked by another four archetypal children within the *maggid*. Later we begin *hallel* only to have it interrupted by the meal and its final recitation completed after *birchat hamazon*. The evening is punctuated with deliberate interruptions and redirections, with questions seeking answers, with prayers disjointed.

Why was this night designed in this manner?

I think an answer is found in an opinion cited by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson in his *Haggadah*. In answering the question, “Why not recite a proper blessing over the mitzvah of *Maggid*?” Rabbi Schneerson cites the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael Hachohen of Modena (1790) who explains in his book *Shevah Pesach*, “*this mitzvah is fulfilled with interruptions—eating and drinking, etc.—and in such a case one does not recite a blessing*”. In fact, suggests Rabbi HaCohen, the interruptions are intentional and actually come to replace saying a bracha over fulfilling the *mitzva* of *maggid*. The intentional interruptions and redirections allow our families and communities to wholly process and uniquely fulfill the *mitzva* of *maggid*, inviting us to reflect, question, reenact, taste, and feel the experience of leaving Egypt. This multi-sensory experience inspires an understanding of our nation’s birth process, punctuated with starts and stops, a process grounded in questions and faith. The *Seder* ultimately is a retelling, rethinking and reimagining of our past and future as we evolve from slaves to a free people, a human trajectory in everlasting covenantal partnership with the divine.



Rabba Dr. Carmella Abraham feels blessed to have the privilege of living her two callings as both a doctor and a member of the Orthodox clergy. Rabba Carmella has interned at the Hillels of Westchester, Columbia Presbyterian Hospital Chaplaincy Program and served as a Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Created Equal Seminar Fellowship. Rabba Carmella earned her bachelor’s degree from Barnard College and her medical degree from Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She practiced at the Women’s Health Program, where she held a dual appointment in Internal Medicine and Obstetrics and Gynecology. She currently works in Oncology Medical Affairs for pharma. Rabba Carmella is married to physician Dr. Steven Kubersky and has three children.