



## Shabbat HaGadol- April 4, 2020- 10 Nisan 5780

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Jewish ritual practice is generally social and the Pesach Seder is a quintessentially social event. Dining rooms packed with many guests and extra efforts to ensure no one is left out are the norm. The Haggadah's introductory declaration "All who are hungry and in need" are invited to join us is bolstered repeatedly by the message that we were liberated not as individuals, but as participants in a community.

This year's Seder is very different. For children who ask a fifth question, "Why is this Seder different from all other Seders?" the answer must explain that social distancing paradoxically entails solidarity while sitting apart.

The questions are essential. The Torah implies the story's telling is activated by questioning. "When your child will ask you, you shall answer saying, 'God rescued me from slavery in Egypt,'" (Exodus 13:14) one medieval commentator, Rabbenu Nissim, remarks that if no one asks, there's no need to recite the Haggadah. This year, many face a Seder with no one to ask. Even for this, our Talmud proposes a remedy. One who conducts a solitary Seder must pose the questions to him or herself (Pesachim 116b)

Another commentator, R. Yom Tov Asevilli, suggests, "All who are hungry..." is not meant to be a genuine invitation. Enslaved people have limited capacity for generosity. By declaring our hospitality and desire to include others, we are demonstrating that we are truly free and secure enough to share our good fortune. The ability to celebrate with others is symbolic. This year, for many of us, it must also be aspirational.

Please, everyone, stay safe and in good health. This year, we are here. Next year, may we be together again.

B'yedidut (w/friendship),  
Rabbi Mitch Levine

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