

TRADITIONAL

Setting Ourselves Apart

Contributed by [Lisa Kaufman](#)

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The first step to growth is to realize we are worthy of growth. We need to see the value of who we are so we will see that we are worthy of investing time, energy, and effort into developing our spiritual potential.

Kadesh is the first step. It's the foundation for the whole Seder experience. We see this in the word "Kadesh," which is translated as "sanctify," but literally means to "set apart," in the sense of designating something as unique and special. Kadesh is that moment when we "set apart" or sanctify the time we're in. We "set apart" the Passover night as holy and unique.

In this sense, Kadesh moves us to "set ourselves apart" - to realize we're unique so we can begin to invest in personal growth.

We invest in something only when we believe it has value. This is true in finance as well as in interpersonal relationships. We spend time and energy with people whom we perceive as having worth. This is also true with self-growth. We will invest our time and energy to develop our potential only if we believe we are worthy.

If we base our self-worth on what we possess and have accomplished, we lose our uniqueness. What is the source of self-worth? Consciously or sub-consciously we base our self-worth on what we possess and what we have accomplished: How much is my income? How big is my house? What kind of car and clothes do I own? Our possessions give tangible value, as do our achievements, our profession, which university we attended, whether we're married, and if we have children.

In fact these two barometers do not give us a true sense of our uniqueness and value. Instead they cause us to lose our sense of distinctiveness.

We intuitively know that self-worth means feeling special. Feeling special stems from recognizing we are each unique. Rarity defines value. When we judge our self-worth by our possessions and accomplishments, that judgment can be made only by comparing our status to others. However, once we're comparing these external realities, the differences are in the quantity. A person's uniqueness is lost in this "judging by comparison." I am just like everyone. The only difference is the quantity of external trappings. What makes me unique - and therefore valuable - is lost.

The Torah tells us that we are made in the "image of God." What is this "image of God"? Just as the Almighty is one - absolutely unique - every human being is one of a kind, unique, special and rare.

We are created in God's image and therefore we are worthy. It's not because of what we possess or have accomplished, but simply because we are. Our very existence is intrinsically valuable. We are created in the image of God, unique, and therefore worthy. This is what Kadesh teaches us.