

All who are hungry

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Question:

I am always puzzled by the beginning of the *Haggadah*, where we declare, "All who are hungry, come and eat; all who are needy come and celebrate Passover." Being that this is said while sitting at the dinner table, the only people hearing it are those who are already there. What is the point of making grand invitations when the truly needy can't hear it?

Answer:

That invitation is not intended for outsiders. We are inviting ourselves and the people around us to really be present at the Seder. While we may be sitting at the table, our minds can be miles away. But then we may miss out on the most powerful spiritual journey - the Seder.

Each one of us is hungry, and we are all needy. We have a soul that hungers for nourishment and inspiration, and we all feel a profound need for our inner self to be freely expressed. Our soul yearns to love, to give, to contribute to the world and to connect to G-d. But our soul is sometimes trapped, surrounded by obstacles to its being free - scars from the past that cripple us; fears that prevent us from opening our hearts; bad habits that waste our time and divert our energy; toxic relationships that we have become dependant on; negative attitudes that darken our vision; egotism and complacency that stunt our growth.

We are stuck in our own inner Egypt, with these internal slave-masters holding us back from becoming who we are supposed to be. Like Pharaoh of old, our ego doesn't want to let us go. Even as we sit down to the Seder to read the story of the Israelite Exodus from slavery, we are still slaves.

So at the beginning of the Seder we invite ourselves to really come to the Seder and experience freedom. Don't let yourself be enslaved to your Egypt any longer. "Whoever is hungry, come and eat. Whoever is needy, come and celebrate Passover." If you hunger for inspiration, come and absorb the *Haggadah's* message of liberty. Don't just sit there - enter into the Passover experience with your entire being. Read the story of the Exodus, taste the *Matzah*, the food of faith, and drink in the wine of freedom.

The Seder night is more than just a commemoration of miracles of the past; it is a personal experience, the exodus of the soul. The same spiritual energies that brought about the miracles long ago are reawakened. Freedom is in the air. On Passover long ago we left Egypt; this Passover we can free ourselves from our own slavery.

We can rush through the *Haggadah* to get to the main course. Then our souls remain trapped. Rather let's take our time, allowing the eternal story of freedom sink in and become a part of us. Let yourself go - free your soul.