

CJL PERSPECTIVE

TO BE FREE OR NOT TO BE FREE?

As we gather tonight with friends and family around the *Seder* table, we will be asking a question that our ancestors have asked from the dawn of Jewish history. Why is this night different from all other nights?

This question has been asked by millions of Jewish people throughout the ages and will be asked yet again this Passover by Jews from all walks of life. What is it that makes this question so powerful that it seems to transcend any satisfactory answer.

At the heart of all the questions that we ask on Pesach night lies a mystery about the very nature and purpose of the festival itself.

How can we celebrate being free if we are still in exile. How can we enjoy peace of mind if our enemies still want to destroy us. How can we enjoy our *Seder* night when there are so many poor people who are struggling to provide for their families. How can we be content by discussing the miraculous story of exodus with those attending our *Seder*, when there are so many of our people who are completely indifferent to our tradition.

The answer to this question lies in first understanding what was achieved by the exodus from Egypt if we are still in exile.

The Chassidic masters explain that on that day G-d gave the Jewish people the greatest gift of all. The freedom to choose their own destiny. The ability to transcend any external force. In other words, to be free or not to be free, was their own choice.

This is why on the one hand we celebrate freedom. Because if we make the right choice, we have the power to be free. However, if we relax our guard and begin to lose focus of our objectives, we will become slaves to the whims and forces surrounding us.

It is for this reason that we are all still asking the same question. Because the answer does not come from some external source. It comes from within. The answer lies in our own hands. If we make the right choices in life, we will achieve true freedom for ourselves and our families and in turn for all the Jewish people and beyond.

6 April
Pesach 1st Day

Shabbat Begins: 7:28 pm
Shabbat Ends: 8:32 pm