

## Anticipation

Mah nishtanah ha'lailah ha-zeh mikol ha-leylot? As we sit down to our seder, we happily anticipate this recitation of "the four questions" by the youngest able participant at the table.

We usually translate these words as "Why is this night different from all other nights?" But the text that follows—"for on all other nights..."—is not a series of questions. It is a list of the ways this night is different. So a better translation would be: "How different this night is from all other nights!" It is very different, indeed.

Anticipating the seder is part of the re-enactment of the Exodus which is so much a part of the evening. The Torah goes into some detail about preparations days in advance of Pesach. We no longer select and sequester a lamb to be slaughtered for the meal, or paint our doorposts with its blood; but inviting guests, "kashering the house" and preparing the meal all heighten the excitement.

We retell our tale of enslavement, liberation and divine rescue with prayer, song and food; and we look forward to our own ultimate rescue—and the rescue of all humanity—from all the myriad forms of oppression and privation in the world.

At the conclusion of the seder we exclaim, "Next year in Jerusalem," showing that we are not finished with the quest for freedom. We have celebrated and rejoiced, but we know that we still have a lot of hard work to do.

How will we carry the differences of "this night" into the future? Judaism teaches both self-care and empathy. How will we continue to experience bondage, ours or others'? How will we seek liberation, ours and theirs? What new ways will we find to celebrate with our Jewish people and with others who are shedding their burdens?

The anticipation should remain with us! Even in hard times, whether personal, communal, national or global; even in the midst of tedium, toil or disappointment—ultimately the seder reminds us to look forward to a joyful conclusion.

Looking backward to the Exodus or forward to the liberations that lie ahead, the seder teaches us the power of hope, and trust in God's guidance through our Torah and tradition.

Chag sameach,  
Rabbi Paul Tuchman