

BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



Freedom in Quarantine

DAY 3 - URCHATZ

2020 Pesach Seder: Kadesh, Urchatz, Karpas, Urchatz, Yachatz, Urchatz, Maggid, Rochtza, Motzi-Matzah, Urchatz, Maror, Urchatz, Korech, Urchatz, Shulchan Orech, Urchatz, Tzafun, Urchatz, Barech, Urchatz, and so forth...

Hand washing is all the rage right now (for good reason!), but Jews have been a little obsessed with handwashing even before it was popular. At the seder though, we take it to the next level and wash at the very beginning of the meal before we eat the karpas. Why?

Before coronavirus, would you wash both hands before eating celery or potatoes? What is significant about this experience of dipping Karpas in salt water?

The reason we wash is a little technical, yet contains a profound insight. There are certain laws that pertained to the holiday of Pesach in the times of the Beit Hamikdash which are generally absent from our religious reality today. After all, at the center of our seder experience was the Korban Pesach. The seder today is comparable to ordering a Shawarma in a Laffa and only receiving the bread and lettuce! When the Temple stood, it was common practice to wash hands before eating foods that came in contact with a liquid. Therefore, even though we are generally not stringent to do this practice nowadays, at the seder we wash our hands before dipping the karpas in salt water...why?

R. Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, commonly known as the Netziv, explains that **we wash our hands during Urchatz because we try to emulate a life at the Beit Hamikdash during the Seder**. Wherever we may be for the seder this year (or any other year for that matter), we bring a piece of life at the Beit Hamikdash along with us. **For one night, we transcend our current reality and imagine a world that has the constant presence of Hashem right before our eyes**. Perhaps the first step toward a rebuilt Beit Hamikdash, is not only imagining its current existence, but by living for a moment as if it is here already.

Our ability to transcend reality is a unique tool for each of us when in a precarious situation. In our current state of isolation, confusion and concern it may be beneficial to tap into this skill to help us through the challenges of the coronavirus.



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Flexing in March 2019



Flexing in March 2020



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What have you done to keep your life "normal" during this period of social distancing?

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