



RABBI AHARON

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As we approach the 'Festival of Freedom' we are honored to share a teaching from Rav Aharon Ziegler, one of the outstanding students of Rabbi Soloveitchik regarding one of the rituals of Seder night. Rav Ziegler is the author of the best selling multi volume series, "Halakhic Positions of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik."

Mitzvah 'Haseibah'- Reclining

Chazal introduced the concept of Haseibah, reclining, as the symbol of freedom. Reclining on the left side is a physical attitude of complete relaxation that manifests abatement from tension or anxiety. One who is anxious cannot relax physically-or conversely, physical relaxation leads to emotional relaxation.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, reclining is also symbolic of throwing off the mental yoke that deprives man of freedom of movement. It is the reverse of the stiff and direct posture that demonstrates obedience. A soldier standing erect at attention symbolizes

obedience. Reclining, on the other hand, is indicative of disobedience, or a courageous rejection of the authority of man. It's an emphatic statement of one's freedom to relax and act as one chooses.

On Pesach night, the Halacha requires that we have a relaxed posture that transmits disrespect for those who would dominate us. We are no longer slaves, and the reclining posture is that of the fearless man who is unhindered by any external forces. To appreciate the fact that Chazal viewed this posture as one of disrespect, we should note that elsewhere they enjoined the student sitting before his teacher from reclining because it is a disrespectful posture. This is the way the Rambam saw it in Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah (7:8). Chazal chose this posture as the symbol of freedom specifically because it indicates a subordinate's disrespect towards his superior. It demonstrates how the poor Jew in Mitzrayim behaved towards his former master on the night of the Exodus. ■

-Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

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