



יוסף צבי רימון

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Zoom on Seder Night?

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It has been suggested to utilize Zoom in order to connect families during the Seder Night.

Aside from the Halachic problems, this would also create serious practical problems. It is far more likely that this would cause great distress, rather than peace of mind.

Leaving on the Zoom, or similar software, for extended time would almost certainly cause mishaps, such as the screen turning off automatically and other similar problems. In some cases, this may cause some people to turn on the Zoom during the holiday itself. In most cases, people will not touch the computer (since they know it is forbidden, and will not do this during the holiday), however, this could cause anguish for everyone. Therefore, beyond the Halachic questions that this suggestion raises, it is not a smart solution.

Yet, the problem is very real. People will be left alone on Seder Night – especially senior citizens. At times, some will be completely isolated. It is not possible to bring them to their families. This poses great danger for them, and it is forbidden to take risks, despite the anguish of being alone.

On the other hand, we must address this problem of loneliness in the Seder Night.

The following is a practical suggestion (*le'chatchila* – from the outset) for Jews everywhere; those who have elderly grandparents, as well as younger relatives, but cannot be together for the Seder:

- Pray Mincha early in the afternoon
- An hour or two before sunset, everyone gets dressed for the Chag and the entire family meets together by Zoom – the grandparents, the children and grandchildren, wherever they live. This time is not an ordinary weekday – it is already Pesach! At this time, the Korban Pesach was sacrificed, and the Levites sang the Hallel (Rambam, Korban Pesach, Ch. 1, #11; Rav Yoel Bin-Nun is of the opinion that this time should always be treated as part of the Pesach holiday, and certainly this year - see his suggestion on Mikraot's Facebook page, and I thank him for pointing this out.)
- Sing songs from the Haggadah at this family "gathering". Children will sing "Ma Nishtana". Every family member can prepare something short. Ask a question several days in advance, and each participant can propose his/her own answer. For example: Who is free in our times? What part of the Haggadah do you like best? In the Seder Night? Or any other question that may have different responses. Then everyone can continue with other favorite songs, like *Vehi she'amda*, *Dayenu*, *Echad Mi Yodeah*, *Chad Gadya* and the like (at the Seder itself, we will sing them again).



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- Then, they will finish a few minutes before sunset, light candles, continue to sing, and daven Arvit (unfortunately, we won't be able to go to the Synagogue because of the danger), and then begin the Seder Night.

Clearly, this will be no ordinary Seder with our grandparents, but it will be a deeply moving encounter and a most meaningful start to the Seder Night. Instead of perhaps ten family members at the Seder, it is possible to include many more at this special event.

At the same time that sacrifices were brought and the Levites sang Hallel in the Beit Mikdash, we, too, will sing and tell the story of the Exodus, and be inspired together with the entire family – near and far. This suggestion is most appropriate Halachically, there are no doubts, and it is suited for everyone *le'chatchila*. Families not inclined to this concept will find a way that suits them.

This proposal will greatly enhance the Seder Night. It will foster a wonderful feeling among the grandparents, children and grandchildren (and I believe it will also give a good, strong feeling to someone who is alone).

Practically speaking, this is far better than the idea of using Zoom during the Seder Night itself. It is possible and desirable to continue the family meeting after the Chag.

We are living in a most complex reality. A sense of sadness and depression can, G-d forbid, overwhelm some people. However, we should see the beauty and the goodness that we can reach, at this time in particular. We may lose some things, but at the same time, we gain new things that can give us special strength, a special connection, great love and an exalted feeling.

Wishing you a happy and Kosher Pesach, with good health for all of Am Yisrael,

With Torah blessings,
Yosef Zvi Rimon

