

MORASHAH

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Weekly *Parshat HaShavuah* Series

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Kadesh u'R'chatz - 14 steps or 15 steps?

At the beginning of the Seder, we chant *Kadesh uRchatz*. Many *Haggadot* have this arranged as 14 steps and others have 15 steps. The key difference is: *Motzi-Matzah*? Are they two separate steps or one compound, yet single, step?

Arguing the merits of *Motzi-Matzah* as either a single compound step or as two distinct steps has some value. However, I will ignore the intrinsic aspect of *Motzi-Matzah* and come up with a completely extrinsic reasoning. How is the number 14 significant vs. the number 15?

The number 14 has its merits. 14 is the *Gematria* of *Yad* - Hand - it could correspond to mighty Hand. However I can think of no connection to "steps." Can you? How about the number 15?

Well,

1. The Temple of Old in Jerusalem had 15 steps.
2. For each step we have a special Psalm hence there are 15 *Shir Hamaalot* - song of ascents or steps
3. The same term - *Ma'alot* - are used in the preface to the song *Dayenu*. "*Uma Ma'alot Tovot Aaleinu!*" This indicates that each step from *Ilu hotzianu* is mentioned. There are actually 14 verses in *Dayeinu*, however there are 15 separate steps enumerated in the summary that follows. The last step an allusion to the Temple i.e. the *Bet Habechira*.
4. There are 15 terms of praise in *Yishtabach* [Source: Tur]

It is clear to me that the number 15 is magical this night - and indeed in general - as a significant number of steps in ascending.

This leads me to believe that the number must be 15, not because I am convinced that *Motzi* and *Matzah* are definitely two separate steps, but rather that it is highly suggested by the entire structure of the Seder that steps would match some magical number. In this case that magical number is most likely to be 15.

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True, 14 can be made into a special number. The *echod mi yodei'a* ends at 13, and therefore perhaps making 14 a special number would add to it a bit of symmetry or completion. However, it is far more likely that the concepts of steps requires 15. This theme recurs too often and is too entwined and enmeshed within the *haggadah* itself to ignore. While the eating of *Motzi* and *Matza* does take place concurrently, the separate, individual *brachot* suggest TWO separate steps - albeit accomplished simultaneously.

Conclusion:

There are 15 steps to the *Seder*, *Motzi* and *Matzah* are therefore separate.

QED