**Yad Nechama:**

**An Anthology of Shabbos Stories Emailed for Pesach (Passover)**

**(5769/2009 – 5775/2015)**

**Compiled by Daniel Keren**

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**Introduction**

We first began emailing Shabbos Stories to people we knew about seven years ago. In the beginning we had about 60 recipients. But by word of mouth, those readers informed others and today we send these weekly stories to more than 600 individuals, mostly in the United States, but also to those living in Canada, the United Kingdom, Israel and Australia.

The highlight of the Jewish year is the celebration of Pesach (Passover) and we are commanded to tell over the story of how Hashem redeemed our anscestors some 3,327 years ago from the cruel bondage of the Egyptian task masters and brought us to Har Sinai some seven weeks later to receive the holy Torah and become G-d’s Am Segulah, Chosen People.

No other Jewish book with perhaps the exception of the Chumash has as many commentaries or been published as frequently as has the Passover Haggadah. That is why our Shabbos Stories for Yom Tov Pesach is our biggest issue of the year as we include classic holiday stories and related reading material to inspire one both as we get ready for this most demanding of holidays and also to gain chizuk during the course of this beautiful festival.

Three years ago we emailed an 89-page anthology of the material we had emailed for Pesach from 5769/2009 through 5772/2012. Now we are updating outr second Pesach Anthology email edition to also include the last three years and our anthology is 269 pages.

Even if you don’t read every page, no doubt you will find material to delight you, your family and guests who come for the Sedorim or for Chol Hamoed and the last days of Passover.

Please share this anthology with your own family, friends, neighbors and colleagues at work or school. Whether you print out a hard copy or just forward a copy of this email, send it to whomever you think might appreciate it.

This anthology is titled “**Yad Nechama**” in memory of my beloved wife of almost 30 years who passed away a few weeks after Shavuos. This will be the first Pesach that our family will be celebrating without Nechama. May your reading of “**Yad Nechama**” serve as a merit for her neshama.

**Daniel Keren**

Brooklyn, NY (Nissan 5775/2015)



**Shabbos Stories for**

**Yom tov pesach 5775**

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For a free subscription, please forward your request to [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**A Seder without Wine**

**By** [**Nissan Mindel**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/1316/jewish/Nissan-Mindel.htm)

**Published and copyrighted**

**By** [**Kehot Publication Society**](http://www.chabad.org/article.aspx?aid=81267)

A Seder without wine? How can it be? you ask. Everybody knows we have to drink four cups of wine at the Seder, in remembrance of the four stages of liberation from Egyptian bondage.

Indeed, so important are these four cups of wine that we make a blessing on each of them, while on the first cup of wine we make the*kiddush*.

A Seder without wine is almost unthinkable! Yet, it happened once upon a time when a whole Jewish community had to make the Seder without wine. This is what our story is about.

It happened many years ago, in a land ruled by a king who was not unfriendly to the Jews. Indeed, one of his best friends was the rabbi of the community, whom the king admired for his wisdom and learning, kindness and humility, a combination of virtues he did not find among his courtiers. The king just loved to spend time with the rabbi, discussing matters of importance. And when the king had any problem, he asked the rabbi’s advice, and he never had any cause for regret.

Everything would have been well, except that the king had a prime minister who was no friend of the Jews, and who was especially jealous of the friendship the king showed to the rabbi.

One day the prime minister asked the king why he was showing such friendship to the rabbi. “Why not?” replied the king. “I admire his wisdom and learning; there is nothing but kindness and fear of G‑d in his heart, and he is most loyal to me and wishes me well. He certainly deserves my friendship!”

**Denigrates the Rabbi to the King**

“What if I proved to Your Majesty that the rabbi is not all that he pretends to be, and that behind Your Majesty’s back he will not hesitate to break your laws, and speak unkindly of Your Majesty?”

“I doubt very much if you can prove any such thing,” replied the king confidently. “But if you do, I will know how to deal with him. On the other hand, if you fail to prove your reckless accusation, I will know how to deal with you. And so, my dear Prime Minister, how do you propose to prove your accusation?”

“The day after tomorrow, the Jews will begin celebrating their Passover festival. On the first two nights of the festival they have a special feast, a ‘Seder,’ they call it, when they drink four cups of wine. So important is wine for their Seder that a Jew will gladly sell his last shirt to be able to have wine for the Seder.

“Now, I suggest, Your Majesty, that you command the rabbi to tell the Jews that no one, not even the rabbi himself, shall drink any wine at the Seder. Then you will see if the rabbi and the other Jews carry out your order, and what they say about Your Majesty.”

“And how are we going to find this out?” asked the king.

**The Seder at the Jewish Guest House**

“I know that before the rabbi sits down to his own Seder table, he visits the Jewish guest house, where a public Seder is arranged for the poor and homeless wandering Jews who happen to be in town. If we disguise ourselves, it will be easy for us to join the crowd and witness the Seder.”

“So be it,” the king agreed. “But I warn you: you are playing with your head!”

“It’s my head against the rabbi’s head,” the prime minister challenged.

The following day the king sent for the rabbi, and when he appeared, the king said to him: “I command you to tell the Jews that no one, not even you, my friend, shall drink any wine at the Seder on penalty of death!”

The rabbi was surprised and saddened, but he answered dutifully: “Your Majesty’s command shall be obeyed.”

True to his word, the rabbi sent out word to all the Jews in the city: “By order of the king, Jews are forbidden to drink wine at the Seder. But except for that, the Seder should be celebrated in the usual way, and with the usual joy and inspiration. And each time, when the Haggadah calls for the drinking of a cup of wine, an empty cup should be lifted,and the following prayer recited:

**A Revised Blessing**

**For the Empty Wine Cup**

“‘Master of the World! It is revealed and known to you that we sincerely desire to do Your Will, but His Majesty the King forbade us to drink wine tonight on penalty of death. Since, according to Your holy Torah, the saving of life puts aside the mitzvah of the four cups, we pray for Your forgiveness for not drinking wine tonight.’”

In the guest house, the table was set for the Seder. For each place setting there was a Seder plate, with matzah, bitter herbs and the other required items; there were spotless wine glasses and cups, and bottles filled with red wine.

Soon the room was filled with celebrants, who seated themselves around the table. Among them were two strangers, dressed as poorly as the rest; but since all were strangers, no one paid any particular attention to them. Certainly it did not occur to anyone that those two were none other than the king and his prime minister.

Presently the rabbi came, and all rose respectfully in his honor. He seated himself at the head of the table and greeted everyone with a hearty “Good Yom Tov.”

**The Kaddesh at the**

**Start of the Seder**

The first item of the Seder was, of course, Kaddesh: to make *kiddush* on the first of the four cups of wine. The rabbi reminded all the guests of the king’s decree. He bade them to rise and lift up empty wine glasses and recite after him the prayer he had composed for this occasion: “Master of the World,” etc.

Everyone faithfully followed the rabbi’s instructions, and the wine bottles were left untouched. Otherwise, the Seder proceeded as joyously and inspiringly as ever.

The king and his prime minister sat through the entire Seder and heard the same prayer repeated four times. Everyone, including the king, enjoyed the Seder meal; only one person sat there like a bereaved man among bridegrooms—the unhappy prime minister.

When the Seder was over, the king and his prime minister left the guest house together. Before parting at the gate of the palace, the king told his prime minister to be sure to appear before him the following day in mid-afternoon.

The following morning, the king sent a messenger to the rabbi to summon him to appear before the king in mid-afternoon. At the appointed time the rabbi and the prime minister met at the gate of the palace, and both were ushered in before the king.

**The King Confides in the Rabbi**

Turning to the rabbi, the king said: “Unknown to you, worthy Rabbi, I and my prime minister were your guests at the Seder last night. We were disguised, of course, and we came to see with our own eyes if you would obey my order. The foolish prime minister had staked his head, assuring me that you would not.

“I am happy that you did faithfully carry out my order, though I sincerely regret having caused you and all the Jews unnecessary heartache by interfering with your sacred Seder celebration. But the prime minister shall pay for his folly. I place him in your hands: choose any kind of death for him, and it shall be done!”

“Your Majesty,” the rabbi replied, “ever since we lost our Sanctuary inJerusalem, no rabbinic court is authorized to pronounce a death sentence on anyone.”

“In that case,” said the king, “I shall pronounce his death sentence: he shall be hanged publicly forthwith!”

Then the king told the rabbi that the decree prohibiting wine drinking was lifted, and the rabbi could now make it known to all Jews that they could again drink all the wine they wanted.

The happy news quickly spread among the Jews and was received with great jubilation. The second Seder was celebrated with extraordinary joy and deep gratitude to the Almighty, in celebration not only of the miracles and wonders of the liberation from Egypt, but also of the miracle that happened to them in getting rid of a cruel enemy.

It was the happiest Passover that they had ever celebrated.

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org*

**The Rebbe’s Passover Punishment**

**By** [**Menachem Posner**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Menachem-Posner.htm)

It was Passover eve of 1910. In the town of Lubavitch, every Jewish home was freshly scrubbed. The tables were bedecked with threadbare but meticulously cleaned white linen, surrounded by families about to begin their Sedercelebrations.

But before Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn could begin his own Seder, he first took a detour to visit the yeshivah, Tomchei Temimim, where he served as dean. (He would later become the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe.)

There, he was pleased to find the large study hall lit up with a sea of candles. Dozens of tables filled the room. Each table had eleven settings, for ten younger students and one senior student, who would serve as a*memuneh,*the overseer and guide who would take the place of their fathers, many of whom were hundreds of miles away.

Each student’s place was set with a *kaarah*, a ceremonial tray holding bitter herbs, a bone, an egg, a bit of vegetable and the special sweet mixture known as *charoset*, all arrayed on a kerchief that covered three hand-baked matzahs.

Two of the matzahs were made from flour that had been zealously guarded against contact with water from the time of the grinding. The third matzah—the one to be used for the very first bite of matzah over which the special blessing is said—was made from wheat that had been under close watch from the time of harvest. Both types were considered *shmurah*matzah, guarded from water, but the difficulty involved in watching the wheat from the time of harvest made the second kind prohibitively expensive and a highly prized commodity.

While all Passover matzahs are made from only flour and water, the two kinds of matzah were made from different grades of grain and were easily distinguishable.

As the Rebbe strode through the hall, he took his time delighting over the students’ shining faces, the meticulously prepared settings, the care that had been put into ensuring that every speck of leaven had been cleaned from the premises, and the festive atmosphere that filled the room.

Suddenly, he stopped.

Turning to one of the tables, he lifted the kerchief covering the matzahs of the *memunah*, a 16-year-old boy named Yochanan Gordon. Lo and behold, he discovered three coveted *shmurah*matzahs, guarded from the moment of harvest, instead of just one.

*“Hay lach minayin?”* demanded the Rebbe, using a Talmudic expression that literally translates as “From where do you have this?”

Yochanan managed to mutter, *“A memuneh git zich an eitzah,”* “A *memunah* figures things out.”

“For this,” the Rebbe replied, “you’ll go without midday meal tomorrow.”

The following day after prayers, Yochanan steered clear of the dining hall. He knew that there was no food for him there, and besides, he was in no mood to socialize.

Instead, he chose to still his hunger pains by walking along the river, which ran through the town and served as the local *mikvah*, swimming pool and laundromat.

As he strolled along, he suddenly heard his name being called out.

Turning around, he saw his friends, Shlomo Chaim Kesselman and Peretz Mochkin, running along the riverbank.

“Yochanan!” they called. “Here you are! We’ve been looking everywhere. The dean knew you’d have no place to eat today and sent us to find you. He wants you to join him at home for the holiday meal.”

By the time Yochanan arrived, the meal had already been finished. But he gained something more than a full belly. He learned that Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak truly cared about each and every student; even those who were punished deserved a warm holiday meal.

*Nowadays, when it is relatively easy to obtain*shmurah*matzah made with flour that has been watched since the time of harvest, it is preferable to do so for the Seder. (See Shulchan Aruch HaRav 453:19.)*

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**First-Ever Canadian Haggadah has a Distinctly North-of-the-Border Vibe**

**By** [**Ron Csillag**](http://www.jta.org/author/ron-csillag/)

[](http://www.jta.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Haggadah-Cover-page.jpg)

The new Haggadah is in English, French and Hebrew, and it features archival photographs of the Canadian Jewish community.

In this rendition of the Passover story, the Children of Israel do not play ice hockey or drink kosher l’Pesach maple syrup.

But the first-ever Canadian Haggadah does have a distinctly Canuck vibe.

For one thing the Canadian Haggadah Canadienne is in three languages – English, French and Hebrew. And instead of the standard illustrations of the Israelites building the pyramids or Moses parting the Red Sea, it features archival photographs that trace the history of Canada’s Jewish community, the world’s fourth largest.

The volume offers “a Canadian perspective on our timeless story of freedom – our Jewish history as seen through Canadian eyes,” states its introduction.

Compiled by Rabbi Adam Scheier of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal and Richard Marceau, general counsel and political adviser at the Ottawa-based Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, the hefty (168-page) Haggadah aims “to deepen the Canadian Jewish identity by presenting something that’s uniquely Canadian,” Scheir told JTA. “It’s never been done.”

A unique Canadian gestalt has been brought into sharper focus for Scheier since he’s an American who came north 11 years ago. Marceau, a French Quebecer who converted to Judaism in 2004, claims a similar cultural awareness, because he was raised “on the border” between English-speaking and Francophone Canada.

“When you have people around the table who speak different languages, even though they understand the other, they are not comfortable enough.”

The two talked and concluded, “Maybe we’re the ones who should be on that bridge, making sure that Canadian Jews can celebrate together,” Marceau said.

Interspersed with commentary from 20 rabbis across Canada, spanning all denominations, are some 100 archival pictures of Jewish life from every region of the country: William Goldbloom stands proudly before his fur-and-hide store in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, in 1921; Grizzled Jewish prospector Marco Zimmerman stakes his claim in the Yukon Territory circa 1920; a doe-eyed immigrant boy arrives from Lisbon just days before Passover 1944; visiting Israeli dignitaries are all smiles in a meeting with Canadian leaders; Canadian Jews demonstrate on behalf of Soviet Jewry in the 1970s.

The Haggadah cover shows a gaggle of children munching on matzah at the 1948 opening of a matzah factory in Montreal.

And, of course, there’s an obligatory hockey moment among the book’s photos: Current Prime Minister Stephen Harper hoists a Team Israel jersey on his visit there last year.

“There so much flavor and so much that should start a conversation about what it means to live as a Jew in Canada and how deep our roots are,” Scheier said.

*The Haggadahs are on sale for $20 each at Judaica stores in Toronto and Montreal and at Amazon.ca. They are scheduled to be available in Montreal on March 12, Toronto on March 18 and Ottawa on March 19*.

*Reprinted from the March 5, 2015 article of the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency.)*

**Pesah: Different**

**Types of Matsa**

**By Rabbi Yosef Bitton**

Matsa (in English "Matzah") is a special unleavened bread made of a flat dough. The dough is prepared with flour and water, without yeast. The flour normally comes from wheat, but technically, the Matsa could also be made from barley, oats, rye or spelt's flour. The whole elaboration process from the time the flour gets in contact with water until the Matsa is baked takes less than 18 minutes.

There are different types of Matsot.  In today's halakha we will learn the differences between 1. Regular Matsa and Matsa Shemura, and 2. Hand-made Matsa and machine-made Matsa

Let us begin with regular Matsa and Matsa Shemura.

The difference between these two Matsot has to do with the level of supervision (shemira), more specifically, the point at which the supervision begins.

Regular Matsa: The supervision of the processing of this Matsa begins from the moment of the mixing of the flour with water. It is necessary to supervise that the flour to be used for the Matsot be kept in a dry place (humidity makes the flour Hamets).

Furthermore, the water to be used to bake the dough should be at room temperature level, because warmer water would accelerate the process of fermentation. No dough, even a small piece, might be left unattended. Any piece of dough left unbaked for 18 minutes is Hamets. The machines should be cleaned after each production for residues of dough, water, etc. These are some examples of the supervision of the Matsa.

Matsa Shemura: In addition to all the rules for regular Matsa in the elaboration of Matsa Shemura the grain is supervised from the time of harvesting. For example: the wheat kernels are carefully examined to make sure that there are no grains which have split or that are sprouting. In those cases the process of Himuts would be triggered by a minimum moisture. The grain is also supervised when it is stored and transported, making sure that there is no humidity.

Certainly, both Matsot are Kasher for Pesah. But the use of Matsa Shemura is recommended particularly for the first two nights of Pesah (in Israel, the first night), when we say the Berakha 'al akhilat Matsa. Why? Having Matsa Shemura during the nights of the Seder is a practice that we follow in attention to the pasuq (Ex 12:17) "and you shall guard (=supervise) the unleavened bread".

During the other days of Pesah there is no obligation to use Matsa Shemura, because during the rest of the Holiday there is no requirement to eat Matsa but only to refrain from eating Hamets.

Matsa 'abodat yad (hand made Matsa) vs Machine made Matsa:

In general, when making a religious article (or even one of its accessories) to be used for the performance of a Mitsva, this article must be done with the specific intention of being used for the fulfillment of that Mitsva.

Example: we cannot use left-overs of leather, which were made originally for shoes, belts, etc. to make a Tefilin or its straps. The leather to be used for Tefilin has to be processed "explicitly" for the purpose of fulfilling the Mitsva of Tefilin. Thus, before processing the leather, the person in charge  says: leshem mitsvat Tefilin, ["I'm processing this leather to be used...] for the mitsva of Tefilin".

The same principle applies, for example, with the threads used for the Tsitsit, they must be manufactured for that specific purpose. If they have been made for another purpose, or even with not specific purpose, these threads are unfit for fulfilling the Mitsva of Tsitsit.

Similarly,  the Matsot that will be consumed during the first two nights of Pesah (matsot mitsva), must be elaborated with the explicit purpose of fulfilling the mitsva of eating Matsa.  Now, unlike the case of leather left-overs or commercial made strings, Kosher for Pesah Matsot, are always made for Pesah.

In the case of the Matsot, therefore, the question is a little different, and it applies specifically to Matsot made by machine. The question is:  Do we consider that the "human intentionality" extends from the man who activates the machinery saying "leshem matsot Mitsva", to the machinery itself, in which case the Matsot will be unquestionably fit?

Or, is this "purposefulness" discontinued as soon as a non-human factor intervenes? The rabbis debated on this matter. Some rabbis assert that machine made Matsot could be used for the first two nights and perhaps they are preferable to hand made Matsot, because although the question of purposefulness still remains, machine Matsot are less exposed to human errors, and that factor supersedes the debate over purposefulness.

However, many rabbis (among them Rabbi Obadia Yosef, z'l)  recommend to use for the first two nights of Pesah, when eating Matsa is mandatory, a Matsa elaborated by hand, with a reliable Rabbinic supervision. Following this last opinion, it is recommended to use hand-made Matsot for the first two nights of Pesah, if one can find and/or afford hand-made matsot shemurot. If not, one can use Matsa shemura made by machine. For the rest of Pesah, it is unnecessary to use hand-made matsot . (*Editor’s Note: One should ask one’s rabbi which matsa he or she should eat during all eight days of Pesah*.)

*Reprinted from the March 13, 2015 Halakha of the Day email from the Shehebar Sephardic Center.*



By Rebecca Rubinstein

**A few weeks before Passover, a handful of Jewish prisoners in a Soviet labor camp in Siberia decided they wanted to celebrate the upcoming Jewish festival.**

Michael Stravinsky had been chosen as their representative to request flour for baking matzahs from Vladimir Petrov, the Russian officer in charge.

The Jewish inmates knew that they might be severely punished for asking such a request. But they also knew that the mere thought of eating matzah on Passover night along with Jews all over the world would be their greatest taste of freedom.

Michael had been accused of treason and passing on Soviet State secrets to Israel. He had been sentenced to 25 years of exile in Siberia to work in a forced labor camp. He was separated from his family and friends and was allowed contact with his loved ones only once a year for two hours.

His real crime was teaching Jewish History and Hebrew to a packed room of young Jews, hungry for some knowledge to connect them to their people.

Michael, the group's spokesman, approached the Russian camp administrator with their written petition for baking matzahs. With a smirk on his face, Petrov said, "I will forward your request to KGB headquarters, and we will act according to their instructions."

Days passed, and there was no reply from Moscow. Some of the group were convinced that they had made a grave mistake by signing the petition, and they would be singled out for even worse treatment.

Passover was only a few days away and still no reply from Moscow. All of the group with the exception of Michael had given up hope and were nervously awaiting the repercussions.

As Michael was busy repairing equipment in the labor camp, the prison guard called out, "Stravinsky, you are to go immediately to administration building." With his heart in his stomach, knowing full well what this summons could mean, Michael did as told.

Fully expecting the worst punishment of all -- confinement to the eight-foot-square punishment cell for the whole of the Passover week -- Michael knocked on the door.

Inside, he confronted Petrov, who, without ceremony, handed him a piece of paper. "Your request for matzah has been granted," Petrov announced, adding, "We are as surprised as you Stravinsky. I will command the officers to give you and your group the bricks to build your oven. The flour ration will be deducted from your food ration for the next 7 days."

The building of the oven began with feverish haste for fear of a reversal of orders. Matzahs were baked from the meager rations of flour. The group had now been joined by other Jewish inmates who were astounded at the thought of eating matzahs on Passover. For some of them, this would be their first Passover celebration.

Even though the shapeless, burnt matzahs they baked were nothing like the matzahs they had once received in smuggled packages from Israel, to the Jewish prisoners these matzahs were the sweetest taste of freedom.

Seder night arrived and a place for the Seder was secretly arranged in a corner of the labor camp between two huts. They used a plank of wood for a table and placed their blankets on the ground to lean on. An old, dented broken pot was used to represent the traditional Seder plate. There was no roasted shank bone, no egg, no charoset, no maror, only a boiled potato one of the Jewish prisoners had saved from lunch.

Heading the Seder, Michael began to sing the only Seder tune he knew, and tears of joy trickled down his cheeks. Mah Nishtana Halaila Hazeh Mikol Haleilot? "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

Michael knew why this night was different and he would remember this night for the rest of his life. At that moment, on the night of Passover, this group of wretched Jewish prisoners shivering in the dark around their symbolic Seder table felt like G-d had redeemed them and made them free men.

Passover, the festival of freedom, connects us to our yearnings for personal liberation from our self-imposed limitations. It reminds us that as a nation we have saved by God from our oppressors, time and time again. By celebrating the festival, we unite with the Jewish people not only in the present, but also in our past, creating a sense of unity and connection with Jews of all time.

Under Communist rule, Jews behind the Iron Curtain were forbidden to study, teach or practice their Judaism in any way. If they were caught, they were interrogated by the KGB and often thrown in prison for long terms on false charges or espionage, treason and illegal gatherings.

But no one can extinguish the spark in each Jew. The Communist Regime tried to strip the Jew of his Jewish identity, but it had the opposite effect. Jews behind the Iron Curtain were willing to risk their lives in order to learn and practice Jewish tradition.

On the night of Passover, as the Jewish inmates of the Siberian camp ate their matzah, they experienced a moment of true inner freedom. Clinging to a ritual practiced by Jews for more than 3,000 years fuelled their inner flame to survive their ordeal in a Jewish way, to feel connected to the Jewish people, and to believe that G-d would save them.

*Reprinted from the website of Aish.com*

**What Is Passover?**

**The Holiday's History**

**And Observances:**

The eight-day festival of Passover is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan, corresponding this year to **April 4 through April 11, 2015**.

Pesach commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. And, by following the rituals of Passover, we have the ability to relive and experience the true freedom that our ancestors gained.

**The Story in a Nutshell:**

After many decades of slavery to the Egyptian Pharaohs, during which time the Israelites were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors, G‑d saw the people's distress and sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message: "Send forth My People, so that they may Serve Me." But despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed G‑d's command. G‑d then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues, afflicting them and destroying everything from their livestock to their crops.

At the stroke of midnight of Nissan 15 of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), G‑d visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, killing all their firstborn. While doing so, G‑d spared the Children of Israel, "Passing Over" their homes -- hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh's resistance was broken, and he virtually chased his former slaves out of the land.

The Israelites left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have time to rise. 600,000 adult males, plus all the woman and children, left Egypt on that day, and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their birth as G‑d's chosen people.

**Passover Observances:**

Passover is divided into two parts.

1. The first and last two days of Pesach are full-fledged holidays.

[In Eretz Yisroel, only the first and the seventh days of Pesach are celebrated as Yomim Tovim – full-fledged holidays.]

1. Holiday candles are lit, Kiddush is recited and sumptuous holiday meals are enjoyed on both nights and days. We don't do any work, etc. However we are permitted to cook and to carry outdoors. [In Eretz Yisroel, only the first and the seventh days of Pesach are celebrated as Yomim Tovim – full-fledged holidays.]

II. The middle four days are called Chol Hamoed, semi-festive "intermediate days," when most forms of work are permitted.

**No Chametz:**

To commemorate the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when they left Egypt, we don't eat or even retain in our possession any "chametz" from midday of the day before Passover until the conclusion of the holiday. Chametz means leavened grain -- any food or drink that contains even a trace of wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt or their derivatives and wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation. This includes bread, cake, cookies, cereal, pasta, and most alcoholic beverages. Moreover, almost any processed food or drink can be assumed to bechametz unless certified otherwise.

Ridding our homes of chametz is an intensive process. It involves a full-out spring-cleaning search-and-destroy mission during the weeks before Passover, and culminates with a search for chametz on the night before Passover, and then burning the chametz on the morning before the holiday.

**Eating Matza:**

Instead of chametz, we eat matza -- flat unleavened bread. It is a mitzvah to partake of matza on the two Seder Nights. During the rest of the holiday it is optional.

**The Seders:**

The highlight of Passover is the two "Seders," observed on the first two nights of the holiday. The first Seder is on Friday Evening, **April 3, 2015** and the second Seder is on Saturday Evening, **April 4, 2015**. The Seder is a family oriented tradition and a ritual packed feast.

**The focal points of the Seder are:**

Eating matza.

Eating bitter herbs -- to commemorate the bitter slavery endured by the Israelites.

Drinking four cups of wine or grape juice -- a royal drink to celebrate our newfound freedom.

The recitation of the Haggadah, a liturgy that describes in detail the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Haggadah is the fulfillment of the biblical obligation to recount to our children the story of the Exodus on the night of Passover.

*Reprinted from the website of Colel Chabad.*

**Where to Find Kosher-for-Passover Food Off the Beaten Track**

**By** [**Faygie Levy**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/18743/jewish/Levy-Faygie.htm)

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In Idaho, one food staple is certain to remain in abundant supply—potatoes. And potatoes, of course, serve as a main Passover cooking ingredient.

If it comes right down to it, quips Rabbi Mendel Lifshitz of Chabad Lubavitch of Idaho, “we don’t have to worry because we can eat as many potatoes as we want.”

But humans cannot live by potatoes alone.

So what happens if you are a kosherconsumer and find yourself living hundreds of miles from a major Jewish population center—and abundant kosher food options—especially before the holiday of Passover, when many take on additional eating stringencies?

If you are a Chabad emissary, you get very creative—and very good at pre-planning—to make sure that you and those in your community will have enough kosher products for the eight-day holiday, which begins at sundown on Monday, April 14.

“We order in everything—*shmurah* *matzah*, wine, meats,” says Lifshitz, who co-directs Chabad center in Boise with his wife, Esther. “You can order a limited amount of kosher chicken here, but anything beyond that we have to bring in specifically.”

Two or three times a year, the rabbi and his wife place a very large food order with meat, chicken and dairy products, which is delivered by a refrigerated truck. The food is then divided to local residents who are part of a kosher co-op of sorts, explains Lifshitz, noting that about 10 families join in the mega-order.

For Passover, the Lifshitzes also arrange for community members to be able to buy kosher wine by the case, in addition to *shmurah matzah*—round, homemade matzah made from grain that is guarded from the moment of harvesting, so that no fermentation occurs.

The rabbi notes that this year, community members who live throughout the state ordered a total of 40 pounds of *shmurah* *matzah*, and about 60 cases of wine and grape juice.

Like their Idaho counterparts, Rabbi Yonah and Esti Grossman of Chabad Jewish Center of North Dakota have plenty of food staples in their region.

“Anything you can eat on Pesach grows in North Dakota,” like potatoes, onions, eggs and beets, declares Rabbi Grossman, noting that the region is the No. 1 producer of wheat in the United States, a necessary ingredient for matzah-making.

That said, Grossman also acknowledges that some items are not readily available, which means a community co-op order of kosher foods to Jews in both North and South Dakota who are looking for kosher products, especially before Passover.

“We’ve been ordering through the Costco in Fargo,” he says. “They can get glatt-kosher meat, but we have to order it in advance. We order 14 to 18 cases four times a year, and then I send out an email, and people tell me how much they want.

“We distribute it, [package it] and take it to the bus station, where we send it by bus to different cities in North Dakota,” he says, adding that “about 15 to 20 families get their meat through this order.”

More and more, the rabbis are finding help from local stores that recognize a market for kosher products around the Passover holiday—and in some cases, throughout the year—even in areas that aren’t known for a significant concentration of Jewish residents.

For instance, a kosher-eating consumer traveling through the Ozarks can find a very limited “kosher section” in a supermarket in Waynesville, Mo., where shelf offerings include boxed matzah and packaged cups of soup even in the middle of winter.

But, caution the rabbis, just because a product is marked “kosher” does not mean that it is, and consumers should check with their local rabbi about certifications for specific brands and products.

The Market Street chain of upscale food stores in some Texas towns, such as Lubbock, Allen and Frisco, offers a very limited selection of kosher food products throughout the year. These selections increase before Passover, according to Eddie Owens, director of communications and public relations at the market’s parent company, United Supermarkets.

Owens notes that they do have customers who request kosher products, but that those inquiries tend to be “infrequent.”



Rabbi Yonah Grossman spent part of his time before Passover supervising the packaging of onions.

Still, the upscale chain makes it a point to boost its stock at Passover time.

According to David Rossi, vice president of marketing at Manischewitz, “every state in the union has Manischewitz products,” including places like Iowa and Nebraska.

“We sell to all major accounts all year round,” Rossi says. “However, at Passover, most stores stock a broader selection of items.”

Meanwhile, the California-founded food seller Trader Joe’s has also made it easier for kosher consumers by stocking kosher chickens and meats.

Lifshitz, of Idaho’s Chabad, says kosher consumers in his area have been able to get kosher meats without it being special-ordered now that a Trader Joe’s opened recently in Boise.

Still, some people in more remote places will discover road blocks. As Grossman recalls: “There’s a lady in Fargo who asked us to get her kosher-for-Passover margarine last year.

“We went to the store [in another state], but they were out of it, and my wife kept apologizing to her. Then she told my wife, ‘That’s one of the things we’ve learned since moving to North Dakota 30 years ago—if you don’t have something, you do without it.’ That’s an inspiring story for us.”

While much of the focus on kosher food is on the retail side, both Rabbi Lifshitz and Rabbi Grossman are also involved in the back end of the industry by providing rabbinical supervision for various products.

“A lot of the products you find in kosher supermarkets in New York are made from potato starch produced in Idaho,” says Lifshitz.

Moreover, at Idaho Milk Products last week, the rabbi oversaw the production of half-a-million pounds of Cholov Yisroel kosher-for-Passover milk protein concentrate and milk protein isolate—forms of milk powder—that get shipped to Israel.

And Grossman oversaw production of peeled onions this year and has previously supervised the manufacturing of sugar.

If there’s one bright spot to not having access to the large number of Passover items available in major cities though, it’s this, says Grossman: “The only things you can’t get are the things you probably don’t want to eat anyway.

“If we were in Brooklyn,” he continues, “we’d probably be stocking up with a whole bunch of kosher for Passover *noshes* (snacks), but not over here.”

*Reprinted from last year’s (April 8, 2014) website of Chabad.Org*

**A Blast from the Recent Past (2013)**

**[Passover to be Celebrated](http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/03/25/passover-to-be-celebrated-in-madeira-for-the-first-time-in-centuries/" \o "Permanent Link to Passover to be Celebrated in Madeira for the First Time in Centuries)**

**[In Madeira For the](http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/03/25/passover-to-be-celebrated-in-madeira-for-the-first-time-in-centuries/" \o "Permanent Link to Passover to be Celebrated in Madeira for the First Time in Centuries)**

**[First Time in Centuries](http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/03/25/passover-to-be-celebrated-in-madeira-for-the-first-time-in-centuries/" \o "Permanent Link to Passover to be Celebrated in Madeira for the First Time in Centuries)**

A Passover seder will be hosted on Madeira, a tiny isolated Portuguese archipelago located 300 miles from Africa, for the first time in centuries, Yedioth Ahronoth reported.

Known more for its famous dessert wine, the islands once had a thriving Jewish community before the Inquisition arrived. Later in the 19th century, Moroccan Jews also established a community there.

The Passover seder in Madeira will be led by Marvin Meital and his wife Danby. Marvin, a former professor of Portuguese literature and language at Hebrew University, also has an interest in crypto-Jewish history.

The Jerusalem-based Shavei Israel organization, which focuses on reconnecting descendants of Jews with their people and heritage, is helping Meital with the Passover seder by providing funding and even specially designed Portuguese-Hebrew versions of the Passover Haggadah.

Some of the 13 Jewish participants in the Passover seder are Bnei Anousim—descendants of Portuguese Jews who were forcibly converted to Catholicism during the Inquisition.

“The holding of a Seder in Madeira is truly historic,” Shavei Israel Chairman Michael Freund told Yedioth Ahronoth.

“More than 500 years after the expulsion of Portugal’s Jews in 1497, the Bnei Anousim are returning to our people. Since Passover commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from bondage, we feel it is especially symbolic to be holding a Seder for the Bnei Anousim in Madeira, for they too are now emerging from the spiritual captivity of the Inquisition,” Freund said.

*Reprinted in the March 25, 2013 edition of the Algemeiner*

**Passover on the Battlefields Of the U.S. Civil War**

**By Michael Freund**

It was April 24, 1864, at the height of the American Civil War, and in between his duties as an infantryman, young Isaac J. Levy sat down in camp on one of the intermediate days of Passover to write a short letter to his sister back home.

Levy, who served in the 46th Virginia infantry unit, was a soldier in the Confederate army which was battling on behalf of the southern states that sought to secede from the United States.

The war had just entered its fourth year, and it would prove to be the bloodiest conflict in American history. New research published last year in the journal Civil War History by demographic historian J. David Hacker of Binghamton University revealed the death toll may have been as high as 750,000 people.

Levy and his regiment, which included his brother Ezekiel, who served as a captain, were posted at Adams Run, South Carolina, and the fog of war had cast a shadow over his observance of the holiday.

“No doubt you were much surprised on receiving a letter from me addressed to our dear parents dated on the 21st which was the first day of Pesach,” he wrote to his sister Leonora, with the word “Pesach” carefully printed in Hebrew letters. “We were all under the impression in camp that the first day of the festival was the 22nd,” and he had therefore unwittingly failed to observe the holiday’s start on the appropriate day.

But Levy went on to assure her that his brother had purchased matza “sufficient to last us for the week” in the city of Charleston at the cost of two dollars per pound, and that they were “observing the festival in a truly Orthodox style.” Sadly, just four months later, Isaac Levy was killed in the trenches during the Siege of Petersburg on August 21, 1864. He was 21 years old.

On the eve of the Civil War, which began in April 1861, American Jewry numbered an estimated 150,000 people, out of a total population of some 31 million. The overwhelming majority of American Jews at the time were recent arrivals: just a decade earlier, there had been 50,000 Jews living in the United States.

Most of the immigrants were German Jews looking for greater opportunity and freedom.

Like their fellow Americans, the Jews of the United States quickly found themselves caught up in the war between the North and the South, and it had a profound influence on them.

As historian Eli N. Evans has written, “For Jews in America, the Civil War was a watershed that involved Jewish soldiers from all over the nation.”

“Serving their countries under fire and fighting side by side with their gentile comrades in arms,” Evans argued, “accelerated the process of acculturation, not only through their self-perceptions, but also because of the actions of the community around them.”

Indeed, an estimated 10,000 Jews – 3,000 southern Confederates and 7,000 Northerners – fought in the war, with nine Jews reaching the rank of general and 21 attaining that of colonel.

One of the most famous American Jews in the military was Commodore Uriah P. Levy. A veteran of the War of 1812 against Great Britain, Levy had endured frequent anti-Semitism throughout his naval career. He briefly served in the Union Navy at the start of the Civil War but retired shortly thereafter.

Another Jew – Judah P. Benjamin – served as secretary of state and secretary of war for the Confederacy, overseeing the administration of the conflict for the South.

A number of Jewish soldiers distinguished themselves in the Civil War and were granted the Medal of Honor, the US military’s highest award, for exceptional bravery on the battlefield.

One such soldier, Sgt.-Maj. and Adjutant Abraham Cohn of the New Hampshire Infantry, was singled out by the assistant adjutant general of the United States for “conspicuous gallantry displayed in the Battle of the Wilderness [of May 1864], in rallying and forming disorganized troops under heavy fire; also for bravery and coolness in carrying orders to the advance lines under murderous fire in the Battle of the Mine, July 30, 1864.”

Jews also played a key part in helping to finance both sides in the conflict. German-born Jewish banker Joseph Seligman used his connections in the German and Dutch financial markets to help the North dispose of $200 million in bonds, thereby providing the federal government with a financial lifeline that enabled it to prosecute the war.

Despite the loyalty and courage they demonstrated, Jewish soldiers often encountered anti-Semitism, and Jews nationwide were subjected to accusations of being “war profiteers” and even aiding the enemy.

In fact, it was at the height of the Civil War that the most infamous act of anti-Semitism in American history took place, when Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant issued General Order No. 11 on December 17, 1862, expelling Jews “as a class” from the Tennessee military district. When Abraham Lincoln learned of the order, he rescinded it.

To what extent Jewish soldiers during the Civil War were allowed to observe their faith is not entirely clear, though we can gain an insight from the experience of 19-year-old Private Joseph Joel of the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, an account of which he published after the war in the March 3, 1866 issue of the Jewish Messenger.

Joel had the good fortune of serving together with 20 other Jews, and as Passover approached in 1862, they found themselves encamped in Fayette, West Virginia.

Together, they “united in a request to our commanding officer for relief from duty in order that we might keep the holydays.” Their commander, Rutherford B. Hayes, who would later go on to become the 19th president of the United States, “readily acceded.”

Having been granted the hoped-for permission, Joel and his comrades went about making the necessary preparations for the holiday.

“Our next business,” he wrote, “was to find some suitable person to proceed to Cincinnati, Ohio, to buy us Matzos.”

Fortunately, they found a Jewish merchant who sold supplies to the army and was heading home to Cincinnati, and he agreed to help, sending them “seven barrels of Matzos” along with “two Hagodahs and prayer-books.”

Armed with some of the basics, Joel turned his attention to obtaining “the other requisites for that occasion.” A number of the Jewish soldiers were dispatched to the countryside to find various food items for the festive Seder meal while others stayed behind “to build a log hut for the service,” a possible reference to a temporary synagogue.

Given the difficulties of war, Joel and his fellow Jewish servicemen had to improvise as best they could. He recalled that “Horseradish or parsley we could not obtain, but in lieu we found a weed, whose bitterness, I apprehend, exceeded anything our forefathers ‘enjoyed.’” Similarly, Joel was unable to obtain the necessary ingredients to make haroset, the dish intended to remind participants at the Seder of the mortar used by the Israelites to make bricks in ancient Egypt.

So he and the other soldiers did the next best thing: They “got a brick which, rather hard to digest, reminded us, by looking at it, for what purpose it was intended.”

That evening, Joel and the 20 other Jewish soldiers sat down and conducted the Seder, one that he later said he would remember for the rest of his life.

“There, in the wild woods of West Virginia, away from home and friends, we consecrated and offered up to the ever-loving G-d of Israel our prayers and sacrifice,” he wrote.

“I doubt whether the spirits of our forefathers, had they been looking down on us, standing there with our arms by our side ready for an attack, faithful to our God and our cause, would have imagined themselves amongst mortals, enacting this commemoration of the scene that transpired in Egypt,” Joel related.

While a number of the participants in that memorable Passover commemoration later died in battle, Joel survived a number of wounds and after the war he moved to Staten Island with his wife.

With the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery serving as one of Passover’s central themes, it is difficult not to wonder whether the Jewish soldiers of the North and South viewed the titanic struggle between the states through the prism of the festival, particularly since the issue of slavery lay at the heart of the conflict.

Did southern Jewish combatants see the irony when they recited the section in the Haggada which declares, “We were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt,” even as they fought to preserve the enslavement of blacks? Did Jewish Union soldiers imagine themselves as deliverers of another people from servitude? We may never know.

Nonetheless, despite the carnage of the fratricidal conflict and the ideological divide between the two sides, the onset of Passover occasionally still had a unifying effect.

In his 1961 classic, American Jewry and the Civil War, the late Bertram W. Korn relates a story signifying how the fraternal bond among Jews could overcome political differences.

“One day during a Passover,” Korn wrote, “Union soldier Myer Levy of Philadelphia was walking through a captured Virginia town, when he saw a boy sitting on the steps of his house and eating matza. When Levy asked for some, the boy leaped up and ran into the house shouting, ‘Mother, there’s a damn-Yankee Jew outside!’ The boy’s mother came out and invited Levy to return that evening for a Passover meal.”

The name of that gracious woman has been lost to history, but the power of her kindness, and the lesson it teaches, has not. Through her action, she paid homage to the words of the Haggada, which states: “Whoever is hungry let him come and eat, whoever is in need let him come and celebrate Passover.”

When we gaze back at the American Civil War, and the Jews who struggled to preserve their traditions even amid the gunpowder and cannon-fire, it is an example well worth remembering.

*Reprinted from the March 24, 2013 edition of the Jerusalem Post.*

**A Blast from the Recent Past (2013)**

**The Rabbi Who**

**Saved Passover**

**By Gil Shefler**

L.A. Jews spared from serving a vegetarian Seder meal by a last-minute Kashrut ruling

NEW YORK (JTA) — Less than a day before the start of Passover, the phone rang at the Brooklyn home of Rabbi Yisroel Belsky. On the line were concerned members of the Rabbinical Council of California, a rabbinical association in Los Angeles that provides kosher certification, among other services.

The RCC had just discovered that Mike Engelman, the owner of Doheny Glatt Kosher Meats, had smuggled uncertified meat into his store, and the West Coast rabbis needed the guidance of their East Coast colleague.

“It was obvious to all of us that we needed an unbiased decision from an expert outside the community, with vast knowledge and experience, to give an authoritative decision that the members of this community would rely upon,” Rabbi Avrohom Union, the rabbinic administrator of the RCC, told JTA in an email.

Now [Rabbi] Belsky, a well-respected arbiter of religious law, had a big decision on his plate. If he determined all the meat was tainted, observant Angelenos may have been forced to toss all the foods they prepared for Passover, which started on the evening of March 25.

“People would have been served salad on Passover night,” said Rabbi Meyer May, the RCC president.

[](http://cdn.timesofisrael.com/uploads/2013/04/Doheny-Glatt-Kosher.png)*Doheny Glatt Kosher Meats will open under new management soon after being shut down because its owner smuggled uncertified meat into the popular Los Angeles market (photo credit: JTA)*

After weighing the information, [Rabbi] Belsky made a ruling: All meat sold prior to March 24, the day the news of the alleged transgressions came to light, was kosher — even though a small portion was not properly certified. Passover was saved — barely.

Kosher violations like this are rare, but not unheard of. News emerges occasionally that a trusted vendor sold clients food that either intentionally or unintentionally did not comply with the strict dietary stipulations of Jewish law.

Police in London in 1928 had to prevent an angry mob from storming a cafe that sold unkosher meat as kosher. In 1986, a court fined Rachleff Kosher Provisions in Brooklyn more than $1 million for selling thousands of pounds of non-kosher tongue and brisket. In 2006, in one of the worst violations in recent memory, Shevach Meats, a supermarket in the largely Orthodox community of Monsey, N.Y., was discovered to have intentionally sold non-kosher items to its unsuspecting clientele.

Some rabbis in Monsey and nearby Spring Valley — though not all — told followers they had to remake their kitchens as kosher, an arduous process that involves boiling pots and pans and passing utensils over an open flame. Some kitchenware that comes into contact with unkosher food is considered irredeemable and thrown out.

“It was extremely shocking because many, many people really viewed this grocery as the most reliable place to get your chicken,” said Rikki Davidson, a 28-year-old homemaker from Monsey. “All the caterers purchased chicken from him.”

What exactly happened at Doheny Market is still unclear. On March 12, Engelman was caught on videotape directing his employees to unload boxes of meat from his car while the market’s kosher supervisor was absent. Engelman reportedly claimed the meat wasn’t unkosher, just not glatt — a higher kosher standard.

But the RCC revoked the shop’s kosher certification on March 24 and the US Department of Agriculture has launched an investigation. Within days, the market was sold to businessman Shlomo Rechnitz, Belsky’s son-in-law, who vowed to ensure it strictly complied with dietary laws.

“The store will reopen in the coming days under RCC supervision after undergoing a thorough restocking and will feature mehadrin kashrus standards,” the RCC said in a statement, referring to the most stringent kosher supervision. “The previous owner has no financial or operational interest in the store.”

Still, for the untold numbers who bought meat from Engelman, the scandal constituted a profound betrayal of trust.

“I’d say hello to Engelman if I saw him on the street, but I would not invite him to dinner,” said May, who also is the executive director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. “I don’t have people I don’t trust in my life.”

Avrom Pollak, the president of Star K, a kosher certifier in Baltimore, said his outfit frequently dealt with clients who tried to cut corners. His supervisors recently caught a caterer trying to sell non-kosher turkey to clients.

“The rabbi remembered the kosher butchers in the area don’t kill turkeys that size,” Pollak said. “We asked to see the invoices and saw the top was torn off, so the name was not available.”

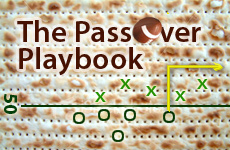
Rabbi Menachem Genack, the CEO of the Orthodox Union’s Kosher Division, the largest kosher certifier in the world, said his organization was looking at new technology to help uphold dietary regulations.

“Over the last few months we’ve been talking to people about whether products at slaughterhouses can be given a unique label,” he said. “There is a specific scanner that will be able to check each number assigned to each piece of meat.”

The RCC said Doheny Market will reopen with new management and increased scrutiny over the next couple of days. Still, Rabbi May said even with the best practices in place, errors can occur.

“Greed exists in the world, so you always have the potential for it and anyone can circumvent the system and make a little bit of money,” he said. “The system was very good and exceeded the national standard. But we had a human failure.”

*Reprinted from the April 5, 2013 edition of The Times of Israel*



**A Super Bowl Champion Shares Inspiration from the Haggadah.**

**By** [**Alan Shlomo Veingrad**](http://www.aish.com/authors/119388319.html)

Throughout my career in the NFL, every year at the start of training camp I would get handed a playbook the size of the yellow pages. I was expected to study it and know every single play, backwards and forwards. Each play was strategically designed, and more than anything else, the team’s success depended on how well we executed those plays.

At times, a player will come up short in his execution, but as long as he wins his share of the battles, all is well. The worst thing, though, is getting the play wrong because you failed to study well. Besides messing up on national television – talk about embarrassing! – your teammates and coaches would all watch the videotape together the next day – in slow motion. Pro Football Hall-of-Famer and legendary Coach Forrest Gregg, who coached me in Green Bay, once told the team: "If I open up your playbook and don't find ketchup, mustard and coffee stains all over it, you didn't study well enough."

In Judaism, we have several "playbooks" to help achieve our spiritual objectives. One of my favorites is the Haggadah – the playbook for the Passover Seder. We have a lot to accomplish on this special night and we've got to make the most of it.

Like a playbook, the Haggadah is full of specifics: drink the wine, wash your hands, dip a vegetable in saltwater, break the middle matzah, ask questions, etc. Each of these strategies is designed to achieve the objective – enhanced Jewish identity, and a deepened sense of freedom.

**Three Essentials**

In the Haggadah, Rabban Gamliel identifies the Pesach lamb, matzah and bitter herbs (marror) as the three essential aspects of the Seder experience.

For me, matzah has a very special meaning. As an offensive lineman, I had to constantly build my body bigger and stronger, to wage those battles in the gridiron trenches. During those years I ate with an animalistic, gorge mentality – consuming huge quantities like a dozen egg whites in order to keep up with the 10,000 calories I was burning every day.

Today, when I sit down at the Seder table, the act of eating is totally different. This eating is a refined, elevated act. I recite the blessing, and introspect on the deeper meaning of matzah as both the bread of affliction and the symbol of our redemption.

**After the Hip Injury I thought**

**My Career was Over.**

Marror, the bitter herbs, teaches another important lesson. To achieve our goals in life, there is often bitter pain involved. In 1988 I missed the entire season with a hip injury. The Packers pretty much wrote me off and I thought my career was over. I was depressed. After seeing a number of orthopedic specialists, I finally found one who correctly diagnosed my problem. He performed surgery, structured a rehab program – and three months later I had no more pain in my hip. It was a miracle.

At that point I became intensely focused on building myself up, and I got into in the best shape of my life. I was lifting weights and pushing my friend’s pickup truck up and down the street. I returned to Green Bay and throughout training camp I became stronger and stronger. Things completely turned around.

I started every game that year and it was my best season as a pro. So when I see that marror on the Seder table – and recall the bitter oppression that the Jews faced in Egypt – I know that though things sometimes look horrible, there is a turnaround waiting and it will work out for the best. The pain eventually pays off.

The last symbol the Haggadah emphasizes is Pesach – the Pascal lamb. The lamb was worshipped as the god of the Egyptians. So the Jews took that very symbol of enslavement, tied it to the bedpost, slaughtered it, ate it, and smeared its blood on the doorpost. It was clear which “God” was in charge.

**I Got an Insider’s Look at the**

**Way Athletes are Worshipped.**

In the world of professional sports, I got an insider’s look at the way athletes are worshipped. It’s good for kids to aspire to something and have a role model, but a famous athlete is not necessarily the kind of human being you want to become. Many times these guys appear one way for the media hype and endorsements, but are plagued by personal problems like drugs, anger, overweight. I think our role models need to be community leaders, teachers, rabbis, parents.

Even better, aspire to become your own hero. Everyone has their own role to play. The quarterback may get the headlines, but the offensive lineman is just as crucial to the win. In 1992 when I played on the world champion Dallas Cowboys, every teammate got the same Super Bowl Ring. Take pride in the team. Find your own unique contribution. We all have a Super Bowl ring waiting to be earned. What’s yours?

**Moving the Chains**

Coming out of the huddle to the line of scrimmage, we didn't focus on crossing the goal line; we focused on making progress and "moving the chains." How often do we see the referee holding up his fingers, motioning that you need just one more inch for a first down?

The Hebrew name for Egypt is *Mitzrayim*, which means boundaries or limitations. Passover is the best opportunity of the year to break out of our own personal limitations, symbolized by the slavery of ancient Egypt. At the Seder, we can gain more yardage toward our ultimate freedom than at other time of the year. We just have to keep moving those chains down the field – inch by inch, yard by yard, and mitzvah by mitzvah – away from the "Egypt" keeping us down.

The secret of success is right there in the Haggadah. But it’s more than just X's and O's on a chalkboard. Great players – and great people – don't just read the playbook. They study it and understand the depth behind it.

Here’s wishing you a happy, kosher, and meaningful Passover.

(Alan Shlomo Veingrad had a seven-year NFL career as an offensive lineman with the Green Bay Packers and the Dallas Cowboys, with whom he won Super Bowl XXVII.)

*Reprinted from Aish.com Adapted from an article in American Jewish Spirit Magazine - ajspirit.com* *Parts of this article appeared in a different version in*[*American Jewish Spirit Magazine*](http://www.ajspirit.com/)*, Spring 2011.*

Alan Shlomo Veingrad had a seven-year NFL career as an offensive lineman with the Green Bay Packers and the Dallas Cowboys, with whom he won Super Bowl XXVII.

**The Kitniyot Debate:**

**Are We Not One People?**

**By** [**Aron Moss**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/8051/jewish/Aron-Moss.htm)

**Question**

I am Ashkenazi (Jew of Eastern European descent) and my wife is Sephardi (an Oriental Jew). She grew up eating rice on Passover, which my family custom would never allow. Every Passover, we have the same discussion: how can it be?

Aren't we all part of the same religion? that one group of Jews can eat rice on Passover and another group can't? Aren't we all part of the same religion? Isn't this an example of how the Torah can be interpreted in so many ways, and there is no one true Judaism?

**Answer:**

Actually, when you compare the way Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews celebrate Passover, you will be astounded not by the differences, but by the similarities. The discrepancies are so minor and external that they just prove the rule—we are one people with one Torah.

Jews are forbidden by the Torah to eat or even own leavened products on Passover. This means any product made from the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, rye, oats), other than matzah, cannot be eaten or in your possession for the eight days of Passover. Jews living in certain areas took on an extra stringency and forbade rice and legumes on Passover.

The Jews of the Orient, however, did not take on this custom. Perhaps the conditions of growing and storing those products in their lands did not warrant this extra precaution. This means that the Seder menu of a Jewish family from Iraq or Yemen will vastly differ from the fare served at a table of German or Hungarian Jews. The former will eat rice, peas, beans and corn; the latter will not.

But that's just the menu. If you look at every other aspect of the Seder, it is almost identical from one community to another. To illustrate this, imagine the following scenario:

Take a 9th century Persian Jew, and transport him through time and space to 19th century Poland. After traversing the globe and jumping a thousand years forward, he arrives in a time and a land that are totally foreign to him. He walks the streets in a daze, completely lost and out of place.

But take him to a Seder, and he will feel completely at home. His host family may look different in color and dress, and they may eat Ashkenazi foods that are unfamiliar to his Persian palate, but the Seder itself will be exactly the same as his family Seder back home. He will hear the children ask the same four questions that his own children ask him. He will eat the same matzah and bitter herbs, drink the same four cups of wine, and read the same prayers and biblical quotes. Even the songs, while sung to different tunes, will have the same Hebrew lyrics.

Most importantly, he will hear the exact same story, the story every Jewish family has told every year for over three thousand years, the story ofWe are still one people our common ancestors who were slaves in Egypt until G‑d set them free.

This is nothing short of amazing. Two thousand years of exile has not weakened our inner connection. Dispersal across the globe has not loosened our bonds of shared history and united destiny. With all the fragmentation and factionalism that we all complain about, we are still one people. This is felt at Passover more than ever.

Rather than focusing on the superficial disparities between communities, look at our internal connection. We are all telling the same story. G‑d took us out of Egypt to make us one nation, united by the Torah, our common history and our common goal. Some eat rice, some don't, and it matters not. We are one family, the children of Israel.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**May Grape Juice be Used for the Four Cups of Wine at the Pesah Seder?**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

Many people ask whether grape juice may be used instead of wine for the Misva of “Arba Kosot” – drinking four cups of wine at the Seder. This is, indeed, an important question with which the Halachic authorities have grappled, both in regard to this Misva as well as in regard to the Misva of Kiddush.

When it comes to Kiddush, the Rambam (Rav Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204) ruled that wine which is Mebushal – meaning, it has been brought to a boil – may not be used. The Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 472) does not follow this view of the Rambam, but according to some authorities, it is preferable not to use Mebushal wine for Kiddush.

The grape juice which is commonly sold in stores today is Mebushal (as it has undergone pasteurization), so this is one disadvantage of using grape juice for Kiddush. It should be noted that the Shulhan Aruch permits using for Kiddush freshly-squeezed grape juice produced on Friday, so if somebody squeezes grapes to produce grape juice before Shabbat, which is obviously not Mebushal, he avoids this disadvantage.

The second Halachic disadvantage of grape juice is that it fails to meet the standard mentioned by several Halachic authorities (Magen Abraham, and Hid”a in Birkeh Yosef) who maintained that one should preferably use aged wine for Kiddush. This refers to wine which was contained in a vat for at least forty days. Grape juice never even begins the fermenting process, and thus certainly does meet this preferred criterion.

Thus, although from a strict Halachic standpoint grape juice may be used for Kiddush on Shabbat, it is preferable to use wine. Ideally, one should use non-Mebushal, aged wine. The next level would be aged wine that is Mebushal. The third level would be non-Mebushal grape juice, and the fourth level would be Mebushal grape juice.

When it comes to the four cups at the Seder, there is an additional factor that must be taken into consideration. Namely, the wine drunk at the Seder must have the quality of “Mesame’ah” – it brings a person joy. The Halachic authorities address the question of whether grape juice, which has no intoxicating effect, meets this requirement.

Hacham Ovadia Yosef draws proof from the comments of the Ran (Rabbenu Nissim of Gerona, Spain, 1315-1376) in Masechet Pesahim, and from the Gemara’s discussion in Masechet Baba Batra (93), that even wine which is not intoxicating is suitable for the four cups of wine at the Seder. He applies this conclusion to grape juice, as well.

As a practical matter, Hacham Ovadia, as well as Hacham Bension Abba Shaul (Israel, 1923-1998), ruled that one should preferably use wine for the four cups, even if this poses some difficulty, but women, and those for whom drinking wine is very difficult, may use grape juice. Hacham Bension adds that a person who cannot drink four cups of wine should use wine for at least the final cup, as he will go to sleep soon afterward. Another option is to mix wine and grape juice for the four cups.

It should be noted that Rav Moshe Feinstein (Russia-New York, 1895-1986) is cited as having ruled against the use of grape juice for the four cups at the Seder. However, as mentioned, the leading Sephardic Sages of the last generation – Hacham Ovadia Yosef and Hacham Bension – allowed the use of grape juice for women and for those who have considerable difficulty drinking four cups of wine.

Summary: One should use wine, and not grape juice, for the four cups at the Seder, but women, as well as men for whom drinking four cups of wine poses considerable difficulty, may use grape juice. Preferably, they should mix wine and grape juice, or drink wine for at least the fourth of the four cups.

*Reprinted from Rabbi Eli J. Mansour’s Daily Halacha email of March 20, 2015.*

**Future Pope Clement XIV Rejects Blood Libel**

Clement XIV (Lorenzo Ganganelli), 265th pope, was born at San Arcangelo, near Rimini, October 31, 1705, elected May 19, 1769, and died September 22, 1774. His election was hailed with particular joy by the Jews, who trusted that the man who, as councilor of the Holy Office, declared them, in a memorandum issued March 21, 1758, innocent of the slanderous blood accusation, would be no less just and humane toward them on the throne of Catholicism.

In this they were not deceived. Two months after his accession Clement XIV withdrew the Roman Jews from the jurisdiction of the Inquisition and placed them under that of the "Vicariato di Roma" (August 5, 1769). Another token of his benevolence toward the Jews was the confirmation (March 29, 1773) of the bull of Clement VIII. concerning the Jus Gaszaka, which was of very great importance to the Roman Jews. The memorandum of Clement XIV (Ganganelli), referred to above, deserves special mention, as much from the importance of the subject treated therein as from the great authority of its author.

It was called forth by a blood accusation against the Jews of Yanopol, Poland. [**Editor’s Note: The Infamous Blood Libel accuses Jews of killing Christian children in order to use their blood for the special baking of Passover Matzahs.]** Alarmed by this frequently repeated accusation, the Polish Jews sent one Jacob Selek to Rome to implore the protection of the pope. Benedict XIV thereupon ordered a thorough examination of the matter, and the councilor of the Holy Office, Lorenzo Ganganelli (later Clement XIV), was charged with the preparation of a report on the subject.

This report, bearing on its title-page the motto "Non solis accusatoribus credendum," was presented to the congregation of the Inquisition March 21, 1758. The author shows therein not only the groundlessness of the Yanopol accusation, but, passing in review all the principal cases of blood accusation since the thirteenth century, demonstrates that they were all groundless.

Only in two cases did Ganganelli hesitate to declare the falsity of the accusation; namely, in that of Simon of Trent, in 1475, and in that of Andreas of Rinn, in 1462. The future pope could not very well acknowledge that the canonization of these two pretended martyrs was undeserved. But he pointed out that the popes themselves hesitated a long time before admitting the worship of Saint Simon and Saint Andrew; the former having waited more than 110 years, and the latter almost 300 years -- a proof that the veracity of the accusation was doubted.

No account is to be taken of the testimony of some baptized Jews, such as Julio Morosini and Paul Sebastian Medici, who, in their hatred of their former coreligionists, claim in their writings that the Jews use Christian blood. Moreover, these writings were triumphantly refuted by high authorities. Ganganelli concludes his memorandum by reminding the Christians that they themselves were once accused by the heathen of the same crime, as attested by Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Theodoret, and Rufinus. The effort of Ganganelli was crowned with success. Benedict XIV, impressed by the arguments in the memoir, declared the Jews of Yanopol innocent, and dismissed Jacob Selek with honors, recommending him, through Cardinal Corsini, to Visconti, Bishop of Warsaw, who received orders to protect the Polish Jews in the future from such accusations

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayikra Young Israel of FlatbushBulletin email. The above article is taken from the Jewish Encyclopaedia.*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Yom tov pesach 5774**

Volume 5, Issue 34 15 Nissan 5774/ April 15, 2014

For a free subscription, please forward your request to [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**Sascha and the “Kremels”:**

**A True Passover Story**

**By** [**Goldie Naiditch**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/19083/jewish/Goldie-Naiditch.htm)

Years ago in Minnesota, there lived a Holocaust survivor named Sascha Breslermann (1925-1998). He was a middle-aged German Jew with a ready smile. He was immaculate, bordering on compulsive—you could eat off his garage floor! His charming German accent rendered the English language quite amusing.

Sascha lived in a modest home with his wife Ruth and their daughter Rochelle. Ruth was a slight, stoic American Jew who complemented Sascha's personality.

Sascha worked for a rental car, He was immaculate, bordering on compulsive agency at the Twin Cities airport. Every day at exactly 8:20 a.m., rain, snow or shine, Sascha would leave to get to his job on time. Ruth prepared a lunch for Sascha every morning in a brown paper bag that she placed every day on the kitchen table. And so, day in and day out, year in and year out, Sascha maintained a precise schedule, never deviating, except of course, on Shabbat or holidays.

As most Jews know, there is one time during the year when pressure mounts. That is Pesach, Passover. During the week before Pesach, we must finalize the cleaning, removal and sale of all leavened food items. Finally, in the last throes of the Pesach cleaning frenzy, we perform a ritual called *BedikatChametz*. We carefully prepare 10 pieces of *chametz* (leavened food), as transmitted by Kabbalistic tradition, and then hide them throughout the house.

After saying a blessing, we search silently for the *chametz* by candlelight. When a piece is found, we use a feather and a wooden spoon to sweep the *chametz* into a paper bag. Although all of this is a lot of fun, it is serious business. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi spent hours “searching for the *chametz*, the specks of arrogance in the soul.”

The following day, the bag with the 10 pieces of *chametz*, along with the wooden spoon, feather and candle, are burned in another ceremony called *Biur Chametz*. The *chametz* must be burned before the official time designated for each city. This, then, is the final “curtain” for the *chametz*.

On the day before Pesach, Sascha's home was even cleaner than usual, if that was possible. Ruth placed the brown paper bag containing the *chametz* on the kitchen table, which she would bring to a communal *Biur Chametz* ceremony on behalf of the family.

That morning, two brown paper lunch bags stood at attention on the kitchen table. Each was folded three times to form a slight handle. Each bag awaited its destiny.

Sascha checked his watch, as he had done at least 10 times since waking, to see that he was on his precise schedule. His last task before leaving work was to get his lunch and car keys and leave the house. He entered the kitchen, and, without taking note of anything unusual, Sascha took a brown bag from the kitchen table and drove off to work.

Sascha parked his car in the employee lot outside the airport. He took his usual path to punch his timecard. On the way, he greeted his friend and co-worker, Jerry.

“How's it goin' Saycha?” Jerry just couldn't get Sascha's name right.

“Gut, gut,” replied Sasha, giving him a toothy, friendly smile. As he made his way near his office, his stomach growled. He was hungry; on the day before Pesach, there's wasn’t too much to eat in the house. Sascha looked in his lunch bag, and to his chagrin, there were only crumbs, “kremels,” in Sascha's unique vocabulary. He immediately tossed the bag into the big green dumpster, and off to work he went.

Meanwhile, Ruth was getting ready to join the community in the group burning of the *chametz,* which was the last ritual to divest oneself of all After putting on her jacket, Ruth went to the kitchen table and took the remaining brown paper bag. Much to her horror, there were no *chametz* pieces inside, only Sascha’s lunch!

Time was of the essence! The crumbs had to be burned within an hour. Ruth quickly called Sascha. “Sascha, you must have the *chametz*!”

“Vat are you meaning?”

“The *chametz*,” Ruth said, “from the *Bedikat Chametz* , the search for the *chametz*. You took it, it was on the kitchen table, in a brown bag.”

Sascha's face turned pale. He had immediate recognition—life had thrown him a brown paper curveball.

“Sascha, Sascha, are you there?”

“Ya, ya.”

“Sascha, you have to bring the *chametz* back home so I can burn it. We only have a little time left.”

“Ya, ya, *chametz*, you mean the kremels,” said Sascha, “I bring zem, I bring the kremels.”

Sascha immediately went to survey the big green dumpster. It was 12 feet high. Sascha rolled up his sleeves. He looked to the right and to the left. Luckily, no one was around. He focused on the top rim of the dumpster. After two tries, he hoisted himself up to the top and jumped in.

Sascha looked around him, feeling like Jonah in the whale. Fortunately, the dumpster was not full. Sascha gingerly started to look for the bag with the “kremels.” There weren't too many brown bags, especially those that were folded quite neatly. After poking and searching around, Sascha found the bag, and yes, the “kremels” were intact.

Now Sascha had one big problem, well, actually, two: How to get out of the dumpster, and what to tell the person who would help him out. Sascha took his cell phone and called Jerry.

“Jerry, I need your help.”

“What do you need, Saycha?”

“Vell, I'm in the dumpster and I can't get out.”

There was a long pause on the other end of the phone.

“Saycha, you say you are in the dumpster?”

“Ya, can you help me get out?”

“OK, this oughta be a good one!”

Jerry went to get a ladder and brought it to the dumpster. He climbed up and saw Sascha. “You are in there, alright!”

As he grabbed Sascha's hands and hoisted him out of the dumpster, he asked, “Now Saycha, you gotta tell me what made you get into this dumpster in the first place.”

“Da vife (wife), she left her watch in the paper bag, and called to tell me to go get it.”

“She left her watch in your lunch bag! Incredible, what wives don't think of!”

Sascha raced home with the“kremels.” Ruth finished burning the *chametz*, and Passover started on time that night. And Sascha, well, he started a new habit: checking to make sure his lunch was in the bag, and not the “kremels.”

*Reprinted from the Passover website of Chabad.Org* *Goldie Naiditch is a teacher, grandmother, and freelance writer who writes about Jewish heroines in Israel, especially those in Judea and Samaria.*

**Mayim Shelanu in Eretz Yisroel**



Photo Credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90

Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Jews are collecting water from a mountain spring outside Jerusalem.

The water will be used in the making of matzah, or unleavened bread, that is eaten instead of regular bread during the week-long Jewish holiday of Pesach (Passover), which commemorates the Jews' exodus from Egypt in Biblical times.

The water, once collected, will sit overnight, and be used the next day for the matzah baking. That water is called "Mayim Shelanu", water that has slept.

*Reprinted from the April 4, 2014 email of The Jewish Press.*

**A Blast from the Past (2005)**

**Like Matzo, This Gentile**

**Is Now a Passover Staple**

**By Alex Mindlin**

I In the book-lined basement of a synagogue in Queens, City Councilman James F. Gennaro sat among a throng of rabbis on Friday morning and signed off on an unusual purchase. Among the items he agreed to buy: hundreds of loaves of bread, bushels of breakfast cereal and several cellars' worth of liquor.

He also became the owner of a vending-machine business, assorted stocks, and 25 newly hatched parrots.

Mr. Gennaro, a second-term member of the City Council, was at the synagogue, Young Israel of Jamaica Estates, to serve as what is sometimes called a chametz goy - a non-Jew who purchases a congregation's chametz, or leavened grain products, for the duration of Passover, which celebrates the deliverance of Jews from slavery in Egypt. The eight-day holiday began last night.

The chametz goy role is common only in heavily Orthodox communities, where many believe it is forbidden not only to consume leavened grain products during Passover, but also to even own them.

Rather than throw all that liquor in the trash, families who need to get rid of their chametz sell it to a friendly non-Jew who takes title to it, legally removing it from their possession - though it stays under their roofs. A token amount of money is exchanged, and after Passover, the non-Jew sells the goods back. The congregants can then resume drinking liquor and eating Wheaties.

Rabbis may sell their congregants' chametz to any non-Jew, but some develop favorites over time - many synagogue janitors, for example, are chametz buyers year after year. Occasionally, one person even becomes the preferred buyer for many different rabbis.

Councilman Gennaro is one such gentile of first resort.

Five years ago, Shlomo Hochberg, the rabbi of Young Israel of Jamaica Estates, approached Councilman Gennaro, in whose district the synagogue is located, about selling him the chametz of Young Israel's congregants.

Since then, through word of mouth, Mr. Gennaro has acquired a following: six rabbis attended the ceremony on Friday, each armed with reams of paper listing the chametz holdings of his congregants, who numbered perhaps 3,000 in total. (That figure includes 1,000 students at Stern College for Women, where Rabbi Hochberg is a guidance counselor.)

"It's become this chametz empire," Mr. Gennaro said before the ceremony. "I'm the yeast man. I'm like Mr. Fermentation."

The haul this year, as described on manifests in English and Hebrew tucked into bulging manila envelopes, included anything conceivably related to grain: stock shares in cereal companies, a vending-machine business (the machines sell some grain products, like granola bars), and, of course, the parrots, which, as grain eaters, cannot be owned by a Jew during Passover, according to some interpretations of the law. (A non-Jewish caretaker will adopt them for the week.)

Mr. Gennaro was lucky, said Rabbi Marc Penner of Young Israel of Holliswood, not to be buying up all his congregants' other pets, too. "I spared you the dogs and cats," he said. "I did those yesterday."

Mr. Gennaro listened attentively, nodding frequently and occasionally asking questions, as Rabbi Feivel Wagner, of Young Israel of Forest Hills, explained his rights as a buyer. Later, the councilman took pains to stress that this was no fictional sale. "If you sell somebody the chametz," he said, "he really owns it. I'm under no obligation to sell it back. Theoretically I could come claim it and use it."

Indeed, he did just that last year, accompanied by Rabbi Penner, who wanted to impress on his congregants the reality of the sale. "We went to someone's house," said Mr. Gennaro, "and we knocked on the door, and I said, 'O.K., I'm here for the chametz.' I selected a bottle of single-malt Scotch."

"It was a blast," recalled Rabbi Penner, fondly. "We just showed up at somebody's house and took their Scotch. They had no idea what to say."

*Reprinted from the April 24, 2005 edition of The New York Times*

**Barrels on a Riverbank**

[**From the Chassidic Masters**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/90/jewish/Yanki-Tauber.htm)

*Editor's note: One of the central figures in the history of Chassidism was the famed "Seer of Lublin," Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Horowitz (1745-1815), who presided over the spread of Chassidism in Poland and Galicia; many of the great Chassidic masters of the time were his disciples. This story, however, is not about the "Seer" but about his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Kopel of Likova; in fact, it happened many years before the Seer's birth.*

Reb Kopel earned a living by purchasing barrels of vodka and beer from the local distillers and selling his wares to the taverns in and around his native village of Likova. It was not an easy life, with the heavy taxes exerted by the government and the hostile environment facing a Jew in 18th-century Europe. Yet his faith and optimism never faltered.

Each year, on the morning before Passover, Reb Kopel would sell his *chametz* to one of his gentile neighbors. *Chametz* is "leaven" -- a category that must famously includes bread but also all food or drink made with fermented grain. The Torah commands the Jew that absolutely "no leaven shall be found in your possession" for the duration of the Passover festival, in commemoration of the leaven-free Exodus from Egypt.

In the weeks before the festival, the Jewish home is emptied and scrubbed clean of *chametz*; on the night before Passover, a solemn candle-lit search is conducted for every last breadcrumb hiding between the floorboards. By the next morning, all remaining household *chametz* is eaten, burned or otherwise disposed of.

What about someone like Reb Kopel who deals in leavened foods and has a warehouse full of *chametz*? For such cases (and for anyone who has *chametz* they don't want to dispose of) the rabbis instituted the practice of [selling](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/sell_chometz_cdo/jewish/Sell-Your-Chametz-Online.htm) one's *chametz* to a non-Jew.

Reb Kopel's neighbors were familiar with the annual ritual. The Jewish liquor dealer would draw up a legally-binding contract with one of them, in which he sells all the contents of his warehouse for a sum equal to their true value. Only a small part of the sum actually changed hands; the balance was written up as an I.O.U. from the purchaser to the seller. After Passover, Reb Kopel would be back, this time to buy back the *chametz* and return the I.O.U. The purchaser got a tip for his trouble -- usually in the form of a generous sampling of the merchandise that had been legally his for eight days and a few hours.

One year, someone in Likova came up with a novel idea: what if they all refused to buy the Jew's vodka? In that case he would have to get rid of it. Why suffice with a bottle or two when they could have it all?

When Reb Kopel knocked on a neighbor's door on the morning of Passover eve, Ivan politely declined to conduct the familiar transaction. Puzzled, he tried another cottage further down the road. It did not take long for him to realize the trap that his gentile neighbors had laid for him. The deadline for getting rid of *chametz* -- an hour before midday -- was quickly approaching. There was no time to travel to the next village to find a non-Jewish purchaser.

Reb Kopel did not hesitate for a minute. Quickly he emptied the wooden shack behind his house that served as his warehouse. Loading his barrels of *chametz* on his wagon, he headed down to the river. As his neighbors watched gleefully from a distance, he set them on the river bank. In a loud voice he announced: "I hereby renounce any claim I have on this property! I proclaim these barrels ownerless, free for the talking for all!" He then rode back home to prepare for the festival.

That night, Reb Kopel sat down to the Seder with a joyous heart. When he recited from his Haggadah, "Why do we eat this unleavened bread? Because the dough of our fathers did not have time to become leavened before G-d revealed Himself to them and redeemed them," he savored the taste of each word in his mouth.

All his capital had been invested in those barrels of vodka and beer; indeed, much of it had been bought on credit. He was now penniless, and the future held only the prospect of many years of crushing debt. But his heart was as light and bright as a songbird. He had not a drop of *chametz* in his possession! For once in his life, he had been given the opportunity to truly demonstrate his love and loyalty to G-d. He had removed all leaven from his possession, as G-d had commanded him. Of course, he had fulfilled many mitzvot in his lifetime, but never at such a cost -- none as precious -- as this one!

The eight days of Passover passed for Reb Kopel in a state of ecstatic joy. Then the festival was over, and it was time to return to the real world. With thoughtful steps he headed to his warehouse to look through his papers and try to devise some plan to start his business anew. Clustered in the doorway he found a group of extremely disappointed gentiles.

"Hey, Kopel!" one of them called, "I though you were supposed to get *rid* of your vodka. What's the point of announcing that it's 'free for the taking for all' if you put those watchdogs there to guard it!"

They all began speaking at once, so it took a while for Kopel to learn the details. For the entire duration of the festival, night and day round the clock, the barrels and casks on the riverbank were ringed by a pack of ferocious dogs who allowed no one to approach. Reb Kopel rode to the riverbank. There the barrels stood, untouched.

But he made no move to load them on his wagon. "If I take them back," he said to himself, "how will I ever know that I had indeed fully and sincerely relinquished my ownership over them before Passover? How could I ever be sure that I had truly fulfilled the mitzvah of removing *chametz* from my possession? No! I won't give up my mitzvah, or even allow the slightest shadow of a doubt to fall over it!"

One by one, he rolled the barrels down the riverbank until they stood at the very brink of the water. He pulled out the stops in their spigots and waited until every last drop of vodka and beer had merged with the river. Only then did he head back home.

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org* Told by Rabbi Y.S. Zevin's in Sippurei Chassidim; translation/adaptation by [Yanki Tauber](http://www.chabad.org/tools/feedback.asp?sendto=Yanki%20Tauber)*.*

**Egypt Calls for Reparations - From Biblical Times**

**By Tova Dvorin**

Middle-Eastern countries have a tendency to hold a grudge against Israel, whether over Israel winning the 1967 war or daring to establish independence in 1948.

But, as of earlier this month [March 2014], an Egyptian columnist has called for Israel to pay Cairo reparations - and this time, it's Biblical.

"We want compensation for the [Ten] Plagues that were inflicted upon [us] as a result of the curses that the Jews' ancient forefathers [cast] upon our ancient forefathers, who did not deserve to pay for the mistake that Egypt's ruler at the time, Pharaoh as the Torah calls him, committed," Ahmad Al-Gamal, a writer for the Al-Yawm Al-Sabi' daily. Translations of the article were provided by The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).

"For what is written in the Torah proves that it was Pharaoh who oppressed the Children of Israel, rather than the Egyptian people. [But] they inflicted upon us the plague of locusts that didn't leave anything behind them; the plague that transformed the Nile's waters into blood, so nobody could drink of them for a long time; the plague of darkness that kept the world dark day and night; the plague of frogs; and the plague of the killing of the firstborn, namely every first offspring born to woman or beast, and so on."

"We want compensation for the gold, silver, copper, precious stones, fabrics, hides and lumber, and for [all] animal meat, hair, hides and wool, and for other materials that I will mention [below], when quoting the language of the Torah," he continued. "All these are materials that the Jews used in their rituals. These are resources that cannot be found among desert wanderers unless they took them before their departure..."

Later in the article Al-Gamal claimed that Israel stole the materials from ancient Egypt, purely out of spite.

"The stories of the Holy Scriptures state that the Israelites set off from the [Nile] valley at night and went to the Sinai Peninsula. This is known to be a desert, where there is no use for large quantities of gold, silver, precious stones, meats, oils, fabrics and the like. Therefore, it is clear that the Israelites took all these things from Egypt before they left."

He quoted a translated version of the Torah, allegedly to prove his point.

"Chapter 25 of Exodus, on the [Israelites'] departure [from Egypt], states: 'The Lord said to Moses: Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering... These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."

He continued by calling on the international community to calculate the modern-day value of ancient shekels for compensation.   
 "'The total amount of the gold from the wave offering used for all the work on the sanctuary was 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel...'," he noted. "I call upon everyone with an interest in Torah studies to instruct us on a scientific basis what is the [precise] meaning of the word 'talent.' How many grams is it currently worth, what was the weight of the sheqel during those days, especially as it was made out of solid pure gold and pure silver?"

The events Al-Gamal describes are from the Pesach, or Passover, story of the Jews being freed from ancient Egypt. The Torah does say that the Israelites were by G-d told to take spoils from Egypt, notably during the plague of darkness.

However, Al-Gamal is not the first Egyptian to demand compensation. The Jews were asked to return those spoils at a much earlier period in history.

In fact, the Talmud in Tractate Sanhedrin tells that the Egyptians came before Alexander the Great (approximately 330 B.C.E.) when he conquered Asia Minor and demanded that the Jews repay them for the gold and silver that the Torah says they took from Egypt during the Exodus.

It recounts how Talmudic scholar Gviha ben Psisiah said to them that the same Torah that recounts how the Jews took spoils from Egypt also recounts how they worked as unpaid slaves for 210 years. Therefore, he claimed, they are owned an enormous sum of wages for that period. The Egyptian representatives asked for a three day hiatus to come up with an answer, but not finding one, they fled.

In the same article, Al-Gamal also calls for compensation from the Turks for invading Egypt during the Ottoman period, from the French for Napoleon's invasion in the 19th century, and the British for 72 years of occupation.

Reprinted from the April 1, 2014 email of Arutz Sheva. (Editor’s Note: I saw nothing in the Arutz Sheva email to indicate it was an April Fools Day joke.)





**PASSOVER IN THE NEWS!**

Over two and a half thousand years ago, G-d saved the Jewish people and took them out of slavery in Egypt, leading them through the Split Sea and into the land of Israel.

Each year we celebrate our redemption from Egypt by reading the story of

Passover out loud during the Passover Seder.

Here’s how it all began…

**EVIL DECREES**

For a long time, Pharaoh’s advisors had been warning him as to the growing threat of the Jewish nation. His sorcerers had seen in the stars that a Jewish boy would be born who would grow up, overturn the entire Egyptian empire and lead his people to freedom.

“All Jews must work from sunrise to sunset…without pay!” Pharaoh declared. “Children must work as hard as adults. No parents are allowed to spend time with their kids. Egyptians may use a Jewish slave to do whatever they need.” And worst of all: “All Jewish baby boys are to be thrown into the Nile!”

**MOSES IS SAVED**

A Jewish woman called Yocheved had a baby boy. Desperately trying to save his life, she hid him until he was three months old, then placed him in a basket and sent him floating down the Nile. His sister Miriam watched him, hiding amongst the reeds on the banks of the river. The floating basket was picked up by the Princess of Egypt – Batya – Pharaoh’s own daughter! Discovering the beautiful infant inside, Batya named him Moses and took him to the palace where he grew up in the lap of luxury.

**FLEEING FOR HIS LIFE!**

Despite the fact that he grew up in the palace, Moses could not bear to see the suffering of the Jewish people. One day, Moses chanced upon an Egyptian taskmaster, savagely whipping a Jewish slave to death. Furious, Moses cried out one of G-d’s Holy Names, and the Egyptian immediately died. Certain that Pharaoh’s officers would be after him, Moses fled to Midian.

**THE BURNING BUSH**

Moses lived in Midian for a number of years, and was a shepherd for his father-in-law, Yitro. One day, a lamb ran away from the rest of the flock. Moses chased after it and saw a strange sight: a bush covered in fire, yet the bush was not being burnt by the flames! Amazed Moses drew even nearer, and all of a sudden heard the voice of G-d speaking to him.

“Go down to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let My people go!”

**THE TEN PLAGUES**

Moses and his brother Aaron came before Pharaoh. “Let my people go!” they declared. But Pharaoh just laughed. They threatened Pharaoh with 10 terrible plagues if he did not listen to G-d, but he did not believe them.

Plague after plague soon struck the Egyptians, each one more shocking than the next. Blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, sick animals, boils, hail, locusts, darkness – and the worst plague of all – death of the firstborn.

Finally, Pharaoh had enough. He ran frantically through the streets of Egypt searching for Moses. “Go!” He yelled, “And take all the Jews with you!”

Moses sent word to all the Jews. “The time has come” he told them, “grab your bags and get ready to leave at once. Don’t wait for your bread to rise, just go!”

The Jews left Egypt with sacks on their backs, and faith in their hearts.

**FREEDOM AT LAST!**

The Jews walked until they reached the sea. And there they stopped. They were trapped! They could see the Egyptian army chasing after them, swords at the ready. Pharaoh had changed his mind. He was chasing after his slaves, trying to recapture them. G-d told Moses to stretch his arm out over the waters, and all at once, the sea split! Miraculously, the Jews were able to walk through on dry land, but as soon as the Egyptians stepped foot in the sea, the walls of water came crashing down on them. The Jews were free!

*Reprinted from the website of JewishKids.Org*

**Matzah: Simple Cracker, Detailed Story**

**By Jared Sichel**

[](http://www.jewishjournal.com/images/featured/pas-matzah_032213.jpg)

Varieties of kosher-for-Passover matzah line store shelves at Glatt Mart. Photo by Jared Sichel

The matzah aisle in any local kosher supermarket — even some nonkosher ones — is increasingly more likely to resemble a cereal aisle with its myriad options rather than the modesty and simplicity that is matzah itself.

A recent visit to Glatt Mart, one of Pico Boulevard’s two major kosher markets, revealed 36 different types of matzah. Yehuda’s gluten-free version is the most popular, according to owner Meir Davidpour. “Everybody wants something different,” he said, referring to the numerous kosher-for-Passover certifications that exist on the market. He estimated the store carries at least six types of handmade shemura matzah — matzah held to the highest kosher standard — and at least 30 types of more standard machine-made matzah.

There are innumerable varieties — egg, chocolate, apple, whole wheat, thin tea, Mediterranean, organic and more — from a bunch of brands, including Yehuda, Osem, Geula, Aviv, Manischewitz, Streit’s.

While matzah appears at first glance to be a very simple food — a combination of water, flour and heat — its many types, brands and flavors reflect the underlying intricacies of what is also known as the “bread of affliction.”

Just ask Rabbi Yechezkel Auerbach, a kosher supervisor based in Lakewood, N.J., a town about 70 miles south of New York City with a high concentration of Orthodox Jews. Auerbach is the founder of Independent Kashrus Research (IKR), through which he is a consultant for companies on issues pertaining to kosher food production.

His career in the kosher certification field unofficially began when he was an 8-year-old sanding rolling pins in matzah bakeries on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Officially, it began 25 years ago, and Auerbach is now regarded as an authority in the supervision field, working with major kosher certification labels like the Orthodox Union (OU) and Kosher Supervision of America (KSA). He is responsible for ensuring that all the matzah sold in three of Lakewood’s kosher grocery stores is fit for Passover.

Advertisement

Some of Lakewood’s Jews have their own certification because, Auerbach said. “We want to service our community with what we believe is the highest standard of kashrus.”

The story of Auerbach’s matzah takes place almost entirely in Israel. He visits the country twice per year, first in northern Israel for the harvest, just weeks after the end of Passover. He returns later to Bnei Brak, a Tel Aviv suburb, for the baking. From cutting, stripping and grinding the wheat, to cleaning the kernels, baking the matzah and shipping it to the stores, someone must always keep watch over what goes into the matzah.

This is meant to ensure that no outside substance finds its way into the bakery, potentially rendering entire batches of matzah as chametz, which is the Hebrew word that describes leavened food, which is strictly forbidden for consumption on Passover.

Matzah that is shemura, or “guarded,” is different than the basic machine-made matzah, not in substance, but in degree. Whereas shemura matzah is closely watched from the time that the wheat is harvested, other matzah is only closely watched after the wheat is ground into kernels, not from the time that it is first cut. The shemura version of matzah goes another step further than its unguarded brother — even the water used to make the dough is carefully stored for at least the night before use.

Auerbach said that to prevent contamination, the wheat kernels are “stored away under protective custody” until several months later, when they are ground into flour and baked into matzah. By Chanukah, Auerbach said, most matzah bakeries are in full swing, working furiously to satisfy orders, many of which are made before the previous year’s Passover.

The bakeries, particularly the ones where the matzah is made by hand, evoke romantic images of brick ovens, floured hands, white baker’s caps and the ultimate prize, a hot, bumpy, uneven piece of matzah.

“Each dough is kneaded by hand, it is finished by hand, it is cut to size by hand,” Auerbach said. “Every step is done by a human being who can focus on the matzah.”

Machine bakeries, shemura and nonshemura alike, meanwhile evoke a more industrial, less romantic feel. The factories have an entire floor dedicated to mixing the dough, which is then sent down chutes into machines that shape the dough into long ribbons, poke holes in them and then flatten them and send them to the ovens.

The machine variant is cheaper largely because the machine process requires far fewer hands and is thus more efficient. But for Jews who are particularly stringent about not approaching the dividing line between chametz and kosher on Passover, handmade shemura matzah, according to Auerbach, is the best option.

Laws pertaining to the baking process are mostly found not in the Torah but in subsequent rabbinic literature. And there are many explanations for not just the physical makeup of matzah, but also its spiritual significance.

The haste with which matzah was baked by the Jews in Egypt and is baked by Jews today, Auerbach said, was “to remind us that there was anticipation and [a] rush of eagerness to get on [to] the next step.”

The variety of types and brands that are available — in Los Angeles and around the world — are likely a combination of market competition and diverse standards of what makes matzah acceptable.

For Rabbi Eli Rivkin of Chabad of Northridge, shemura matzah is not only his personal matzah of choice over Passover, but he has distributed about 100 pounds of it to approximately 250 households in Northridge.

To eat matzah during the Passover seder, Rivkin said, is actually an explicit mitzvah according to Jewish law. And it’s the only mitzvah in Judaism that requires eating a specific food.

Although he only eats one type of matzah over the holiday, Rivkin sees the many types available in the marketplace as a good sign for Judaism.

“I think it’s wonderful that Judaism is flourishing and that there’s such a wide variety of kosher food available,” he said.

The results of this proliferation were apparent in Glatt Mart’s matzah aisle, where Sigal Mamon-Harosh was pushing a shopping cart filled to the brim with Passover products and several of the 30 boxes of matzah she said she purchased.

She anticipates about 20 people at each of her family’s two seders. With that many mouths to feed and tastes to satisfy, the wide variety of matzah on the shelves did not disappoint.

“My husband will eat matzah shemura, I eat the whole wheat, the kids eat the egg with the apple, my parents eat the white, and then I have guests that I’m not sure what they eat.”

Reprinted from the March 21, 2013 edition of the Jewish Journal (Los Angeles).

**A Blast from the Past (April 22, 2008)**

**Matzo in Short Supply for Bay Area Passover**

**Lots of Theories, But No Clear**

**Answers Why This Year Different**

By Matthai Kuruvila,

Chronicle Religion Writer

The talk at Passover tables this weekend wasn't just about Moses leading Jews out of slavery. Jews also discussed the shortage of matzo.

Around the region, grocery stores reported having completely run out of their supplies of the essential staple for Passover, the weeklong observance that began Saturday evening.

Safeway, Whole Foods, Lunardi's, Lucky and Mollie Stone stores were among those that reported selling out of their supply of the unleavened bread. A reporter's calls found matzo-less stores in San Francisco, San Rafael, Oakland, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Berkeley and Palo Alto. Even stores that specialize in Jewish products, such as Afikomen Judaica in Berkeley, said they'd run dry. Most grocers said the shelves emptied Friday or Saturday.

Many Jews said it was an unprecedented shortage.

MATZO-C-01MAR02-FD-LH--Matzo
 (PHOTOGRAPHED BY LIZ HAFALIA/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE)
 also ran 03/30/2004
 Ran on: 04-04-2007
 Matzo, made with only water and flour, is traditionally eaten during the Passover holiday.
 ALSO Ran on: 04-06-2007 Photo: LIZ HAFALIA

Matzo (PHOTOGRAPHED BY LIZ HAFALIA/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE)

And there are still five or six more days, depending on tradition, before observant Jews are allowed to eat any leavened bread.

"I've spoken to a lot of folks who are kind of at their wits' end," said [Aaron Rosenthal](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Aaron+Rosenthal%22), communications manager for the [Jewish Community Center of San Francisco](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Jewish+Community+Center+of+San+Francisco%22). "It appears there's been a huge disconnect between the Bay Area grocery community and the Bay Area Jewish community in terms of supply and demand."

The reasons for the shortage are not entirely clear. But theories abound. A jubilee year in Israel, when some fields lie fallow, might have depressed production. Others believe that grocery stores may have underestimated a rise in Jewish observance.

But basic supply and demand may come into play. And supply is down. Safeway spokeswoman [Teena Massingill](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Teena+Massingill%22) said the company ordered more matzo than in the past. She suggested that shortages at other stores led people to raid Safeway stores.

Costco stores in the Bay Area didn't stock any matzo, store operators said. Company spokespeople didn't return calls. Trader Joe's decided to not stock matzo nationwide - though the shortage appears largely restricted to the Bay Area.

Trader Joe's is taking the year off to "re-evaluate" matzo, according to [Alison Mochizuki](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Alison+Mochizuki%22), director of national publicity for Trader Joe's, which has 41 stores in the Bay Area. "We want to hear from our customers and what they expect from us."

They're not happy.

And demand is high. Passover is the single most widely observed Jewish holiday, drawing in the full spectrum of American Jewish life, from the ultra-Orthodox to those who never attend synagogue and view their Jewishness as a cultural heritage. The fact that it is celebrated in the home - and not the synagogue - encourages the wide observance. And matzo is essential.

On the first night of Passover, which was Saturday night, Jews are required to eat wheat-based matzo. And for the rest of the week, they can only eat unleavened bread made from wheat or four other grains: barley, oats, rye or spelt.

The ritual requirements make it very difficult to make matzo at home, said Rabbi [Lawrence Kushner](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Lawrence+Kushner%22), scholar in residence at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco.

"It would be impossible to make matzo unless you had a kitchen dedicated for matzo - and for the rest of the year it would be unused," he said.

And the actual preparation is painstaking.

The grains have to be guarded from the time they are harvested to the time they make it into the kitchen to make sure the grains don't come into contact with any moisture, which would allow the grains to rise. From the moment it is mixed with water, the baker has only 18 minutes to get it into the oven.

"Passover is an alternate gastronomic reality," said Kushner.

The bread symbolizes what enslaved Jews were allowed to eat, earning it names like "the bread of affliction" or "slaves' bread." The fact that it is unleavened is also a reference to the fact that in Jewish slaves' haste to flee Egypt, they didn't have time to bake leavened bread.

What lessons are to be learned are up for debate. As with all things Jewish, there are many opinions.

Several Orthodox Jews wryly noted that waiting until the last moment to purchase matzo didn't treat Passover and its rituals with due respect.

"For somebody truly observant, they're not out shopping on a Saturday," said [Mark Cohen](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Mark+Cohen%22) of Oakland, who attends Congregation Beth Jacob. Those who didn't buy well ahead of time "are not planning as wisely as the holiday would dictate."

But Rabbi [Stephen Pearce](http://www.sfgate.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=bayarea&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Stephen+Pearce%22), who heads San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El, said the holiday is about sharing. And those who have should give to those who do not.

A woman who came to the community seder Sunday night at the synagogue asked if she could take some of the matzo home - a wish that was granted.

Part of the seder liturgy includes the invocation "let all who are hungry come and eat and share in the Passover," said Pearce. "Well, let's put this into action."

*Reprinted from the April 22, 2008 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle.*

**All Who Are Hungry**

**Come and Eat**

**By Rabbi** [**Aron Moss**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/8051/jewish/Aron-Moss.htm)

***Question*:**

I am always puzzled by the beginning of the *Haggadah*, where we declare, "All who are hungry, come and eat; all who are needy come and celebrate Passover." Being that this is said while sitting at the dinner table, the only people hearing it are those who are already there. What is the point of making grand invitations when the truly needy can't hear it?

***Answer*:**

That invitation is not intended for outsiders. We are inviting ourselves and the people around us to really be present at the Seder. While we may be sitting at the table, our minds can be miles away. But then we may miss out on the most powerful spiritual journey - the Seder.

Each one of us is hungry, and we are all needy. We have a soul that hungers for nourishment and inspiration, and we all feel a profound need for our inner self to be freely expressed. Our soul yearns to love, to give, to contribute to the world and to connect to G-d. But our soul is sometimes trapped, surrounded by obstacles to its being free - scars from the past that cripple us; fears that prevent us from opening our hearts; bad habits that waste our time and divert our energy; toxic relationships that we have become dependant on; negative attitudes that darken our vision; egotism and complacency that stunt our growth.

We are stuck in our own inner Egypt, with these internal slave-masters holding us back from becoming who we are supposed to be. Like Pharaoh of old, our ego doesn't want to let us go. Even as we sit down to the Seder to read the story of the Israelite Exodus from slavery, we are still slaves.

So at the beginning of the Seder we invite ourselves to really come to the Seder and experience freedom. Don't let yourself be enslaved to your Egypt any longer. "Whoever is hungry, come and eat. Whoever is needy, come and celebrate Passover." If you hunger for inspiration, come and absorb the *Haggadah's* message of liberty. Don't just sit there - enter into the Passover experience with your entire being. Read the story of the Exodus, taste the *Matzah*, the food of faith, and drink in the wine of freedom.

The Seder night is more than just a commemoration of miracles of the past; it is a personal experience, the exodus of the soul. The same spiritual energies that brought about the miracles long ago are reawakened. Freedom is in the air. On Passover long ago we left Egypt; this Passover we can free ourselves from our own slavery.

We can rush through the *Haggadah* to get to the main course. Then our souls remain trapped. Rather let's take our time, allowing the eternal story of freedom sink in and become a part of us. Let yourself go - free your soul.

*Reprinted from Chabad.Org. Rabbi Aron Moss is rabbi of the* [*Nefesh Community*](http://www.chabad.org/2516560) *in Sydney, Australia.*

**A Blast from the Past (2010)**

**Passover Begins in Cleveland, Ohio**

**By The Associated Press**



Sol Ganz, 100, takes part in the Seder service at Maltz Chapel at the Montefiore Nursing Home on Mar. 29, 2010 in Beachwood. Approximately 100 residents plus friends and family enjoyed the service and meal. (Photo by Scott Shaw of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.)

As the Jewish community around Greater Cleveland and around the world celebrated Passover, the beginning of the High Holy Day was also marked at the White House.

President Barack Obama marked the start of Passover Monday evening with a private seder in the executive mansion.

Obama and first lady Michelle Obama invited friends and White House aides to mark the Jewish holiday with a meal on Monday. The Obama aides started the tradition during 2008's primary campaign in Pennsylvania; Obama made a surprise stop to meet with staffers who were sharing an impromptu meal in a hotel basement.

The event continued last year at the White House with a small group of aides and advisers.

The Jewish Passover holiday begins Monday night with a traditional seder meal. Extended families typically gather and retell the story of the exodus.

The biblical story recounts that G-d killed the first-born of Egypt after the pharaoh refused to release the children of Israel from bondage, but "passed over" the houses of the Hebrews.

After that divine blow, the pharaoh gave in and let the Hebrews go. They were then given the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai and wandered in the desert for 40 years before arriving in the Land of Israel, according to the Bible.

The tradition of eating matzah comes from the Bible's account that the Jews left Egypt in such a hurry that there was no time to allow the bread to rise. It is also considered the bread of the poor, meant to remind Jews of their ancestors' hardships. Leavened bread is banned and burned ceremonially before the holiday starts.

*Reprinted from the March 29, 2010 edition of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

**Job Opportunity: Prime Minister and Matzah Maker**



Photo Credit: Kobi Gideon/ GPO/FLASH90

We all know that Bibi Netanyahu is a brilliant orator, outstanding special forces soldier, and probably our best Prime Minister so far, but who knew he also knows how to bake a perfect Matza - even I can't do that!

[](http://www.jewishpress.com/news/photos/job-opportunity-prime-minister-and-matzah-maker/2014/04/01/attachment/netanyahu-holding-matza/)  
*Reprinted from the April 1, 2014 email of The Jewish Press.*

**Jewish Families Donate Leavened Food in Observation of Passover**

**To Stock a New Food Pantry**

**|By Alison Matas**

Passover is seen traditionally as a holiday of the spring, not usually marked by snow.

But Howard Kaplan and his wife, Roberta, of Baltimore, wouldn't let Monday's inclement conditions deter them from coming to the [Pimlico Race Course](http://findlocal.baltimoresun.com/pimlico/home/na/pimlico-race-course-baltimore-venue) to dispose of their leavened [foodicon1](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-03-25/news/bs-md-chametz-burning-20130325_1_chametz-food-pantry-food-drive##).

"Snow won't hold anybody up," she said.

Baltimore-area families burned their chametz Monday morning in observation of Passover. The holiday commemorates G-d's freeing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt more than 3,000 years ago. Because the Jewish people had to leave Egypt quickly, they had to eat their bread before it had risen. No leavened food is consumed during the eight-day period of Passover, which began Monday, and families cannot keep any of it in their homes.

Usually, people burn or throw away their leavened food at the annual event. But this year marked the first time they were encouraged to donate it. Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. and Park Heights Renaissance have partnered to open a food pantry in April at the Towanda Community Center, and the unopened, nonperishable food donated Monday will [stockicon1](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-03-25/news/bs-md-chametz-burning-20130325_1_chametz-food-pantry-food-drive##) its shelves.

Betsy Gardner, who organized the food [driveicon1](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-03-25/news/bs-md-chametz-burning-20130325_1_chametz-food-pantry-food-drive##) and serves as the Northwest and Jewish community liaison for City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young, said the donations will help meet a need in Park Heights while eliminating waste.

"Watching people throw away so much food, it's heart-wrenching," she said.

Gardner said she didn't know how much food people had contributed as of midmorning but added that she hoped to fill an entire U-Haul truck by the end of the day.

Many people who were at the race course said they hadn't been aware they could bring food to donate but thought it was a [good ideaicon1](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-03-25/news/bs-md-chametz-burning-20130325_1_chametz-food-pantry-food-drive##).

As he prepared to burn chametz Monday, Yisroel Rabinowitz of Baltimore scarfed down a few bites of a chocolate-chip muffin—his last taste of leavened food before dropping the muffin wrapper and some slices of bread in the fire with his father. Other people pulled hot dog buns, rolls and protein bars out of grocery bags and placed them in the fire.

After burning their chametz, the Kaplan family huddled together and recited a declaration stating their known leavened [productsicon1](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-03-25/news/bs-md-chametz-burning-20130325_1_chametz-food-pantry-food-drive##) were no longer in their possession.

Benjamin Kaplan, 20, son of Howard and Roberta Kaplan, said burning chametz has spiritual as well as practical implications. Giving up the food is a metaphor for getting rid of any undesirable quality or trait.

And for Gabrielle Burger, of Baltimore, who burned bagels and challah with her stepfamily, tossing the food in the fire was symbolic because it was the physical representation of a complete purging.

*Reprinted from the March 25, 2013| edition of The Baltimore Sun*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l**

**The Meaning of**

**Chad Gadya**

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION:** |

What is the meaning of *Chad Gadya*?

|  |
| --- |
| **ANSWER:** |

|  |
| --- |
| shunra |

*Chad Gadya* is a system that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* set up of the destroyers being destroyed. It's a system repeated in history, one destroyer destroys the other; it's a principle of Hillel. Pirkei Avos [2:6].

When he saw a skull floating on the water, he said, you were drowned because you drowned someone else, and the end of those that drowned you is that they will suffer a like fate. And as we look through history we see what happened.

The nation of Ashur, Assyria, that invaded the land of the ten shvotim and carried them off was destroyed by Babylonia. Babylonia because of its subsequent wickedness was overcome by Persia. Persia was eventually conquered, and so on. One nation after another falls. That's the plan of history, that the nations are not eternal. And that's what Pesach comes to say also, Passover, Pesach means when the destroyer comes he's going to knock down everyone except His nation, the Jewish people are going to remain forever.

This law that all the nations eventually are destroyed does not apply to the Am Yisroel. And that's why we repeat Chad Gadya at the end, there always will be this Chad Gadya, this one little nation will be at the end.

Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.” The above was transcribed from a question posed to Rabbi Miller by a member of the audience attending his classic Thursday night hashkafa lectures at his Flatbush shul from the 1970’s until his petirah in 2001.

**The Dayenu Jew**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“It would have sufficed for us.” (*Haggadah of Pesah*)

On the Seder night we sing the song of *Dayenu*. It’s a great song that speaks about all the wonderful things Hashem did for us. For instance, the first stanza says, “If Hashem would have taken us out of Egypt but didn’t punish the Egyptians, *dayenu* (it would have been enough. If He punished the Egyptians but didn’t destroy their gods, *dayenu*.”

The song goes on and on. If Hashem didn’t give us the Torah, if He didn’t give us the Shabbat, etc., it would have been enough for us. But would we really be satisfied with that?

**Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv**

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt”l, explains that this song is said by *Dayenu* Jews. This song was sung by Jews that weren’t matured yet, Jews that first got out of Mitzrayim. They would have been satisfied with no Torah and no Shabbat. We would have been happy just to get out of Egypt and would not have cared if Hashem didn’t punish the Egyptians.

We would have been happy to go to a land of freedom and would not have cared about the impression left on the rest of the world, as if it’s ok to be wicked and get away with it. It would have appeared as a world without justice, but Hashem wasn’t happy with that; He wanted to show the world that there is a Leader that runs the world. Hashem wanted to destroy their gods to show that true redemption doesn’t begin until idolatry is wiped out.

**Being Satisfied with**

**Very Little Spiritually**

Had Hashem not killed the first born the world would not know that there is a justice system of measure for measure. The Egyptians enslaved the Jews who are Hashem’s first born, so He killed their first born. Hashem gave us great wealth because He promised it to Abraham. But us? We would have been satisfied without all of this. The *Dayenu* Jew is satisfied with very little spiritually, doesn’t mind so much about Hashem’s image in the world. The *Dayenu* Jew would like to get by with the minimum observance.

But, Hashem wasn’t satisfied. He knew that without Torah, without Shabbat, a nation with a minimum appetite for these things would never remain a redeemed people. *Baruch Hashem* today we are a nation who would never make do without all of these spiritual gifts. We sing an unending thank you to Hashem for all He has done for us.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**Stories of *Pesach***

**By** [**Rabbi Sholom Klass**](http://www.jewishpress.com/author/rabbisholomklass/)

Pesach is synonymous with aiding the poor and the needy. In the city of Kovno where the great Reb Yisroel Salanter was the chief rabbi, there was a special house set aside for the very poor; there they were housed and given food. Unfortunately, the house was a dilapidated one and in massive disrepair. Reb Yisroel knew its wretched condition, and he tried many times to get people to contribute to its upkeep.

But too few people heeded his plea, and the condition of the building got worse with each passing day. One Seder night, Reb Yisroel put on his coat and left his warm and comfortable house. The hours ﬂew by and he did not return. His wife was frantic, and she rushed out for help in trying to discover what had happened to him.

The people searched every house in the city, and only when they came to the poor people’s building did they ﬁnd him. To their horror, he was lying ﬂat on the ﬂoor amid the squalor and dirt, sound asleep. Next to him, the poor people also lay. They had no choice, for all the beds were broken. The people begged Reb Yisroel to leave the dilapidated building and to return home. However, he adamantly refused. “I will not go home,” he kept saying over and over again.

Soon, word of the incident spread throughout the city and it created an uproar. Imagine! The rav of the city, the greatest of his generation, lying in such ﬁlth! And on the night of the *Seder,* too! “Please, Rebbe,” they begged, “please come home. This is no place for you to be.”

But Reb Yisroel stood ﬁrm. “No, I will not go home until this house is repaired and made fit for people to live in. Are these people any worse than me?” His words made a deep impression on the community and within hours, enough money was pledged to guarantee that the building would be repaired and made into a decent place in which to live.

Reb Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev was known as the great “defense attorney” for the Jewish people. Under any and all circumstances, he was able to ﬁnd a good word to say about his people. One *Bedikas Chometz* night, after the *chometz* (leaven) had been searched for and burned, he took his *shamash* with him for a walk through the streets of the town. Meeting a peasant, he stopped him and asked quietly, “Tell me, would you perhaps have a little smuggled silk to sell? I need it very badly.”

“Indeed, I do,” replied the peasant. “I have as much as you want.”

The rav thanked him and continued on his way to the amazement of his dumb-founded *shamash.* Reb Levi Yitzhak continued on his way, and met a Jew trudging along the street.

“*Shalom Aleichem*,” he said. “Tell me my friend; perhaps you can let me have some *chometz?”*

The Jew looked at him in horror and said: “How can you suspect me of such a thing? Do I dare have chometz on the eve of Pesach!”

Reb Levi Yitzhak paused and lifted his eyes to the heavens and said: “Behold, Master of the Universe, what a great people are our children, Israel. The Russian czar is a ﬁerce and mighty ruler. He prohibits the smuggling of goods into his land and posts soldiers and police with deadly weapons to watch the frontiers day and night. If anyone is caught he is brought before a judge and immediately sentenced to a severe prison term.

“Nevertheless, all kinds of goods are smuggled in and the peasants defy him almost openly. You, on the other hand, wrote a few words in your Holy Torah, saying: ‘And no leavened bread shall be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven found in all thy borders.’ There are no soldiers to guard against violating this law and no judges and prisons to punish the violators. Still, as soon as the hour of prohibition arrives, not a crumb is to be found in a Jewish home!”

Rav Akiva Eiger was a man of extraordinary humility and sensitivity. Every Pesach he would invite the poor to come and eat at his table. One year, as they were dining, one of the poor guests accidentally knocked over a cup of wine, staining the tablecloth. The man turned red with shame and Rav Akiva saw this. Without hesitation, he also knocked over his cup.

*Reprinted from the March 7, 2013 edition of The Jewish Press.*

**The Feast:**

**A Seder Story**

**By** [**Tuvia Bolton**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/463/jewish/Tuvia-Bolton.htm)

*Editor's note: This is an old Jewish story/joke/metaphor. Versions abound. My favorite is Tuvia Bolton's rendition:*

There were once two beggars who used to go around begging together. One was Jewish and the other a gentile. As the night of Passover approached, the Jewish beggar offered to help his non-Jewish friend get invited to a *seder* (the festive Passover meal accompanied by many commandments and rituals) and get a good meal.

"Just put on some Jewish clothes and come with me to the synagogue. Everyone brings home poor guests for the seder. It's easy, you'll see."

The non-Jewish beggar happily agreed. On the first night of Passover they went to the synagogue, and sure enough, both got invited to different homes for the festive ceremony.

Hours later they met in a predetermined place in the local park. But to the amazement of the Jewish beggar, his friend was blazing mad.

"What did you do to me?" He shouted. "You call that a meal? It was torture!! It was hell! I'll pay you back for this--you'll see..."

"What do you mean? What happened?" the Jew asked.

"What happened? As if you didn't know! You Jews are crazy--that's what happened! First we drank a glass of wine. I like wine, but on an empty stomach... My head started spinning a bit but I figured that any second we would begin the meal. The smell of the food from the kitchen was great. Then we ate a bit of parsley. Then they started talking, and talking, and talking. In Hebrew. All the time I'm smiling and nodding my head as if I understand what they're saying--like you told me to--but my head is really swimming and hurting from the wine and I'm dying of hunger.

"The smell of the food from the kitchen is making me insane, but they don't bring it out. For two hours they don't bring anything out! Just talking, and more talking. Then, just what I needed.... another cup of wine! Then we get up, wash hands, sit back down and eat this big wafer called matzah that tastes like newspaper, leaning to the left (don't ask me why...). I started choking, almost threw up. And then finally they give me this lettuce, I took a big bite and wham! My mouth was on fire. My throat! There was horseradish inside! Nothing to eat but horseradish! You guys are crazy....

"Well, I just got up and left. Enough is enough!"

"Ah, I should have told you." replied the Jew. "What a shame! After the bitter herbs is a glorious meal. You suffered so long; you should have just held out for a few more minutes...!"

*The editor again: Jewish history is a seder. We've had our appetite teased with small moments of triumph. But mostly we've had "bread of faith" that our palates can't really appreciate. And generous helpings of bitter herbs.*

*The lesson? Two thoughts come to mind. You need patience to be a Jew. And since we've swallowed the maror already, we might as well hold out one minute longer and get the feast...*

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Pesach 5773**

Volume 4, Issue 28 15 Nissan 5773/ March 26, 2013

*For a free subscription, please forward your request to* [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**A Miracle in Baghdad**

**By Rabbi Nuta Yisrael Shurack**

It was midday when an elderly traveler entered the Jewish quarter of Baghdad. The marketplace, where merchants from many lands sold their fabrics, spices and other wares, seemed strangely empty for such a day. He sighted the grandest building in the section, and determined that must be the great synagogue.

He continued his trek towards it until he entered its courtyard and sat down to rest, opening his small sack to take out a few dried figs to refresh his strength. Yet no sooner had he started his lunch that he became aware of a commotion from within the sanctuary. He peeked inside, and beheld a moving spectacle—hundreds of Jews fervently chanting Psalms amidst tears and sobs.

“What has happened?” he asked of the first Jew whose attention he could grasp.

Hurriedly, and in a voice or desperation, the man told him the story as best he could. The Sultan had decreed that the Jewish people of Baghdad must produce a leader who could perform miracles as Moses had done. Since Moses was the leader of the Jewish people in Egypt and he was able to do miracles, the Sultan expected the same from the leader of the Jews of Baghdad. If they would not produce such a miracle maker, the Jews would be expelled from Baghdad. Therefore, all of the Jews were fasting and praying to G‑d for salvation.

In his calm and patient disposition, the wise traveler approached yet more Jews, until he had finally pieced together the entire story:

The Sultan’s chief advisor, Mustafa was a vicious Jew-hater whose mission it was to destroy the Jews, or at least have them banished from Baghdad. He had convinced the Sultan that the Jews were not only infidels for denying the prophet Mohammed, but that they were thieves and liars as well, deserving immediate expulsion.

At first the Sultan was hesitant to believe Mustafa, however, the Sultan was told about what had happened when the Jews left Egypt and what Moses did to Pharaoh. He began to worry that perhaps one of the Jewish leaders of Baghdad would attack him with plagues, and decided he did not want to take any chances. Therefore, he issued a decree that the Jewish had to produce a leader like Moses, or leave Baghdad immediately.

The wise, elderly traveler sat in contemplation for several moments and then approached one of the rabbis at the front of the synagogue and whispered in his ear. Soon all the leaders of the community were talking quietly and then suddenly there was a loud clap on the lectern and one of them spoke.

“This man who is visiting our town says that he has a plan. He will travel to the Sultan immediately to try and save us. If he is successful we will rejoice, however if he fails, he will tell the Sultan that he acted alone. Meanwhile we will continue to pray for his success!”

The man headed for the palace, pounded on the entrance gate, and said,“I am a Jew who can do miracles, and I demand to see the Sultan immediately.”Before long he found himself face to face with the ruler of Baghdad. “So,” said the Sultan, “You claim you can do miracles like Moses. What can you do?”

Dozens of people, from the baker and court jester to the royal guards and advisors stared at the old man with the white beard and piercing eyes. “If you would be so kind,” said he, “I will perform a miracle akin to those which Moses himself did. Before your very eyes, I will cut off a man’s head with a sword, and then put him back together and make him live!”

The Sultan smiled nervously and glanced around not knowing what to think or make of the situation. Perhaps the fellow was completely crazy. Or perhaps he was telling the truth. After all, the he seemed extremely confident and spoke with such conviction. What if he was telling the truth? If he doubted him, then who knows what kind of wrath would be unleashed on the Sultan and his kingdom.

He continued, “There is but one condition. The man whose head I cut off must be truly wise. In fact, he must be the wisest man in the realm. If not, his head will not properly re-attach. Intrigued, the Sultan decided he must see for himself if the Jew was telling the truth. He looked around the room until his eyes fell on Mustafa, his chief advisor and the wisest man in the kingdom.

Before the Sultan said a word, Mustafa cried out, “No, he is lying! The Jew is an imposter! He can’t really cut someone’s head off and re-attach it.” “That might be true,” said the Sultan, “but what if he is telling the truth and we don’t accommodate him? Surely you don’t want to put the whole kingdom at risk! After all, were you not the one who had advised me to expel the Jews lest we be put in danger?”

“Bring the sword immediately,” cried the Sultan, “Mustafa has volunteered!” With that, Mustafa began to tremble and yelled out, “No I admit it. I was both wrong and very foolish. The Jewish people do not have extraordinary powers!” Mustafa ran out of the palace never to be seen again. The Sultan annulled the decree, thanked the Jew for coming and said that the Jews were welcome to live in Baghdad as long as they desired.

The man returned to the synagogue to share the good news. Immediately, there was unbelievable rejoicing, and a banquet was held in honor of the miracle that G‑d had done for His people. Then quietly and quickly, the old man slipped out and left the town before anyone could even get his name. Some people say that he was Elijah the Prophet. Some say he was a great mystic. Yet others believe that he was just a Jew who simply cared about his fellow Jews as much as he did about himself.

This story helps elucidate a very interesting aspect of the Passover observance. Every holiday is marked by mitzvahs. Yet many of these mitzvahs are not equally fulfilled by all. For example, most of us hear the shofar from someone else who blows it, and on Chanukah many have the custom that the head of the household kindles the menorah as a representative of the entire family. Yet, on Passover, everyone must eat his or her own matzah. On Passover, we are all equally significant.

Exodus was the time when our people came together as one. Leaving Egypt united as one people set the stage for the mitzvah that Hillel considered to be the core of the entire Torah: Love for a fellow Jew. The hero of this story actualized that which we all know to be true, that each of us is only complete when we do all that we can to ensure that every single Jew is being taken care of as well.

This is why the Passover Haggadah begins with an invitation, “All who are hungry, let them come and eat.” Our table is only complete when it is open to others!

*Reprinted from the Passover website of Chabad.Org*

**Jews and Food: The**

**Passover Connection**

**By** [**Dina Coopersmith**](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48865557)

Most of the Passover mitzvot revolve around food. In fact, besides the telling of the story of leaving Egypt, all other commandments are eating-oriented: matzah, *maror*, the four cups of wine, vegetable dipped in salt water, leaning while eating, etc.

As much as we Jews tend to focus on food on the holidays, there are always other characteristics of the holiday that are more important: *shofar* on Rosh Hashana, building a sukkah and the four species on Sukkot, lighting the menorah on Chanukah, hearing the megillah and giving charity on Purim, etc. And yet, on Passover, the first holiday in the Jewish calendar, food takes center stage on Seder night.

**FOOD – THE LIFE-GIVING FORCE**

Before eating you may feel weak, indicating a diminishing of life force and energy. Then, as you eat, your strength is restored and the life force is immediately infused into you.

Eating most powerfully gives us the opportunity to feel a direct connection with G-d.

G-d is the only Giver of life; He holds the key to life and we essentially have no power over His constant giving. Therefore we can deduce that eating most powerfully gives us the opportunity to feel a direct connection with G-d.

Although we have some control attaining other necessities of life, like oxygen and water, the actual force of life itself is completely in the hands of the Almighty. Each moment we receive that gift of sustenance, it is from G-d Himself.

"If one attaches himself to the Almighty with a complete attachment, one might possibly even access from Him the power of reviving someone back to life, as this is the most specifically G-dly power, more than anything else." (End of *Path of the Just*, Chapter 26, describing the highest level achievable in mankind, in the steps toward G-dliness.)

The feeling most associated with soaking up life directly from G-d can be attained through eating.

**EGYPT – THE EPITOME OF**

**INDEPENDENCE FROM G-D**

Passover is the holiday which represents the birth of the Jewish nation. Prior to the exodus, the Jewish people were considered in utero, not yet born. When a fetus is in its mother's womb, it is completely part of its mother, dependent on everything she does, eating what she eats, drinking what she drinks. It doesn't yet have a life of its own.

Egypt was known at that time as the only country not dependent on rain for its livelihood. The Nile would overflow and water all the fields. Therefore Egyptians felt completely independent of G-d, with no need to look heavenward and hope for rain. Pharaoh expressed this feeling when he said, "Mine is the Nile and I created me" (Ezekiel 29:3).

Therefore, while the Jewish people were in Egypt as a fetus, eating what their "mother" ate as an intrinsic part of that nation, that was their essence as well, completely disconnected from the spiritual and from G-d. They didn't yet have their own inherent existence and identity.

**SEDER NIGHT – BIRTH & EATING**

When a baby is born, a hubbub of activity surrounds him. Until you hear that first cry, there is a tremendous tension, as the baby precariously hovers in a zone situated between life and death. At this very point of coming into existence, life is most fragile.

Certain critical things have to change quickly to allow for the child to become an independent entity, separate from its mother. Its umbilical cord is no longer connected to its source of sustenance and instead its mouth and throat, which were closed all these months, have to open and start functioning as a medium through which the baby receives its nourishment. Its breathing system undergoes a radical change as well. This transformation and delicate beginning bring with it vulnerability and danger. Only after those first few moments do things calm down a bit and the status quo of life takes over.

On the Seder night, the most important activity is to enable the existence of the new baby-to-be, the Jewish nation.

When the Jewish people left Egypt, that moment they came into being as a nation. That precarious night was fraught with danger. They had been submerged in such impurity that they really didn't deserve to come into being at all.

"They were hanging in the balance during that time, whether to be saved or destroyed with the Egyptians" (Midrash, Yalkut Shimoni 233).

On the Seder night, the most important activity is to enable the existence of the new baby-to-be, the Jewish nation. No other activities can happen when we are still in limbo, fragile, endangered. All that can occur is the strengthening of the life force, creating the essence of this child, namely: eating!

And the kind of food we eat is crucial as well. Just like you can't let a newborn baby ingest anything in the first few days that might tax her newly activated digestive system, nor expose her to any bacteria which her immune system can't fight off, so too, we on Passover we have a strict diet to which we must adhere: *"chametz asur b'mashehu"* -- not even a drop of leaven is permitted on this holiday when our spiritual immunity is so low.

We must build our resistance up in a "sterile" environment, with specially equipped nourishment, "mother's milk" – matzah, which the mystical sources call "the bread of belief." Later on as we develop and reach the giving of the Torah on Shavuot, we can allow a certain amount of "bacteria" -- leavened foods -- into our diet. In fact, these foods can even be part of the commandments of the holiday.

But on Passover, as we create the foundation for our identity as a Jewish people, extreme care must be taken to enhance our spiritual nature, to eat only G-d-prescribed food which is tailor-made for our needs at this crucial juncture.

On the Seder night, as we eat the matzah with its exacting requirements, keep in mind we are emerging into a new world, becoming a new entity, separate from the other nations, creating our own Jewish identity. We are ingesting G-d's "milk" of spiritual nourishment, the "bread of belief," and building within ourselves a direct connection with G-d which creates a rock-solid foundation of Jewish belief, fueling us for the rest of the year.

*Reprinted from a recent email of Aish.com This article was adapted mostly from a number of Hebrew essays on Passover by Rabbi Shimshon Pincus, zt"l.*

[**Kosel Undergoes Cleaning for Pesach, Kvitlach Removed**](http://matzav.com/kosel-undergoes-cleaning-for-pesach-kvitlach-removed)

Armed with wooden poles, Kosel employees yesterday removed millions of kvitlach - handwritten notes, faxes and email printouts - from between the ancient stones of the Kosel. The Western Wall Heritage Foundation gives the Kosel such a face-lift twice a year - before the Pesach and ahead of Rosh Hashanah.

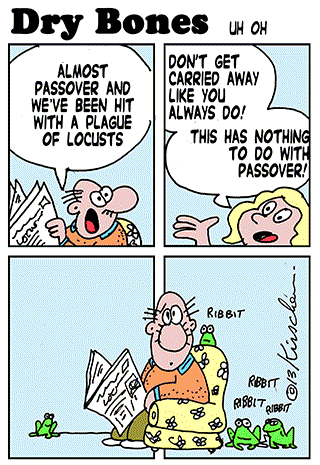
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Armed with wooden poles, Kosel employees yesterday removed millions of kvitlach - handwritten notes, faxes and email printouts - from between the ancient stones of the Kosel. The Western Wall Heritage Foundation gives the Kosel such a face-lift twice a year - before the Pesach and ahead of Rosh Hashanah.

The kvitlach will be placed in a repository in accordance with halacha, with the laborers - working under the supervision of Kosel rov Rav Shmuel Rabinovich - taking care to not read their content.

Engineers also regularly conduct a test to determine the stability of the stones so that none are in the risk of falling on the mispalelim below.

*Reprinted from the March 19, 2013 website of Matzav.com*



**L’Chaim to Passover:**

**Savoring Life, Savoring Wine**

**By Gail Appleson,**

Can you remember exactly when you graduated from grape juice to super sweet Manischewitz or Mogen David Concord wine? I have to admit that I don't recall the precise holiday or Shabbat, but I do certainly remember a childhood Passover when my older brother took that leap. There were a lot of people at our seder table and I doubt my parents noticed how seriously Bob was following the four cup rule. But soon none of us could miss the fact that he had toppled right off his chair.

Although it wasn't the most sophisticated introduction to wine, it was a revelation of sorts. Because years later, when my brother was in college, he developed an affinity for complex dry red wine, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon. I can remember visiting Bob at Vanderbilt University and having him teach me how to sip and savor the flavors as they unrolled in my mouth.

[](http://www.stljewishlight.com/opinion/commentaries/article_8ad96c04-65de-11e0-aad5-001cc4c002e0.html?mode=image&photo=0)

Rabbi Avi Rubenfeld

Maybe that's why today I so strongly associate Passover with the respect that my brother and I have for wine. Bob and I don't see each other that often, but when he does visit St. Louis, there is always a long evening discussion over a bottle of complex, dry kosher red wine. He is an Orthodox Jew living in Skokie, Ill. and I am Conservative - so we have our differences in observances - but when we share wine, we share our spirituality. And we do it seated at the same family table where his first Passover wine encounter occurred.

I used to think this was a rather unique experience, until I learned a Talmudic expression from Rabbi Avi Rubenfeld of the Chabad of Chesterfield: Nichnas yayin yatza sod "when wine goes in, secrets come out." In fact the word yayin and the word sod, which means secret, both have the numerical value of 70.

If you Google the expression, you'll find examples - particularly from Purim celebrations when alcohol consumption is encouraged- in which the drinking of wine has led to a drop in inhibitions and resulting spiritual insights and ability to focus ones thoughts. Rabbi Rubenfeld suggested a fascinating story that can be found on the Chabad website called "A Purim Secret." It's about a man named Baruch Mordechai, who lived in the 1800s and was believed to be a simpleton. However, on the 70th anniversary of his bris, which occurred on Purim, he was able to offer an extremely scholarly discourse after consuming a large tumbler of strong wine.

There are even some opinions that the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden was actually the grape. According to this view, the grape opened the eyes of Adam and Eve to the things they would not have seen otherwise.

While I certainly can't claim that drinking wine has ever provided me with profound intelligence or made me a scholar, there have been times when just the right amount has opened my mind to something deeper, as in my discussions with my brother. Rabbi Rubenfeld certainly has a point when he says that "wine is not just a drink."

"Wine has taste, depth, character," he said. "Just as there are many levels of studying Torah. There is a whole palate that a person can accomplish. There's room for differences. As with wine, there is a palate of tastes."

Indeed, wine can be dry, semidry, semisweet and sweet. It can be oaked or unoaked. It can be young or aged. It can be sparkling or still. It can be light, medium or full-bodied. It can be simple or complex. It can taste like black cherries or grapefruit and it can be red, white or rose.

Regardless of its taste or style, on a very fundamental level, "Wine is essential to Judaism...it's essential to who we are," Rabbi Rubenfeld said.

to savor."

*Excerpted from the April 13, 2011 edition of the St. Louis Jewish Light.*

**The Orthodox Union (OU’s) Ten Most Asked Pesach Questions**



OU Kosher shared with Matzav.com the ten most common questions asked to-date on the OU Kosher Hotline by consumers in advance of Pesach. Note: These teshuvos are valid for Pesach 2013 only.

The OU Kosher hotline - 212-613-8241 - will be open for extended hours pre-Pesach: from 10 a.m to noon on Sunday, March 24, and from 10 a.m to 1 p.m on Monday, March 25, Erev Pesach.

**1.** **Q: Does water require special certification for Passover?**

**A:** All unflavored bottled water, seltzer and sparkling water is [kosher for Passover](http://oukosher.org/passover/), even without any kosher supervision.

**2.** **Q: Can I drink Coke on Pesach?**

**A:** Coca-Cola will again be available with an OU-P for Passover in regular and diet flavors. Aside from the New York metropolitan area, Coke will be available in Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Miami, Atlanta, Houston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles.

This year, in New York, Coca-Cola items will be made with an OU-P in 2-liter bottles. All these items, of course, require the P symbol. Most of the bottling plants servicing these markets will designate the Passover Coke items with a distinctive yellow cap in addition to the P symbol on the cap or shoulder of the bottle.

**3.** **Q: Can I use my facial cosmetics on Passover?**

**A:** All facial cosmetics are acceptable for use except for lipsticks. This is a dispute among the rabbis, and we encourage you discuss the matter with your personal Orthodox rabbi.

**4.** **Q: Does Extra Virgin Olive Oil need to be certified kosher for Passover?**

**A:** All OU certified extra virgin olive oils are [kosher for Passover](http://oukosher.org/passover/), as long as they bear the OU symbol. All other oils (including other varieties olive oil) require a reliable kosher for Passover certification to be consumed on Passover.

**5.** **Q: Which baby formula can I use for my infant on Passover?**

**A:** Most infant formulas are made from soy products. Use of kitniyot does not apply to infants. However, you must take care to keep bottles, nipples and formula away from the general kitchen area. Any mixing or washing should be done elsewhere, such as in the bathroom sink. For a list of acceptable formulas visit: <http://oukosher.org/passover/articles/baby-formula/>

**6.** **Q: Costco is having a sale on salmon. May I use the frozen Kirkland Salmon?**

**A:** Due to the frequent application of glazes to raw fish, it should be purchased only with reliable kosher certification. However, **Kirkland Frozen Wild Salmon** is acceptable after washing it off, while the**Kirkland Atlantic (Farm Raised) Salmon** is acceptable as is for Passover when it bears the OU symbol.

**7.** **Q: Are there any coconut oils that can be used on Pesach?**

**A:** Only the **Spectrum Organic Virgin/Crude Coconut Oil** is acceptable for Passover when bearing the OU symbol.

**8. Q: Are any nutritional supplements or food thickeners acceptable for Passover?**

**A:** Despite the OU’s best efforts, OU certified manufacturers of nutritional supplements have not agreed to special Passover productions. In an effort to help rabbis to make decisions about nutritional supplements for Passover, the OU has identified those products that are halachically acceptable for cholim (the sick). For an extensive listing visit: <http://oukosher.org/passover/guidelines/medicine-guidlines/nutritionals-and-dietary-supplements/>

**9.** **Q: Are raw nuts acceptable for Passover?**

**A:** Raw nuts in their shell do not require Passover certification. Shelled nuts that list BHA or BHT (preservatives) in the ingredients require special Passover certification. They are sprayed on the nuts using corn derivatives (kitniyot). Please note that regarding peanuts different communities have different customs. Some hold them to be kitniyot; while others eat peanuts on Passover.

**10.** **Q: What coffees are acceptable for Passover?**

**A:** All regular ground coffees are acceptable for Passover use when bearing an OU. **Decaffeinated coffee**: Coffee is often decaffeinated by means of ethyl acetate, which is derived from either kitniyot or chametz. Therefore, decaffeinated coffees are not acceptable for Passover unless specifically marked for Passover or found in the [**OU Passover Guide**](http://oukosher.org/passover/passover-guide/)under the heading of products certified for year round use and Passover. **Instant coffees** often contain maltodextrin, which is derived from either from corn (kitniyot) or wheat (chametz). Therefore, all instant coffees require special Passover certification unless explicitly mentioned in the OU Passover Guide under the heading of products certified for year round use and Passover.

*Reprinted from the March 14, 2013 email of Matzav.com*

**What's New?**

**Public Seders**

Nearly 700 Chabad-Lubavitch yeshiva students have travelled to destinations around the world where they will be conducting public Passover Seders under the auspices of "Merkos Shlichus." They have been sent to towns and cities with small Jewish communities or tourist spots that do not have permanent emissaries. Chabad-Lubavitch Centers world-wide will be hosting public Seders. To find out about the Seder location closest to you call your local Chabad-Lubavitch Center or visit chabad.org.

Passover Items Used in WWII Found at Death Camp



An old Haggadah preserved by

Bar Ilan University. Photo: Courtesy

The Israel-based Shem Olam Holocaust and Faith Institute on Thursday (March 24, 2013) showcased items that may have been used for Passover rituals at the Chelmno death camp in western Poland. The items were discovered during excavations of the site in pits containing prisoners’ belongings.

One item is a worn out and partially torn Haggadah that was burned by the Nazis. Several portions dealing with the search for chametz (leavened bread) and other sentences managed to survive.

Shem Olam was founded in 1996 by Avraham Krieger. It is located in Kfar Haroeh, just north of Netanya. One of the institute’s projects deals with how Jews coped with the day-to-day struggles during the Holocaust.

“The Nazis told Jews who had been deported to Chelmno that they were being relocated to a village faraway in the east; they told them each person could bring only lightweight items with a combined weight of 3 to 4 kilograms (7 to 9 pounds),” Krieger said.

“Because of the limited number of items they were allowed to carry, the Jews brought their most important items, but many brought with them things that belonged to their spiritual life and identity… The mere fact that they added these things shows that they were loyal to their faith, to the holiday and to tradition; they demonstrated that they did not let the Germans break their spirit,” he said.

According to Krieger, “Most of the death camps had no such items left behind, but since Chelmno was the first death camp on Polish soil, the Nazis had yet to have at their disposal a sophisticated apparatus and consequently, some of the property was buried, and survived.”

*Reprinted from the March 19, 2013 edition of the Jerusalem Post.*

**Binding Words Fading Quickly As a Sephardic Clan Gathers for Seder,**

**By Dianna Marder**

At Passover seders throughout the region last weekend, Jewish families gathered to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. Each generation keeps the story alive for the next.

But for the family of Delcy Weinberg, 82, of Northeast Philadelphia, the seder has an additional significance. She is descended from a community of Turkish Jews whose native tongue, Ladino, is near extinction.

Nearly 100 of Weinberg's kin - some from as far as South Carolina and Florida - attended the family's 26th annual seder Sunday night at the Westin Hotel in Mount Laurel. All were members of the Hakim, Sady, Saul (Weinberg's maiden name) and Avayou families, who joined together to celebrate and preserve their distinct history with snatches of the Ladino language and melodies.

A blend of Hebrew and Spanish, Ladino is the language of Sephardic Jews - those who were expelled from Spain in 1492.

Only the 80-somethings in Weinberg's clan remember the old language, almost unknown today. Maurice Sady, Weinberg's cousin, who led the annual seder, recalls owning a Hagaddah printed in Hebrew with Ladino transliterations, but now the Passover seder is conducted mostly in English and Hebrew, with as many references and melodies as the older generation can remember in Ladino.

Sady remembers that his grandfather, as an elder in the community, was addressed as seor and older cousins were called tio, Spanish for uncle, as a sign of respect.

Sephardim, who made their way to countries such as Turkey and China, as well as to those in South America and the Caribbean, are in the minority in the United States, where most Jewish families are Ashkenazim - of German and Eastern European heritage.

Ashkenazic Jews blended Hebrew with the languages of those countries to develop Yiddish, while Sephardim blended Hebrew with Spanish to develop Ladino.

Unlike Yiddish, which gave us the linguistic gems chutzpah and schlep, no Ladino words found their way into modern English.

And while Jewish children can attend after-school classes to learn to pray in Hebrew or speak in Yiddish, children's classes in Ladino are almost unheard of.

"It's a dying language, unfortunately," says Weinberg, whose grandparents spoke Ladino at home. "I don't think there's anywhere you can send your children today to learn it."

As a substitute, Weinberg says, her children studied Spanish in high school and college. If you can understand Spanish, you can understand Ladino.

"I talk to Mexicans, I talk to Puerto Ricans," Weinberg says, "and they all understand me."

Weinberg's extended family traces its American roots from David Avayou, who left the coastal city of Izmir in Turkey and resettled in another coastal resort, Atlantic City, in 1904.

Norman Avayou, at 82 years the youngest of David Avayou's children, helps organize the annual seder. He says his father returned to Izmir briefly in 1906 to find a bride and later brought most of her family from Turkey to Atlantic City, too.

"The sea air and the promenade along the shore may have been the reason David Avayou picked Atlantic City," says nephew Maurice Sady, 84, of Mount Laurel, who leads the seder service, making certain to introduce as many Ladino references as possible.

The Sady and Avayou families founded Congregation Shaareh Zion in Atlantic City in 1920 and a Jewish cemetery in nearby Pleasantville a few years later. The synagogue closed in 1980, but the Avayou/Saul/Sady clan still schedules an annual bus trip to the cemetery every fall, just before the Jewish High Holy Days.

In the small, tight Sephardic community of Atlantic City, Sady says, men and women had to marry Ashkenazic Jews in order to avoid marrying cousins. So roughly half of those who attend the annual seder are Ashkenazic, and most do not know any Ladino.

"We may be the last generation to speak Ladino," Norman Avayou says.

Philadelphia's only Sephardic synagogue, Mikveh Israel, founded in 1740, owns a Torah donated by the Sady family.

One more thing, Weinberg notes with pride: Sephardic cooking is distinct (better, she hints) from Ashkenazic.

"We never made gefilte fish," she says, turning up her nose at the hard-to-fathom chopped-carp dish so routinely served as an appetizer at Ashkenazic Passover seders that some people think it's as mandatory as matzo.

"In our family," she says, "we made flounder Francaise."

*Reprinted from the April 22, 2008 edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer.*

**It Once Happened**

**Looking for a Jew**

**In a European Town**

**By Rabbi Laibl Groner,**

**Of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's Secretariat**

One year, just a few days before Pesach (Passover), I called one of the Rebbe's emissaries in Europe with a message from the Rebbe. The emissary was being instructed to visit a certain city and give assistance to a Jewish resident there. The Rebbe did not specify who this Jew was or what type of help he was supposed to provide.

"Reb Laibl," the emissary said. "It's a few days before Pesach. I'm expecting 400 people for the Seder. How can I drop everything and travel four hours there and four hours back?"

"Listen," I told him, "are you a shliach (emissary) of the Rebbe or not? The Rebbe knows that it's right before Pesach. Drop everything and go immediately to that city. Don't waste any time."

The shliach called me after Pesach: "Let me tell you what happened. I came to that city, but there was not a single Jew - no synagogue, no nothing. I went around asking the local residents if there were any Jews in the city. No one knew of any Jews living there. I went to the city hall and asked to check the lists of people who live in the city, but there were no records of any Jews in town. I thought that maybe I had made a mistake (there were no cell phones in those days), and so I prepared to head back home. I would call you to say what happened.

"Before leaving the city, I stopped at a gas station. The attendant came out and asked me, 'What's a Jew with a beard doing in a city where there are no Jewish people?'

"'Are you sure that there's not even one Jew in this town?' I asked the man. The attendant thought for a moment and then said, 'Now that you mention it, there's a butcher shop about half an hour away from here, and I'm almost sure that the owner of that butcher shop is a Jew.' He gave me the directions, and I arrived there at around a quarter to six in the evening.

"I opened the door of the butcher shop, and when the owner saw me, he literally fainted! What had I done to him? I picked him up, revived him, brought him to a chair, and gave him a cup of cold water. When I asked him what had caused such a strong reaction, he told me the following:

"'My wife, my two children, and I are the only Jewish people in this town. The local minister comes from time to time and tries to convince us to convert. "Why does your family have to be alone?" he asks. I would always tell him that rather than renounce our religion, Jews preferred martyrdom, to be burnt in auto de fés...

"Recently, the minister came again,. But this time he told him he wasn't going to leave the store unless I would agree to do what he asked. I told him I needed a week to decide. When he left my shop, I turned to G-d and said, 'I need a sign from You that I should not agree to his request.'

“A whole week passed without any sign from Above. At 5:30 this afternoon, a half hour before the minister was supposed to return for my final decision, I said to G-d, 'He is coming at 6. If You don't send me a sign I will agree.' Fifteen minutes later, out of nowhere, you entered my shop. I realized this was the sign I was waiting for and that was why I fainted."

The shliach told the butcher, "Passover is in another few days. I'm inviting you, your wife, and your two children to spend the holiday with us." The man happily agreed.

Two years later, the shliach called me again. "There is a postscript to the story. While the family was staying with us for Pesach, we invited them to stay a little while longer. Their stay lasted for about six weeks during which time we shared with them the basics of how to lead a Jewish life.

"Last week, I was visiting Jerusalem and I went to pray at the Western Wall. Suddenly, I felt someone tapping my shoulder. I turned around and saw a bearded young man standing with his children.

"'Do you recognize me?' he asked. When I said 'no,' he replied, 'Look into my eyes.' I took a closer look at him. 'You're the butcher from that town!' I cried. 'What happened? What are you doing here?'

"'When we returned home after spending those six weeks in your house,' he replied, 'my wife told me, "Listen, if we're Jewish then we have to live amongst other Jews. What are we doing here? We have to close the shop, pack our things, and make aliya to go live in Israel." That's exactly what we did. Since arriving here in Israel, we have become closer and closer to our Jewish roots and you can see for yourself how we've progressed...'"

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. Reprinted from Beis Moshiach Magazine*

**Coke for Pesach**

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Kosher Today reports: A major Chasidic rabbi in Williamsburg routinely offers his followers Coca Cola products but not the Coke products manufactured in the US. The Chasidim rely on the certification of Rabbi Yehuda Leib Landau of Bnei Brak, who does not certify Diet Coke on Passover, because of his issues with the sweeteners. The [diet] products are instead certified by the Chief Rabbinate of Tel Aviv, which is why the Williamsburg rabbi bars the Israeli Diet Coke on Passover. Rabbi Landau does, however, certify the regular Coca Cola for Passover.

It is widely believed in Israel that Rabbi Landau is one of the few people on earth that knows the exact ingredients of Coca Cola. Rabbi Landau’s certification on Diet Coke bottles clearly states that he does not certify the Diet Coke for Passover.

Although Coke generally does not condone import of its products from country to country, it has apparently made an exception for its Israeli products under Rabbi Landau.

A leading rabbi told KosherToday that the switch of certifications on Diet Coke is widely known amongst most Israeli consumers who covet Rabbi Landau’s hechsher, but it has incensed some Diet Coke customers who claim they were unaware of the change despite the disclaimer on the product.

In the US, Coca-Cola is certified by the Orthodox Union (OU) and most bottlers in the US produce a number of Coke products including Diet Coke for Passover. Last year, there was a major shortage of the Passover Coke in California when Coke directed its suppliers to change the way they manufacture caramel to reduce levels of the chemical 4-methylimidazole, or 4-MEI, which California has listed as a carcinogen.

Coca-Cola products in Illinois are certified as Kosher for Passover by the CRC (Chicago Rabbinical Council). This year some of the caps designated for the CRC supervised production were mistakenly delivered to the East Coast. But the OU confirmed that products available in the East Coast either with OU-P or CRC-P13 on Yellow Caps has been produced under the strict Passover supervision of the Orthodox Union and the products are Kosher for Passover.

*Reprinted from the March 7, 2013 website of Matzav.com*

**Working to Get the Passover Message Out,**

**One Matzah at a Time**

**By** [**Menachem Posner**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Menachem-Posner.htm) |

As Passover draws near, [Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries](http://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/jewish/Centers.htm) the world over distribute millions of handmade *shmurah* matzahs.

And with such a tall order comes the distribution of stories as well.

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| Mendel Wineberg, left, and Yehoshua Shneur, student coordinator for Montreal, prepare to deliver shmurah matzahs. |
| Mendel Wineberg, left, and Yehoshua Shneur, student coordinator for Montreal, prepare to deliver shmurah matzahs. |

For example, in 2004, Shmuel Glick was in a New York hospital, battling an aggressive form of cancer. Just before Passover, Glick asked his son Yehuda to go home and get some handmade *shmurah* matzah and give it to a Jewish E.R. doctor they’d come to know.

After the holiday, the doctor visited the Glick family and told them how he treasured the gift, and that his entire family had enjoyed it. Shmuel Glick passed away three months later, but his passion for sharing matzah remains.

Rabbi Yehuda Glick, who now lives in Baltimore, will soon load his car with *shmurah* matzah and drive an hour to suburban Germantown, Md., where he plans on passing out the hand-rolled, cracker-like wafers to just about every Jewish person he can find. Glick, who together with his wife is opening a new Chabad center in Germantown, sees the *shmurah* matzah as central to his mission.

“For some people,” he explains, “this will be a reminder that Passover is coming. For others, it will serve to enhance their family Passover celebration, as they see, touch, and then taste matzah rolled by hand and baked in a stone oven just like our ancestors have been doing for generations.

“And for everyone, it will be my way of saying I am here for them.”

*Shmurah* means “guarded”; the matzah with that name is made from flour that’s been carefully guarded from moisture from the moment the grain was harvested. Most *shmurah* matzah is baked the old-fashioned way in a handful of places in the United States, Israel, Europe, and more recently, Ukraine. It represents the desire of a people to fulfill G‑d’s will without the intrusion, complication and impersonality of a machine.

Drive initiated in 1954

Just days before Passover 1954, the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—lamented the fact that *shmurah* matzah had become virtually nonexistent, and exhorted Jewish leaders, “rabbis, *shochtim* (ritual slaughterers), reverends, synagogue caretakers,” and indeed every individual, to do their utmost to distribute hand-baked *shmurah* matzahs in their communities.

The Rebbe said that it had once been customary for rabbis to hand out *shmurah* matzah to their congregants, and he wished to reinstate the practice. At the very least, he encouraged them to give every individual six matzahs—three for each Seder night—or even two, so that they would have one per night.

Rabbi Berel Mochkin, head of the [Chabad Lubavitch Youth Organization of Montreal](http://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/aid/117801/jewish/Chabad-Lubavitch-Youth-Org-of-Montreal.htm), remembers that he and a number of other youthful activists began giving out matzahs the very next year. “At that time, most people did not know what it was. We even convinced the local supermarket chain to sell the matzahs. Now they do not need to be convinced, as everyone knows what it is, and people buy it on their own.”

Fifty years later, Mochkin is still giving out matzahs all over the city. Yanky Greene, a student at the Rabbinical College of Canada, says he and a friend brought some to Jewish businesspeople in Old Montreal. “Sure, they were happy to get them. Some of them looked and said, ‘Oh, *shmurah* matzah!’ But others didn’t know what it was, so we filled them in.”

Dr. Gerald Avertick, an optometrist who’s been receiving the matzah for many years from various Chabad organizations in Montreal, says they have changed his family’s Passover experience. “It used to be that we would get machine matzahs, and use the extra matzahs from Chabad just at the Seder. But now the kids like the hand matzah better than the other stuff. I go out and buy it every year, so that we will have enough.”

Rabbi Yisroel Shmotkin, executive director of [Chabad-Lubavitch of Wisconsin](http://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/aid/117740/jewish/Lubavitch-of-Wisconsin.htm), who distributes 1,000 pounds of *shmurah* matzah yearly, says that things have indeed changed since he began giving out matzahs in 1969. “The success of the Rebbe’s campaign can perhaps be seen in how the bakeries have begun to cater to individual distribution. When I first started, I would order large boxes, only to discover that a third of the matzahs would invariably be broken by the time they got off the truck, and we had to repackage them into boxes of six. There was no way that we were going to give out broken matzah. After all, for most people, this is their matzah for the Seder.”

Today, the bakeries have recognized the importance of packing for distance, and even sell smaller boxes. He adds: “We still carefully check every box to make sure that the matzahs are whole.”

Shmotkin still proffers a portion of his matzah packages personally, but sheer volume and distance dictate that he share the burden with delivery services and UPS. In fact, many people come to pick up their own—an indication of how deeply rooted *shmurah* matzah has once again become in the Jewish experience. H

e recalls receiving letters from people telling him how they had not been planning on having a Seder, but when the *shmurah* matzah arrived, they quickly arranged one. Others wrote that these matzahs had given them the encouragement to celebrate Passover properly, eating no leavened foods for the duration of the eight-day holiday.

In his words, “Sharing these authentic matzahs lifted them up to get in touch with their inner selves.”

In Cherry Hill, N.J., where Rabbi Mendy Kaminker runs the [Israeli Chabad Center](http://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/aid/1275853/jewish/Israeli-Chabad-Center.htm), he says that he sees *shmurah* matzah distribution as a special opportunity. “In addition to the spiritual benefits these matzahs bring, going out each evening and delivering them to people’s homes gives me the chance to offer them a special gift. It has become a tradition. They invite me in, we talk, and I hand them the matzahs.”

Kaminker says he begins his visits well before the holiday, because “the better we get to know each other, the longer I end up staying in each house, and the fewer homes I get to reach each night.”

To obtain hand-baked *shmurah* matzah for your Seder, contact a [Chabad center](http://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/jewish/Centers.htm) near you.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**Matzoh May be a**

**Lost “Loss Leader”**



The age of using matzoh as a “loss leader” may be rapidly coming to an end as many chains seemed to have changed their policy of offering Matzoh as a loss leader for specific amount purchases. This year, for example, Shoprite is offering the free 5 lb. box of Matzoh but only with $50 of Kosher for Passover products or two boxes for $100 of Passover foods purchased.

In the past, the Matzoh was offered for the purchase of any food, even if not kosher for Passover. Some stores are no longer offering the promotion altogether but selling the 5 lb. boxes for at least $7.

The change is good news for Matzoh manufacturers who were often at the mercy of retailers pushing the manufacturers for bargains. Early indications are that Matzoh sales are well ahead of last year despite these changes.

Prices of Matzoh seemed to have increased across the board, including Israeli Matzoh and the hand-made shmurah which in most cases has risen by at least $1.00 a lb.

At least one source wondered out loud why Matzoh prices have risen when the price of flour has in general declined. But the Matzoh bakers say that in the case of the shmurah (closely guarded flour from inception) costs have actually risen.

*Reprinted from the March 7, 2013 website of Matzav.com*

**The Fifth Son**

**(Not) at the Seder**

**Correspondence by Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson,**

**The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Zt”l**

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| Original art by Miriam Teleshevsky. |
| Original art by Miriam Teleshevsky. |

By the Grace of G‑d

11th of Nissan, 5717

[April 12, 1957]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

The Festival of Pesach is inaugurated by the central theme: “When thy son will ask thee,” and the Haggadah is based on the commandment of the Torah: “Then shalt thou tell thy son.”

There are various ways of asking questions and formulating the answers, depending upon whether the son belongs to the category of the “Wise,” the “Wicked,” the “Simple,” or “The One Who Knows Not How to Ask.”

While the “Four Sons” differ from one another in their reaction to the Seder service, they have one thing in common: they are all present at the Seder service. Even the so-called “Wicked” son is there, taking an active, though rebellious, interest in what is going on in Jewish life around him. This, at least, justifies the hope that someday also the “Wicked” one will become wise, and all Jewish children attending the Seder will become conscientious, Torah-and-Mitzvoth-observing Jews.

Unfortunately, there is, in our time of confusion and obscurity, another kind of a Jewish child: the child who is conspicuous by his absence from the Seder service; the one who has no interest whatsoever in Torah and Mitzvoth, laws and customs; who is not even aware of the Seder-Shel-Pesach, of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent Revelation at Sinai.

This presents a grave challenge, which should command our attention long before Passover and the Seder night. For no Jewish child should be forgotten and given up. We must make every effort to save also that “lost” child, and bring the absentee to the Seder table. Determined to do so, and driven by a deep sense of compassion and responsibility, we need have no fear of failure.

In order to remedy an undesirable situation of any kind, it is necessary to attack the roots of the evil. The same is true in this case.

The regrettable truth is that the blame for the above-mentioned “lost generation” lies squarely on the shoulders of the parents.

It is the result of an erroneous psychology and misguided policy on the part of some immigrants arriving in a new and strange environment. Finding themselves a small minority and encountering certain difficulties, which are largely unavoidable in all cases of resettlement, some parents had the mistaken notion, which they injected also into their children, that the way to overcome these difficulties is to become quickly assimilated with the new environment, by discarding the heritage of their forefathers and abandoning the Jewish way of life.

Finding the ensuing process somewhat distasteful, as such a course is bound to be full of spiritual conflict, some parents were resolved that their children would be spared the conflict altogether. In order to justify their desertion and appease their injured conscience, it was necessary for them to devise some rationale, and they deluded themselves, and deluded their children, by the claim that in their new surroundings the Jewish way of life, with the observance of the Torah and Mitzvoth, did not fit. They looked for, and therefore also “found,” faults with the true Jewish way of life, while in their non-Jewish environment everything seemed to them only good and attractive.

By this attitude the said parents hoped to assure their children’s existence and survival in the new environment. But what kind of existence is it, if everything spiritual and holy is traded for the material? What kind of survival is it, if it means the sacrifice of the Soul for the amenities of the body?

Moreover, in their retreat from Yiddishkeit, they turned what they thought was an “escape to freedom” into an escape to servitude, pathetically trying to imitate the non-Jewish environment, failing to see that such imitation, by its caricature and inferiority complex, can only call forth mockery and derision, and can only offend the sensibilities of those whose respect and acceptance they are so desperately trying to win.

The same false approach to the minority problem, whereby the misguided minority seeks to ensure its existence by self-dissolution, which essentially means suicide, or, at any rate, self-crippling, has dominated not only individuals, but unfortunately has been made the creed of certain groups thrown together by a set of circumstances.

This gave rise to certain dissident movements on the Jewish scene, which either openly or by subterfuge seek to undermine the Torah which Moses commanded us, as he received it from the One G‑d, and transmitted it to our people; the Divine Torah which gives our people its unique and distinctive character among the nations of the world. Verily, these movements, while differing from each other, have one underlying ideology in common, that of “We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.” ([Ezekiel 20:32](http://www.chabad.org/16118#v32))

The dire consequences of this utterly false approach were that thousands upon thousands of Jews have been removed from their fountain of life, from their fellow Jews and from their true faith. Deprived of spiritual life and content, there grew up children who no longer belong to the “Four Sons” of the Haggadah, not even in the category of the “Wicked” one. They are almost a total loss to themselves and to their fellow Jews and true Yiddishkeit, which are inseparable.

The event of the Exodus from Egypt and the Festival of Passover are timely reminders, among other things, that not in an attempt to imitate the environment lies the hope for survival, deliverance and freedom, but rather in the unswerving loyalty to our traditions and true Jewish way of life.

Our ancestors in Egypt were a small minority, and lived in the most difficult circumstances. Yet, as our Sages relate, they preserved their identity and, with pride and dignity, tenaciously clung to their way of life, traditions and distinct uniqueness; precisely in this way was their existence assured, as also their true deliverance from slavery, physical and spiritual.

It is one of the vital tasks of our time to exert all possible effort to awaken in the young generation, as also in those who are advanced in years but still immature in deeper understanding, a fuller appreciation of the true Jewish values, of Torah-true Yiddishkeit, a full and genuine Yiddishkeit; not of that which goes under a false label of misrepresented, compromised, or watered-down “Judaism,” whatever the trademark.

Together with this appreciation will come the realization that only true Yiddishkeit can guarantee the existence of the individual, of each and every Jew, at any time, in any place, and under any circumstances.

There is no room for hopelessness in Jewish life, and no Jew should ever be given up as a lost cause. Through the proper compassionate approach of Ahavas Yisroel, even those of the “lost” generation can be brought back to the love of G‑d (Ahavas HaShem) and love of the Torah (Ahavas HaTorah), and not only be included in the community of the “Four Sons,” but in due course be elevated to the rank of the “Wise” son.

May G‑d grant that all sons and daughters of Israel be gathered together at the same table of the Seder service, to celebrate the Festival of Passover in its true spirit and manner, in accordance with “the testimonies, statutes, and laws which G‑d our G‑d commanded us.”

May the gathering also of those “lost tribes of Israel,” and their assembly at the Seder table, hasten the beginning of the true and complete Redemption of our people, through our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our time.

With the blessing of a Kosher and Happy Pesach,

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

**What if a Non-Jew Comes to One’s House on Pesah with Hametz**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

If a gentile comes into a Jew’s home on Pesah with Hametz, the Jew is not required to send him out of the home. A common example of such a case is a non-Jewish workman or electrician who comes to do repairs. If he brings Hametz food with him, the Jew may allow him to remain in the home, and is not required to ask him to leave.

Even though the Torah formulates the prohibition of Hametz with the term “Lo Yera’eh” (“it shall not be seen”), the complete phrase is “Lo Yera’eh Lecha” (“it shall not be seen to you”), which our Sages interpreted as referring specifically to Hametz which one personally owns. It is not forbidden to have in one’s home Hametz owned by a non-Jew, and thus if a non-Jewish repairman shows up in one’s home on Pesah with Hametz, he may be permitted to remain.

Nevertheless, it is preferable, when possible, to avoid this situation, as there is the risk that the non-Jew may leave crumbs on the table that may reach one’s food. Furthermore, the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in his work Rab Pe’alim (2:55), cites authorities who held that the aforementioned Halacha applies only to raw Hametz dough. According to these Poskim, although one may allow a gentile to bring dough into his home on Pesah, one may not allow baked Hametz products in his home. It is thus preferable to avoid this situation, and to respectfully ask the gentile not to bring Hametz products into the home. If, however, a non-Jewish worker did bring Hametz into the home on Pesah, no violation has been committed, and the Jew should simply clean and ensure that no crumbs were left.

Summary: If a non-Jew will be coming to one’s home during Pesah, such as a workman who comes to do repairs, it is preferable to respectfully ask that he does not bring Hametz into the home, but strictly speaking, the non-Jew may be allowed to enter the home with Hametz, as long as one ensures to remove any crumbs that are left.

*Reprinted from the March 3, 2013 Daily Halacha email of Rabbi Eli J. Mansour, part of the Rabbi Jacob S. Kassin Memorial Halacha Series.*

**Haggadah Tidbits**

"This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt"- Wasn't the matzah actually what they ate upon leaving Egypt? When *Ibn Ezra* was imprisoned in India, he was only fed matzah and no *hamess*. The reason for this is that matzah takes very long to digest, and one could remain satiated with a smaller amount. Likewise, the Egyptians gave the Jews matzah to eat.

"And I gave to Esav Mount *Se'ir*"- Why do we mention Esav in the *Haggadah*? Hashem promised to Abraham "Your descendants will be strangers in a strange land." Hashem also promised, "To your descendants I will give this land [of Israel]." Therefore we mention that Esav was given Mount *Se'ir* and never became a stranger in a strange land. Thus he has no claim to the land of Israel.

"Rabbi Akiba said, 'We can show that each plague... was made up of five different plagues'" - What is the purpose of trying to maximize the number of plagues that Hashem brought upon Egypt? When we were taken out of Egypt, Hashem promised, "I will not strike you with any of the sicknesses that I brought on Egypt." The more sicknesses we can attribute to the plagues in Egypt, the fewer sicknesses that Hashem may bring upon us if we sin.

"We therefore are obligated to thank, praise, adore...Hashem" - There is a principle learned in the *Gemara* that one is only obligated to thank Hashem for miracles going back two generations. Why, then, are we obligated to thank Hashem for the miracles involved in the Exodus? It seems that it would just be an optional "nice thing to do." In the preceding paragraph in the *Haggadah*, we read that each person must view himself as if he personally was taken out of Egypt. Since the miracles were actually done for us and not only for our ancestors, "We therefore are obligated..."

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**Shabbos Stories for Parshas**

**Chol Hamoed Shabbos Pesach 5773**

Volume 4, Issue 29 20 Nissan 5773/ March 30, 2013

***For a free subscription, please forward your request to*** [***keren18@juno.com***](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**Passover & the**

**Power of Love**

**By** [**Sara Debbie Gutfreund**](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=48867522)

After the tragic death of my rabbi and Rebbetzin, my Passover memories are awash with saltwater tears.

It was five years ago, the week before Passover. We were living in Israel when the phone rang at dawn. It was my mother. I could hear the tears muted only by the distance between us.

“The Rabbi and Rebbetzin died in a fire Friday night. There is nothing left of their house. I can’t believe it. I can’t believe they are gone.”

I looked out at the Jerusalem dawn and felt my breath catch. Was I even awake? It sounded like a nightmare unfolding word by word as my mother told me how she was rushed to the Rabbi’s home at the crack of dawn on Shabbos, so that she could speak to the chief of police to prevent an autopsy. It couldn’t be.

**Recalling the Rabbi’s Laughter and Wisdom**

I thought of Rabbi Jacob Rubenstein with his clear, blue eyes and booming voice. His laughter and his wisdom. It couldn’t be. I thought of the Rebbetzin with her kind smile and quiet dignity. I thought of their children and grandchildren. I thought of my synagogue, the Young Israel of Scarsdale, bereft suddenly of its light, its center, its leadership. And it seemed so unfair. Right before Passover. When we were supposed to be preparing for [freedom](http://www.aish.com/h/pes/t/). For joy. For redemption.

I hung up the phone and stared out at the sun rising through the mountains. *Where are You?* I whispered. *Where are You?*

And I suddenly remembered what Rabbi Rubenstein had said to me right after my grandmother died. He had watched me sit beside my grandmother since I was a little girl every Shabbos morning. He knew how I clung to her love and her strength. And he knew I was falling apart.

“Debala,” he had said. “This is not what He wants from you now.” I wouldn’t look up at him. I didn’t want to see the kindness in his eyes. I didn’t want to hear the truth.

“It’s not fair,” I said, knowing as I said it that I sounded like a kindergartner who had lost her turn at the slide.

**Conceding that “It’s Almost Never Fair”**

“No, it’s not. It’s almost never fair,” he had conceded as we stared at the rows of gravestones glittering in the summer sun. I wanted to turn back time. Get back what I had lost. Start over.

“But you know,” he continued, “that never stopped your grandmother. And it’s not going to stop you.”

I heard these words echoing through my living room that fateful morning as my household awoke, and the long to do list of the day began. A few days later, I woke early headed out to the airport with my children to pick up my mother and grandfather. It was the eve of Passover and families were reuniting in bursts of joy all around us. I stood with my children, all dressed for the holiday as they watched the passengers spill through the sliding door.

**An Elderly Couple Broke Down in Tears**

In front of us an elderly couple broke down in tears as their son walked towards them. “I thought this day would never come,” I heard the mother whisper in Hebrew.” I can’t believe you’re home.”

We moved away to give them space, but her words lodged inside my heart as I searched for my mother and my grandfather. When we finally spotted them, the children rushed forward in a flurry of ribbons and laughter and tiny, patent leather shoes echoing off the marble floor.

I saw my grandfather next to my mother but somehow all alone. I saw him lift his great grandson into the air and the words came to me, unbidden and unwanted: *It’s not fair. I want my grandmother back. I want to see her hold my son too. I want to see her stand again by my grandfather’s side.* Throughout the drive home, the smell of spring wafted towards us from the fields as my mother spoke in soft whispers about the Rubenstein’s funeral.

At the [Seder](http://www.aish.com/h/pes/) table that year, I thought of what Rabbi Rubenstein had said to me when I got engaged. “You know you come from a long line of tough women. Go easy on this guy.” He had seen the four of us on so many shabboses: my great grandmother, my grandmother, my mother and I sitting beside each other in synagogue like a wall made of prayer.

And at the chuppah when I encircled my husband, he told me: “Pray for love. Only G-d can give us the power to love. Now is the time to pray for love.” And I did. I made circles of prayer, as the sun set and the walls of the chuppah seemed to melt into the water behind it.

**G-d Gives Us the Power to Love**

And I think of that moment as we sing and ask questions and dip parsley into water made of tears. I think about how He gives us the power to love. I think about how He gives us the strength to come home. I think about the sound of the woman’s voice in the airport: *I thought this day would never come.* And I look around the table at my parents, my grandfather, my husband and my children. I look at the Judean Hills stretched out beneath a star studded sky and I think that it’s true. *I also thought this day would never come.*

The next time I go back to Scarsdale, I look for the Rebbetzin who always sat in the front row. I search for Rabbi Rubenstein beside the Aron. I know that I shouldn’t, but I look for them anyway. The morning sun filters through the windows and falls in pools of light onto the soft carpeting. I look for my grandmother’s seat, and I see an unfamiliar face sitting there. I look for home, but it is long gone. I want to turn back time. Start over. Get back what I have lost. But that’s not what He wants from me now.

**“But That’s Not Going to Stop You”**

Every year at this time, I feel the grief of that moment. Coming home and finding aching gaps that will never quite be filled again. But this is the week that I also remember my beloved Rabbi’s words: *It’s almost never fair but that’s not going to stop you. That’s not what He wants. Pray for love. Only G-d can really give us the power to love.*

So I think about the power of love. How we dropped everything we knew long ago in Egypt and ran with half risen bread because of the power of love. How we followed Him through a desert of unknowns with just the clothes on our backs because of that love. How we follow Him still even when life is unfair and confusing and full of loss. We follow because we feel the power of His love as [Passover](http://www.aish.com/h/pes/mm/Passover-Breaking-News.html) arrives. His yearning for our voices, our songs and our tables full of saltwater tears.

And sometimes at dawn at this time of year I can almost hear Him whisper: *I thought this day would never come. I can’t believe you’re home.*

*In memory of Rabbi Jacob and Deborah Rubenstein*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Aish.com*

**Israel Defense Forces Set to**

**Consume 75 Tons of Matza**

**By Gil Ronen**



The IDF is prepared for the Pesach holiday, after weeks of staff work and logistical planning. The IDF's Food Center will supply bases, camps and outposts with a special menu for the Seder and subsequent week-long holiday.

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**Almost 7 Tons of Nile Perch**

**And 25 Tons of Various Meats**

In preparation for the holiday, the military acquired 75 tons of matzot, 6.5 tons of Nile perch, 35 tons of various kinds of meat, about 7.2 tons of matza flour, which is used for making "kneidalach," and about 14,000 bottles of grape juice. For dessert, about 7 tons of marble cake, chocolate cake and cookies [made out of potato starch and not flour] will be served.

Soldiers who will be on duty at guard positions and outposts during the Seder itself will enjoy a festive meal, which will be brought directly to them. The soldiers will receive a personal Seder kit that will make it possible for each one of them to celebrate the Seder according to Jewish halakha.

*Reprinted from the March 25, 2013 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**A Message from the Kalever Rebbe for Pesach 5773**

**Jewish Weapons – The**

**Key to Our Protection**



The pictures are broadcast to us from our Holy land, 6,000 miles away. Political protocol is strictly followed as the most powerful man in the world pays his first state visit to Israel. The leaders of both countries conduct urgent meetings on how to deal with threats that loom most ominously from Israel’s hostile “neighbors,” most notably Iran which purports to challenge Israel’s very existence.

Even closer to the homeland is the very country which had enslaved our ancestors some 3,300 years ago. Despite formal peace treaties between Israel and Egypt, the relative calm which has prevailed over the past few decades appears to be in jeopardy as the entire region becomes increasingly destabilized.

**Common Sense Lessons to be**

**Learned from the Story of Pesach**

It is hardly coincidental that on the eve of our holiday of historical national redemption, we find ourselves, once again, preoccupied with serious matters pertaining to ensuring our continued freedom from the enemies arrayed against us. What common sense lessons can we learn from the story of Pesach from three and half millennia ago, to help us deal with the challenges we face today?

Truth be told, there is very little that transpired in the Pesach narrative that can be understood with common sense. In fact, every step of the way, the instructions G-d gave to Moshe and the Children of Israel all but defied common sense.

Consider Hashem’s very choice of Moshe Rabbenu as His spokesman to go to Pharaoh to secure the freedom of the Jewish people. Instead of choosing the most skilled and proficient politician and negotiator, Hashem chose a political refugee, convicted of murder, who suffered from a speech impediment to boot. Nevertheless, under Hashem’s protection Moshe entered the palace and instead of immediately summoning the executioner, Pharaoh engaged him in debate and continued to engage Moshe for nine plagues that followed.

**Not a Single Jew was Harmed by a Mitzri**

When the Bnei Yisrael were commanded to tie a sheep, the deity of the Egyptians, to their bedposts in preparation for its slaughter, it would have been wise to avoid contact with the Egyptians until the Korban Pesach ceremony was completed. Instead, Hashem instructed the Jews to approach the Egyptians to borrow gold, silver and beautiful clothing. And again, under Hashem’s protection not a single Jew was harmed by a Mitzri.

And finally, as the clock struck midnight of the fifteenth Nissan and the Egyptian firstborns were smitten by Makas Bechoros, even though the Egyptians frantically urged the Jews to leave their country, the Jews resisted the temptation to flee in the darkness and cover of night. They steadfastly awaited the command from Hashem to begin their march to freedom, which did not come until morning. The Bnei Yisrael walked out of Mitzrayim, “B’Etzem HaYom Hazeh,” in the full light of day and in full sight of their erstwhile taskmasters. And yet again, defying common sense, not a single sword was lifted against them to prevent them from leaving. They left with their walking sticks in hand and sacks of possessions slung over their shoulders, trusting fully in Hashem’s divine protection.

**Our Most Powerful Weapon is Our**

**Unwavering Faith in our Father in Heaven**

The lesson and message for us today is abundantly clear. the most powerful weapon we Jews possess in our arsenal to defend ourselves against those who threaten us, is our unwavering faith in our Father in Heaven and an unswerving commitment to live our lives in accordance with His will as He taught us through His holy Torah. This is what has preserved us throughout the course of our turbulent history.

And, on the night of the Seder, many Jews have a custom of reenacting the exodus in dramatic fashion, walking around their Seder table with a stick in hand and their Matzos slung over their shoulders in a little sack to show that we too follow in the path our forefathers blazed for us. A path of renewed commitment to Hashem that will lead us to the final and ultimate redemption,

Wishing you and your families a Kosher and joyous Pesach filled with Hashem’s myriad blessings.

Reprinted from a special Pre-Pesach Message email of the Kalever Rebbe of Williamsburg, shlita. Special Thanks to: Rabbi Avraham Shalom Farber, Shimon Farber & Yehuda Leib Meth, for the English translation of the Rebbe’s message.

**The Ten Plagues:**

**Rated 'R' for Retribution**

**By Rabbi David Zauderer**

Following a class that I gave about the Passover Seder and its symbolism, a young man approached me. He made a charge that at first blush seemed bizarre but in retrospect provoked considerable thought. Passover, he asserted, was a terrible holiday for children.

A terrible holiday for children?

Though this fellow would have been wrong to make a similar claim about, say, Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, when the kids have to sit in the synagogue all day through all those "boring" services, at least the claim would be understandable. But Passover?!

**How Can Passover Not be Kosher for Kids**

I loved Passover as a child! How can anyone think that Passover, of all holidays, isn't kosher for kids?

Then he elaborated. At the Passover Seder, the family -- sometimes multi-generations -- sit around munching Matzah and drinking wine. But we also commemorate that the Almighty brought Ten Plagues to punish the Egyptians --- including the murder of all Egyptian firstborns. It was with the latter my student had a problem. "Why," he demanded, "should we teach our children to extol this?"

Consider what would happen today if Hollywood remade the famous epic, "The Ten Commandments". With Sean Connery cast as Moses -- and the latest technology used to recreate the Ten Plagues in vivid detail -- if the producers were faithful to the Author's original "script", viewers would see frogs jumping into Egyptians' throats, killer locusts striking, and the entire Egyptian army drowning in the sea as the ancient Hebrews managed to make it safely to the other side. What kind of "rating" do you think the movie would garner?

**Does Mr. Righteous Indignation Have a Point?**

Truthfully, would you let your little ones view it, Two Thumbs Way Up or not? I think not! And yet we bring our children to the Passover Seder each year to read about -- indeed, take pride in -- those very same stories! Mr. Righteous Indignation has got a point there, doesn't he?

To the best of my knowledge, in thousands of years of Seders, there's never been one documented case of "Post-Haggadic Traumatic Stress Disorder". Another Passover miracle?

No. It's because there is a crucial distinction between unwarranted, wanton acts of violence, and justified retribution and punishment.

Allow me to explain with a slight digression. Many of today's "social scientists" have argued against corporal punishment even of deserving children. Children who are "hit" by their parents will, they claim, learn to hit their peers.

These acknowledged experts might have a valid point --- but for a very different reason.

**Parents Today Might Be More**

**Of a Buddy than an Authority Figure**

Today, it has become increasingly popular -- and accepted -- for a parent to be more of a buddy than authority figure. In some cases, immature and under-educated children are actually being given an equal say in how they should be raised.

In Ye Days of Old, most parents conveyed to their children in no uncertain terms that it was they who knew what was best for them. This transformative trend in child rearing has not come without a cost.

We moderns may be "closer" to our kids than our parents were to us --- and some will say that on account of our "buddy relationship" with our kids, we relate to them much better than our parents related to us . But the downside of this is that in our role as best friend to our children, we often tend to lose the perceived sense of authority that turns unjustified abuse into justified discipline.

We need to find that balance between friend and authority figure.

So it's no wonder, then, when we discipline our kids, who think of us as their buddies, that they will resent it and ultimately learn from what we are doing to them that it's okay to hit someone when you want to get them to do something for you.

**Parents Must Be Role Models**

But that's not the way it should be, of course. Kids have to understand that they are not their parent's equals. Parents are there to be role models for them and to set rules and standards that they must obey in order that they grow up to become decent, caring members of society.

And if we can get that notion across to our children, then when we discipline them, even if they won't always agree with us, at least they can accept that the disciplinary measure meted out to them is a punishment from those who are entrusted with their personal welfare and spiritual growth, and they won't extend that to their friends in school.

And that's exactly what I answered this young man who felt that Passover is not kosher for kids.

**Don’t Confuse Divine Retribution with**

**Wanton, Unnecessary or Unjustified Violence**

We should never confuse the Divine retribution that the Almighty brought upon the Egyptians (who had persecuted and tortured our people and who had thrown our babies into the Nile, among other things), with the kind of wanton, unnecessary and unjustified violence and murder that we try to shield our children from in movies and computer games. There is a big difference. It's the difference between being smacked or firmly disciplined by your father who knows what's best for you, and being hit by the class bully in school.

At the Passover Seder, we teach our children that there is Divine justice in the world, and that evil actions should not go unpunished, and that the Almighty, Who is our Father in Heaven, cares very much about the world and gets involved in making sure that the bad guys lose in the end. And those are important lessons that our kids can live with --- not just at the Passover Seder, but the whole year round .... unlike all the violent T.V. shows and movies that our kids often watch, and that they can definitely live without!

*Reprinted from the March 25, 2013 email of JewishWorldReview.com*

**Making Pesach Relevant And Joyful to Our Children**

**By David Bibi**

If you have not seen this yet, and you probably did because I got at least 10 mailings with it, I found it amusing: “As you gather around the Passover Seder next week, please remember there are a group of Jews who will have nothing to eat this Pesach ……..

They are called Ashkenazim

Earlier this week in recalling my father in law Gerald Werman who passed away on Monday, Yosef Mordechai ben Rachel a’h, I asked a question in giving a halacha at minyan one morning. As we approach Passover, “What’s the most important part of the Seder?”

Although the answer is one I heard often from Rabbi Abittan, I realized later that it was a question I posed in a previous newsletter based on a note I received from Gutman Locks in Jerusalem. And Mr. Locks does a much better job than I could do writing this:

**A Holiday with the Greatest Number**

**Of Details, Requirements and Restrictions**

“Although the holiday of Passover is, by far, the most memorable and beloved holiday of the entire Jewish calendar, it also brings the greatest number of details, requirements and restrictions. Observing each of these elements is crucial during this week of preparation and especially for the Seder itself. To list them all would (and does) fill an entire book.

“There are the Torah commandments and there are the rabbinical commandments. There are also the customs that, surprisingly, vary tremendously between the Sephardim and Ashkenazim. There are the unique customs that have developed around the diaspora. For example, Indian Jews eat different foods on Passover than Temanni Jews, and some Jews will dip their matzah in their soup, while others would be aghast at such a move! Some will eat beans, and some would never do such a thing.

There are strict requirements as to the minimum amounts of matzah, bitter herb and wine that must be consumed, and only within a specific period of time. And perhaps most important of all are the amazingly strict requirements not to have any leavening or related products in our possession for the entire week. Confusing this even more is that some authorities say certain foods are leavened while others swear that they are not.

“On and on, the list of requirements that ensure a successful Seder can certainly seem overwhelming. It is no wonder that the favorite question a sharp student will ask his rebbe right before the Seder is, “What is the most important thing that I must watch out for?”

**Make Sure that the**

**Children Have a Good Time**

“Last Pesach, right before leaving the Kotel to rush home for the Seder, a rabbi friend of mine asked me that very question. To his great surprise, I immediately answered, “Make sure that the children have a good time.” He looked at me as if I might be joking; his face was all twisted up. He wanted to know some great Kabbalah about the four cups of wine, or maybe how to lean to the side when drinking them. Or maybe I could give him some great Chassidic teaching on how to do teshuva (repentance) while trying to gulp down that impossibly hot horseradish. AAGHHHH! But, no, I simply said, “Make sure that the children have a good time.”

“The next afternoon, he came up to me, smiling. He’s a smart guy and he took my words to heart. He said, “It was the best Seder ever. The kids were great. Everyone was laughing. We all enjoyed ourselves tremendously. But tell me, how can you really say that keeping the kids happy was the most important thing to watch out for? After all, this is a very serious holiday.”

**“If We Forget Our Past, There Will**

**Be No Reason to Go On as a People”**

“I explained, “There is only one reason we have the Seder at all: to remember the Exodus from Egypt. And there is only one reason why we must remember the Exodus from Egypt: so we will remain Jews. If we forget our past, there will be no reason to go on as a people.

There is only one way for us to remain Jews, and that is to raise Jewish families. Without the children coming back next year, there won’t be any Jewish families. It’s for the kids’ sake that we go through all this each year and, G-d willing, we will get to do it for them again next year, too. And if they have a good enough time, then surely someday we will even get to do it for their kids.”

Rabbi Abittan would tell us that although it’s important to have guests, the guests are not nearly as important as the children. It’s the children we need to relate to, it’s the children we need to tell, it’s the children we need to continue this unbroken chain. They should sit next to us. They should participate. They should take fond memories of the Seder. The Misvah of VeHigadeta LeBincha – and you should tell your children – takes precedence over any one else as the Seder.

**My Father-in-Law Knew It Was**

**Always About the Children**

My father-in-law knew it was always about the children. He was their go to guy. When it came to reports, they had a built in family writer who would not only do the report but teach them more than they could have ever learned in researching the report themselves. He always had a smile. And his one liners could entertain anyone for hours.

There was no subject he wasn’t well versed in. But he never preached. He asked, he prodded, he listened. He made each of them important and that’s why they loved him so much. And there was nothing he held back. Jonah remarked that when people were just realizing the power of licensing, Jerry who had sold hundreds of millions of dollars in licensed shoes, explained to Jonah who was just a little boy, the why’s, how’s, and what’s of licensing.

**Taking Jonah to China on a Business Trip**

When Jonah as a student, wanted to understand the process of working with factories overseas from design, production, sales and distribution, Jerry didn’t just explain it to him. He took him to China, from meeting to meeting, from factory to factory, from restaurant to bar. Jerry’s preferred career would have been to teach. He fulfilled that dream more than any other way in what he gave his children, his grandchildren, his nephews and nieces. He gave them a love of knowledge connecting generation to generation.

So this Pesach let us remember that it’s all about the kids. It’s all about them having a good time, It’s all about continuing the chain. It’s all about generation to generation.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameyach

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**Blood Libel Alive and Well**

**In the Muslim World**

**By David Lev**

 It may seem hallucinatory in this day and age, but unfortunately, the “matzah blood libel” is alive and well. In a discussion with Arutz Sheva, Professor Moshe Sharon of Hebrew University said that there were still many instances of the false accusations against Jews for allegedly using the blood of non-Jews to make matzah, but that these accusations today are made in the Muslim world, not the Christian world, where the libel originated in 1144 with the fabricated story of William of Norwich, England.

The accusation that Jews use the blood of Christian or Muslim blood is quite common in Islamic literature. Materials printed by Hizbullah, Hamas and other terror groups, along with books sold throughout the Arab world, discuss alleged cases of Jewish use of blood for matzah baking, said Sharon. “Historical” investigations of cases of blood usage by Jews are common fodder for academic dissertations; for example, the Syrian war minister Mustafa Talas did his dissertation on the Damascus blood libel of 1840.

**Israeli Arabs Are Also**

**Affected by These Beliefs**

Israeli Arabs are also affected by these beliefs, said Sharon. He discussed the case of one of his students at Hebrew University who once asked him where Jews find the Christian blood they need to bake matzah. “This shows that the tradition of the blood libel is still deeply rooted,” he said.

One bestseller in Kuwait includes a step by step guide to the process of producing blood for matzah baking, including the lurid, fabricated description of a special barrel with sharp prongs into which the Christian child is strapped, and the barrel rolled along the ground so that the prongs stab him and release his blood, which is collected in a special vessel in the barrel.

When asked how the Arab public could be so gullible as to believe such mythical stories, Sharon said that the fact that such stories are printed in books made them authoritative in the eyes of many simple, as well as educated, Arabs. “Hatred for Jews is so strong that anything that makes them look bad is usually quickly embraced in the Muslim world,” he added.

One of the reasons Arabs can get away with this is because Israel allows them to, said Sharon. “If we were a country that was sensitive to issues of honor, as the Muslim states are, we would demand an apology for such propaganda” as a precondition for any negotiations.

“When the Palestinians talk about the IDF killing Arab children, it is the theme of the blood libel they have in mind, and it is that image they want to convey to Europe,” he added. “The fact that there have not been any pogroms in the Muslim world over blood libel accusations is because of Israel's military strength. If Israel was not perceived of as a formidable force in the Middle East, such pogroms would spread like wildfire,” he said.

The irony of the mendacious blood libel accusation is that the Torah expressly forbids Jews to consume blood in any form, whereas pagan religions did so as part of their rituals.

*Reprinted from the March 25, 2013 email of Arutz Sheva.*

**The Baal Shem Tov**

**Celebrates Pesach in Turkey**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

A little known fact about the Besh't, is that he once tried to travel to Israel in order to meet with the Tzadik (holy Jew) Rabbi Chiam ben Atar (known as the Ohr HaChiam HaKodesh). If they would have met Moshiach would have been revealed and could have put an end to world suffering.

But he didn’t make it. He did not reach the Holy Land, but he did get as far as Turkey where the following story occurred.

When he reached the shores of Turkey without money or friends he suddenly lost his memory and all his holy powers departed from him. Luckily his daughter, who had accompanied him on the trip, found a job washing clothes in the Jewish section of Istanbul while he struggled to learn how to read.

Passover was approaching. All of the poor people of the town were invited to one home or another and the Besh't and his daughter were invited by a rich man called Rab Mair to be among the fifty guests at his Seder (Passover meal, at which we talk about the miraculous exodus from Egypt, eat Matzah, and drink four cups of wine).

They arrived in Rav Mair's palatial home with all the other guests before the beginning of the holiday and were given a room. But as night fell and the holiday began the Baal Shem Tov did not leave his room to participate in the holiday prayers. In fact, even well into the night when everyone was seated in their places for the festive meal, the Besh't still didn’t show up.

**Noticed that His Guest**

**Was Absent from the Seder**

Rav Mair noticed the absence and began to regret that he invited him. Here was such an important festival with such unique and meaningful commandments and it seemed that this man couldn't care less. The Besht's daughter tried to calm their host down and said they should just begin the ceremony without her father but the rich man thought differently.

He excused himself, left the table, went up the stairs to the Besht's room and began to angrily knock at the door. When there was no reply, he took out his key and opened it.

But what he saw made him freeze.

The Besh't was sitting in a chair facing the door, eyes bolt open, staring at the ceiling as though in another world. His face was red with intense longing and he was completely oblivious to what was happening around him. His memory and abilities had returned.

Rab Mair wanted to quietly close the door and leave, but he was so paralyzed with awe he couldn't move.

**The Besht Came to Himself**

**And Spoke to His Host**

After several minutes the Besht came to himself, looked at his host, and calmly said, "Ahh, Good Yom Tov, excuse my delay. Come, let us go downstairs. I just have to pray the evening prayer. Please just give me a small room downstairs for a few minutes so I won't disturb your guests with my prayers and I'll be with you shortly, don't wait for me."

But it wasn't so simple. As soon as he began praying in an adjoining room, his sweet joyous voice drew all the guests from their chairs, and in moments they were either trying to get a look at him through the partially open door, or at least hear a word or two though the wall.

The Besh’t finished his prayers, joined everyone at the table and the Seder began. The joy was contagious and in moments they were all singing and celebrating the exodus of over 3,000 years ago as though it was actually occurring at that moment for the first time.

But the highlight of the evening was when they came to the sentence in the Hallel, "He (G-d) does great miracles alone, forever is His Kindness."

The Besh't stood up and told everyone to repeat this phrase over and over again, "He does great miracles alone, forever is His Kindness. He does great miracles alone, forever is His Kindness" louder and louder with more and more enthusiasm, until they almost felt their souls jump from their bodies from sheer joy.

**Announcing that a Terrible Decree Against**

**The Jews of Turkey Had Been Eliminated**

After the Seder the Besh't announced that these words had just eliminated a terrible decree against all the Jews of Turkey, and that the next day in Synagogue everything would be clear.

Sure enough the next morning in the Synagogue instead of beginning the prayers, everyone was gathered around a merchant called Rab Tzemach, one of the richest Jews in Istanbul, who was standing on a chair waiting for silence so he could tell everyone what happened to him the previous night. When they were quiet he began.

"This has never happened before, but last night just as I was about to begin the Seder with my family, I unexplainably felt so tired and sleepy that I told my guests to continue without me and went to my room to lie down for a few minutes.

“No sooner did my head touch the pillow that I fell into a deep sleep. Lo-and-behold, my dear departed father appeared to me, which also had never happened before. He looked very worried and told me there was a terrible decree about to be signed by the Sultan against the Jews of Turkey!

**The Sultan’s Chief Advisor**

**Was a Wicked Anti-Semite**

“He said that the Sultan's chief adviser, a wicked anti-Semite called Mustafa, had convinced the Sultan by all sorts of "proofs" and "witnesses" that a necessary ingredient in our Matzoth is the blood of Moslem orphans.

“The Sultan became so enraged that he decided to evict all the Jews from Turkey the night of Passover and confiscate their belongings.

“’But it is not to late", continued my father, ‘The Sultan has not yet actually signed the decree. Now he's asleep and if you can get to him before he wakes up perhaps you can convince him not to sign’.

“’Me!?’ I blurted out, ‘How can I convince the Sultan? Who am I? Why, I wouldn't even be able to get into the Palace! This makes no sense!’

"’I have a document that will get you in’ interrupted my father, ‘and you can talk to the Sultan. Just listen. You see, years ago I saved the life of the present Sultan's father who was then Sultan of Turkey. That's right I saved his life.

“’The Sultan was traveling incognito on a journey when he was kidnapped by highway robbers who thought he was an ordinary rich traveler. He was very clever, and managed to conceal his real identity, and even convince them that he was an expert carpet maker, which he also happened to be, and would make fine carpets for them if they didn't kill him. His plan worked. He wove the carpets, and they sold them for very high sums and in return they kept him alive.

**Eventually Managed to Free the Sultan**

“Everything went smoothly for a while, but it so happened that one day I happened to buy some of those carpets and something made me suspicious. In fact I became so suspicious that I actually followed that salesman back to his hiding place in the forest without him knowing it, and eventually even managed to free the Sultan.

“The Sultan was so grateful that he wrote me an official document granting me and my offspring permission to enter the palace for a private audience whenever we so desired. And that deed is in the false bottom of the safe that I left you".

"Up to this time", said Rav Tzemach to the crowd of Jews, "I must admit I was skeptical; after all it was only a dream. But when I actually woke up and found the document where he said it was, I began to realize that something awesome was happening and I had to work fast. I took the document, put on my coat, ran out the back door, jumped on a horse and raced to the palace.

**Brought to the Sultan’s Palace by His Mother**

“At first the guards refused to let me in despite the document. But when I demanded to see the Sultan's mother they unexplainably agreed and called her. It was a miracle that she came, and when she saw the document she immediately brought me into the castle to her son's chambers, which was no less of a miracle.

“Luckily he was still sleeping, but when he awoke and saw us standing there he was anything but pleased and he began screaming at me.

"’Do you mean to tell me that my trusted advisor Mustafa is wrong or that he lied to me?" he bellowed angrily, "NO NO! Not Mustafa!' He is a wise and devoted servant. If anyone is the liar it's you and your blood-thirsty people! So what if your father saved my father's life? So what? I will not allow murderers of Moslem children to breathe the holy air of Turkey! Bring the Decree!" He yelled shaking with rage.

**Accuses Mustafa of Being**

**An Enemy, a Liar and an Idolater**

"Suddenly I shouted out at the top of my lungs, "Mustafa is a charlatan! He is your enemy, a liar and an idolater! Yes! An Idolater. If you break into his house you will see that he really is a devout Catholic and even sleeps with a cross around his neck!""

"Believe me I don't know where I got those ideas from, but I spoke with such authority that the Sultan immediately dispatched a group of his secret police to check my accusations.

“An hour later they returned with the shocking news that every word I said was true, and that they had even killed the Satanic villain on the spot.

“Needless to say the Sultan profusely apologized to me and swore that from now on we will have no troubles from our Moslem brothers in Turkey."

After Rav Tzemach finished speaking everyone began making some calculations and came to the conclusion that exactly at the time when the Besh’t had made them repeat the words "He makes great miracles alone etc.'' the police entered Mustafa's home and put an end to his blood libel.

*Reprinted from last week’s Torah email from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**Celebrating Pesach in**

**A Siberia Labor Camp**

In 1939, the German military began to attack Poland. When all of Poland fell to the Germans, the Jews knew it was time to take steps to escape from the destruction. Russia was no lover of the Jews, but many instinctively felt that anything was preferable to the Germans. So, along with many others, Harav Yisroel Rabinowitz packed his belongings and began to plan his escape to Russia.

Reb Yisroel and his group cautiously approached the border, following in the footsteps of their barely visible guide. And then suddenly-disaster! Shouts and gunfire rang through the night as the border guards tried to stop the illegal refugees.

**Zigzagging Back and Forth to**

**Avoid the Bullets Flying in the Air**

Reb Yisroel ran desperately, zigzagging back and forth to avoid the bullets that were flying through the air. And then he tripped and fell, and the Russian guards were on top of him. Based on trumped-up charges, the evil Russians sentenced Reb Yisroel to 5 years of hard labor in Siberia.  
 Despite the difficulties, Reb Yisroel was determined not to give an inch in his observance of Torah and mitzvos. He avoided treif food at all costs. He refused to work on Shabbos, despite many beatings and punishments. In time, the guards realized that he was adamant in refusing to violate his religious principles, and they left him alone.

**A Source of Encouragement to**

**Other Jews Trapped in Siberia**

Other Jews in the area were greatly heartened by the presence of Reb Yisroel. The word quickly got around. For the many Jews imprisoned in the wasteland of Siberia, he became the source of halachic (Jewish legal) advice and much needed encouragement.

Pesach was several weeks away, and Reb Yisroel began making plans for a chometz-free Pesach. He never touched the non-kosher soup, so he lived only on his bread ration. What could replace it for Pesach? Then he made contact with a woman living near the camp, who was willing to trade bread for other kinds of food.

Now Reb Yisroel had to find a way to get to the woman to make the exchange. An idea began to form in his mind. He would eat only half his bread ration during the next few weeks, saving the other half to trade in return for potatoes. Then, shortly before Pesach, he would fake illness, thereby gaining access to the prison hospital, where security was lax.

**Giving Up Half of His Too**

**Meager Bread Ration**

In the middle of the night, he would leave the hospital to make the trade. The first difficulty was in saving half of the meager bread ration. The entire ration itself was hardly enough to live on, and on the reduced ration, he started to feel weak from hunger. Still, the thought of the upcoming Yom Tov strengthened him and made it all worthwhile.

Shortly before Pesach, Reb Yisroel managed to procure a grass that causes stomach illness. He was immediately admitted to the hospital, where they confiscated his fur coat; after all, they reasoned, bedridden patients had no use for fur coats. This certainly complicated his plan; going out in the Siberian night without a coat was not very advisable.

**The Freezing Wind Instantly Knifed**

**Through His Thin Nightclothes**

But he had come this far, and he was determined to go ahead with his plan. Long after the other patients were asleep, Reb Yisroel slipped out of bed and climbed out of the nearest window. The freezing wind instantly knifed through his thin nightclothes, and he started shivering uncontrollably. Moving quickly to keep warm, he dashed to the hiding place where he kept his extra bread, grabbed the food, and raced to meet the woman.  
 Upon reaching his destination, Reb Yisroel realized that he had to be back at the hospital before the nurses came around and discovered him missing. So he made the exchange quickly, thanked the woman politely, and dashed out toward the hospital.

The way back somehow seemed to take much longer. Every step was an effort as the frigid wind snatched away his breath and froze his body. He slipped in the window and back into bed, with nobody realizing his absence. When Pesach arrived, the satisfaction of being able to observe the Yom Tov in accordance with halacha (Jewish law) made the outing at night well worthwhile.  
 After Pesach, spring finally came to Siberia. As spring turned to summer, Reb Yisroel began thinking about Tisha b-Av. Should he fast in his weakened state? Reb Yisroel decided to fast and share in the sorrow of his Creator over the destruction of the Holy Temple. His friends heard about his plans, and they tried to convince him not to fast.

Still, Reb Yisroel remained firm. So they decided to help him out as much as they could. One of the women cooked him a soup to eat after the fast. As soon as he ate the soup, Reb Yisroel suffered from unbearable stomach pains, and he was taken to the hospital. As he was dozing off, he suddenly realized that this was the second time he had been in the hospital for stomach pains; the first time, of course, he caused the stomach pains himself, to be able to observe Pesach.

**Awakened by Shouts and Cheers**

**Of the Other Hospital Prisoners**

Shouts and cheers awakened Reb Yisroel the following morning. “We are free! We are free!” The other patients were dancing wildly around the room, laughing and crying simultaneously. “What is all this about?” Reb Yisroel asked in surprise. “Yisroel, we are free!” they cried with excitement. “Stalin made a pact with the Polish government in exile, allowing all the political prisoners of Polish nationalities who are the in hospitals to be set free. And that means that we are free to go!”

Reb Yisroel immediately offered a heartfelt prayer to Hashem. Clearly, his being in the hospital at this opportune moment was a result of his mesiras nefesh (self-sacrifice) in observing the laws of Pesach. The hand of Hashem in his life was so evident, it was amazing! Reb Yisroel was sent to Tashkent, where he soon began teaching children. After the war, he came to America and became a rav in the Bronx, where he continued his vision in life: teaching Torah to all.

**The Reward of Having Made the**

**Service of Hashem His Top Priority**

As we celebrate the Yom Tov of Pesach, we remember the incredible story of Reb Yisroel Rabinowitz, how he made the service of Hashem a top priority. We can be inspired by the example of Reb Yisroel. Whenever we may be tempted to complain about the effort involved in doing a mitzvah, we should remember the words of the Sages, “Calculate the cost of a mitzvah against its reward.” (Avos 2:1)

Although the effort to perform mitzvahs may be big, especially on Pesach, the reward for mitzvahs is incredibly great. Through mitzvahs we grow closer to Hashem in a state of happiness. Therefore, one should always be happy to put effort into performing mitzvahs.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

**Love of the Land**

**The Human Side of the Story**

**Chanukah Candles**

**For Pesach Use**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach, Zt”l**

It was the evening before Pesach when Jews go searching for *chametz* with a candle. In the home of a prominent resident of Bnei Brak it was decided that one place they would not have to search was the new cabinet that had been installed in the kitchen only a short while before.

After all, they had not yet used it to store any food and it was too high for any of the children to reach.

When the head of the family was about to begin searching the rest of the house he suddenly realized that he had forgotten to prepare a candle. He then recalled that the only thing that had been stored in that high new cabinet

was a box of colored Chanuka candles. unable to locate any other candles at that hour he decided to take a ladder in order to reach those Chanuka ones which were on the highest shelf.

And what did he find on that shelf? A package of *chametz* wafers!

It turned out that one of the children had wanted to hide those wafers and had also used a ladder to get up to that shelf.

Only then did he realize how Heaven had saved him from sinfully harboring *chametz* in his home.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Pesach 5772**

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**Ahead of Passover, Strict Standards Transform a Brooklyn Neighborhood**

**By Joseph Berger**

On any ordinary day, yellow school buses with the Hebrew names of yeshivas dominate the ultra-Orthodox landscape of Borough Park, Brooklyn. But in the days before [Passover](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/p/passover/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), large trucks parked along many of the sidewalks are far more striking, particularly those bearing signs with a Hebrew word obscure even to most Jews: Sheimos.

Sheimos (pronounced SHAME-os) is a term for religious books containing the Hebrew name of God that need to be ritually buried in the ground.

As Passover approaches, Orthodox Jews strive to rid their homes of even the slightest trace of bread or other unleavened grain products known as chametz, almost down to the molecule. Bibles, prayer books and volumes of Talmud receive a thorough airing as well, and the most dog-eared specimens are often discarded. But Jewish religious law considers throwing them in the trash a desecration.

So parked all day on many streets in Borough Park and nearby neighborhoods like Midwood are trucks whose drivers will carry books to a cemetery upstate for a fee of about $8 to $10 a box.

**Neighborhood Transformation Before Passover**

Passover preparations transform a neighborhood like Borough Park just as the Christmas season transforms the nation’s Currier & Ives villages or the jostling sidewalks of Fifth Avenue. Passover, the eight-day holiday that celebrates the Exodus from Egypt, an event that defines Jews as a people, consumes many Jews who observe it, but in Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods the degree of fevered stringency can be breathtaking.



Kirsten Luce for The New York Times

Teenagers collecting discarded books to be buried according to Jewish law.

Passover preparations transform a neighborhood like Borough Park just as the Christmas season transforms the nation’s Currier & Ives villages or the jostling sidewalks of Fifth Avenue. Passover, the eight-day holiday that celebrates the Exodus from Egypt, an event that defines Jews as a people, consumes many Jews who observe it, but in Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods the degree of fevered stringency can be breathtaking.

It is evident in the stacks of food processors for sale at The Buzz appliance store, with their special “kugel blades” for making a starchy pudding that does not require bread, or in bakeries that make matzos by hand within an exacting 18 minutes, or in garages equipped with vats of boiling water where Jews immerse cooking pots that might contain chametz.

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| --- | --- |
| PASSOVER-2-popup | spacer |
| spacer Kirsten Luce for The New York Times  An appliance store called The Buzz sells families the latest gear to prepare their traditional meals |  |

**Seasonal Uptick in Employment**

It is also evident in a seasonal uptick in employment, because the neighborhood has no shortage of experts in the finer points of fastidiously keeping kosher who supplement their livelihoods during Passover.

“G-d in Borough Park is like steel in Bethlehem,” joked Alexander Rapaport, a Hasid who runs Masbia, a soup kitchen organization.

The first item a customer notices when entering Gourmet Glatt, a sparkling new emporium that resembles a Whole Foods, is not food, but a tall stack of Easy-Off. That is because among the first things a Hasidic homemaker does before preparing holiday dishes is clean the oven two or three times to make sure not even a speck of chametz from the past year contaminates those dishes.

Once inside the market there are other signs of how the holiday, known in Hebrew and Yiddish as Pesach, is observed with scrupulous rigorousness. The shelves are lined with brown butcher paper so that Passover products are not exposed to the year-round boards. There are two counters of vegetables — washed and unwashed.

Although the Talmudic injunction is a matter of interpretation, many Orthodox families prefer their carrots, beets, radishes and parsnips straight from the soil, with granules of dark earth still clinging. That way they can wash the vegetables themselves and be sure, or as certain as humanly possible, that no grain alcohol or leavened grain byproducts touched them.

For the same reason, Hasidim will buy only unwaxed apples — the store has such a bin — and eat only gefilte fish made of carp because it can be bought live, assuring its purity.

“On Pesach people don’t want anything chemical, even if it’s not chametz,” said Rabbi Shmuel Teitelbaum, the store’s mashgiach, or kosher monitor.

Hasidim from the Belz sect will not touch garlic during the holiday. Not because garlic is chametz, but because generations ago in Europe garlic was preserved inside sacks of wheat. Since their ancestors did not eat garlic, Belz Hasidim will not eat garlic. Tradition is tradition.

The other day, Mordechai Rosenberg, a 50-year-old Bobov Hasid wearing an astrakhan fur hat, was pushing a cart loaded with boxes of sugared cereal made from potato starch. He felt compelled to explain to another Hasid that they were for his grandchildren.

**Follow Customs of His Parents**

“I eat what my parents taught me,” he said. “I won’t even put jam on my matzo because it could have a little drop of water that will mix with the matzo.”

In some Hasidic ways of thinking, dipping matzo or matzo meal in water may leaven some trace of unseen flour. That is why Hasidim, as opposed to other ultra-Orthodox Jews, will not eat matzo balls with their chicken soup (they use cooked egg instead) and why kosher supermarkets sell more potato starch than matzo meal.

Rabbi Menachem Genack, the rabbinic administrator of the Orthodox Union, which certifies foods in 83 countries, explains that the rules forbidding chametz are more severe than for nonkosher foods like pork. Jewish law tolerates some contamination of kosher food, as long as it does not exceed one-sixtieth of the total consumed; with chametz, even the slightest speck renders a dish inedible.

**The Frenzy for Passover Perfection**

The frenzy for Passover perfection is palpable inside The Buzz, a kosher cross between a Williams Sonoma and a Best Buy that is especially bustling this time of year. Juicers become a particularly hot item. All year long, ultra-Orthodox Jews drink Tropicana and other processed juices that bear rabbinical certification. On Passover, particularly fussy ones buy juicers to squeeze their own and avoid possible contamination in the manufacturing.

Food processors are also a best seller; The Buzz sells thousands. The most popular, said Heshy Biegeleisen, one of the owners, is a 14-cup machine made by Gourmet Grade that has the “ultimate kugel blade.” It prevents the potato batter from having a soupy consistency associated with some food processors.

The blade was designed by engineers in China after Mr. Biegeleisen spent three weeks there figuring out with them how to forge a device that could create the granular texture of a hand grater (minus the blood that often comes with a cut finger). The answer was a blade that alternated large holes with small holes.

For four months ahead of Passover, Charedim Shmurah Matzah Bakery, planted in the shadow of the subway, turns out 80,000 pounds of hand-kneaded, flattened and perforated matzos in an atmosphere of high-wire tension, monitored by timers. Shmurah matzos are “guarded” from the time the grain is harvested and milled until the time the dough is baked, and only 18 minutes can pass between the mixing of the water and flour and the insertion into a very hot oven.

The process echoes the haste of the ancient Hebrews as they rushed to bake bread before escaping from Egypt. Still, at times the bakers carrying long rods loaded with discs of dough and sprinting to get them into the oven recall a less ancient phenomenon — the Olympics. They look like pole-vaulters running down a track as if the gold medal were at stake.

*Reprinted from the April 2, 2012 edition of The New York Times.*

**Good Shabbos**

**The Red Seder**

In Parshas Vayikra (two weeks ago), the Torah describes the various korbanos - sacrifices which were brought in the tabernacle and later in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The root of the word korban - (sacrifice) is karov which means close.

The essence of the korbanos was that they brought Jews closer to Hashem. The korbanos are sacrifices for Hashem. Our lesson this week is therefore the following: Whenever we make sacrifices for Hashem, we grow closer to Hashem and His Holiness. The following amazing and touching true story illustrates how a few Jews grew closer to Hashem.

**A Young Rabbi Arranges a**

**Passover Seder in the F.S.U.**

About ten years ago a young rabbi was invited to a town in the former Soviet Union to arrange and conduct a Passover Seder for the area residents.

The recently ordained Rabbi arrived several weeks before the holiday to prepare. Trying to make the event as big as possible, he went to the town's mayor to find a suitable place to hold the festive ceremony. After exploring several options, the Mayor decided that the best place in town to serve their purpose was the Communist meeting hall.

When the Communists were in power, their party hall was usually the biggest building. The Rabbi and the Mayor went to look at the place, and sure enough, it was perfect. Publicity and posters went up, people were invited, and food was brought and prepared. New vessels were bought, the Pesach cooking was supervised, and the whole building was cleaned and decorated with Pesach themes.

All the hard work paid off. Three hundred people arrived for the Seder! Young and old, men and women came, all dressed in their nicest clothes with shining faces. Some came from nostalgia, some out of curiosity, and some to enjoy a good meal. But everyone, whether they knew it or not, came because they were Jews and tonight was Pesach. It took a while to get everyone seated and settled.

The Rabbi made a short welcoming speech telling them what to expect. For some of them it was their first "Seder" in fifty years, and for many the first in their lives. Haggadahs translated into Russian were handed out, cups were filled with wine, Matzos were distributed, and the evening began.

**Everyone Followed the**

**Rabbi’s Instructions**

Everyone followed the Rabbi's instructions, and listened to his explanations with great interest. They read aloud from their books how Hashem performed great miracles thousands of years ago, and how He took the Jews out of Egypt. They ate the Matza, drank four cups of wine, finished their holiday meal, sang, and even danced at certain times. All went smoothly until the cup of Elijah. The Rabbi explained that this fifth cup represents the future Redemption, when Moshiach will gather all Jews and make a beautiful new world with the revelation of Hashem everywhere.

Suddenly one of the older men stood up, banged on the table and said in a booming voice, "Young man! Excuse me please, young Rabbi!"

**The Place Fell Silent**

The place fell silent. As they listened earlier to the Rabbi, they now turned to the impromptu speaker.

"We are very grateful to you for this beautiful evening with the wonderful food and wine you brought us. Everything is very nice, very beautiful and very tasty."

Everyone in the room shook their heads in agreement and wondered what he was getting at.

**“We Are Not Little Children”**

"Everything you said is also very interesting and nice." The man continued. "Beautiful stories; about miracles... nice Bible stories. We all love stories. But what you said about Messiah coming and making a utopia, building a Holy Temple and all this. Please Rabbi, we are grown up people. We are not little children to believe such nonsense!

“You are a very nice man and we are very grateful, but please save such foolish superstitions for your children, not for intelligent grown-ups. Please understand, dear Rabbi, this is nothing personal but you are naive. You are locked up in Yeshiva and we live out here in the real world."

Many of the assembled shook their heads in agreement. The looked pitifully at the Rabbi as though to say, "We are sorry, but he's right."

The young rabbi however did not lose his composure. He waited a minute and replied.

**“Do You Realize Where We Are?”**

"My friend," he said with a warm smile, "My friends!" he opened his arms and looked around the room. "Do you realize where we are? Do you realize what we are doing? Do you realize what you are saying!? If someone would have told you fifteen years ago that you would celebrate a PESACH SEDER in the COMMUNIST MEETING HALL, would you ever have believe him?

“Fifteen years ago there was nothing more powerful than Communism, and nothing weaker than Judaism! Communism was the chief antagonist and enemy of Hashem, everyone in Russia was sure that Communism was right, and would win in the end. Yet here we are! The impossible has happened! Communism has not only fallen, its hall now serves Judaism! Is it really so far-fetched that Moshiach can change the world?"

The man looked at the crowd then back at the young rabbi, straightened up, smiled broadly and said..."BRAVO!!" And the crowd broke into applause.

*Reprinted from the Good Shabbos email of Parshas Vayikra.*

**Rabbi Paysach Krohn Reflects**

**On the Kedushas of Pesach Seder**

By Daniel Keren

Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn, prominent *mohel*, popular ArtScroll author of the *Maggid* stories and world renowned Torah lecturer spoke last year at a special Pre-Pesach Hakhel Event at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin in Brooklyn about “*Making the Most of Your Seder*.”

He declared that every time you celebrate a *Yom Tov*, one has to do more than just eat *matzah* on the *Seder* night or sit in a *sukkah* on *Sukkos*. If you don’t change as a result of your observance of the festival, than you are no more than a donkey.

Rabbi Krohn spoke of a distinguished *rosh hayeshiva* in the Mirrer in *Yerushalayim* who recalled how his mother of blessed memory would prepare their house for the coming of *Pesach*. After she had carefully spent hours cleaning the walls of the dining room with a special lime substance, she would gather all of her children into the room. She would tell them, “These [newly] clean walls have not heard *lashon hora*.” The affect of her words served to inspire the children into the spirit of the *Yom Tov* and give the room a special aura as the *Seder* was conducted that first night of *Pesach*.

**An Obligation to Prepare**

**In Advance for the Seder**

Every father has an obligation to prepare in advance for the *Seder*. This entails preparing notes of what important parts of the *Hagaddah* he wants to discuss with the family and emphasize to the children.

Which wines you are going to drink for the *arba kosos* should also be figured out a few days before the first night of the *Yom Tov*. Don’t start the *Seder* and try to discover if you can handle a particular wine and which bottle you should be avoiding. Rabbi Krohn also spoke of the fact that as one becomes older, one might have to buy a smaller *kos* as his ability to drink from a larger wine goblet decreases.

**Recognizing that We are the**

**Greatest Nation in the World**

Rabbi Krohn spoke of Rav Moshe Eisenman of Ner Israel Yeshiva in Baltimore who has written so many wonderful books. Rav Eisenman says it is very important that fathers at the *Pesach Seder* emphasize to their children that we – *Klal Yisroel* – are the greatest nation in the world. We must comprehend on the night of the *Seder* that we are the *Abishter’s* children and that we have to have pride in ourselves for as a nation we have survived all our enemies who have disappeared. Such a statement will infuse our children with a positive feeling for themselves as important components of *Klal Yisroel*.

**Making the Seder Night a**

**Memorable Experience for All**

It is important to make the *Seder* night a memorable experience for all of one’s children. One should never give up on a child even if a son is wearing ear rings or a daughter, G-d forbid, is sporting nose rings. In the end, one never knows where the greatest *nachas* will come from.

The *Seder* night is an important vehicle to communicate the importance of clinging to *Klal Yisroel* and avoiding the allure of a smiling and seemingly friendly non-Jewish world. Alluding to the terrible rate of intermarriage in America in which sadly more than 50% of all Jews are marrying out of the faith, he said that the lessons of the *Seder* night promoting greater pride in our Jewish heritage could be the solution.

Imagine that fire symbolizes *Klal Yisroel* and water represents the non-Jewish world. If you put fire into water, it is going to be quickly extinguished. But, Rabbi Krohn noted that if you teach separation, than if you have a pan of water under a fire, that fire [*Klal Yisroel*] is not going to be doused by the greater amount of water [non-Jewish influences]. Rather the fire because of the separation of the pan is going to survive and indeed cause the greater amount of water in the pan to evaporate and disappear.

*Reprinted from last week’s edition of The Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Warren Buffet**

**Buys Chometz**

The Omaha World Herald reports:

It might be his best deal yet.

Warren Buffett got a bottle of Scotch, a loaf of traditional Jewish bread, a bag of Cheetos and the rights to the food in three large drums and a box.

All for free.

For thousands of years, Jewish people have sold their leavened goods - anything containing grain that rises when baked - to non-Jewish friends before the eight-day observance of Passover begins. Any unsold leavened products are donated to charity.

**The Prohibition Against Eating Leaven**

**Celebrates the Exodus from Egypt**

Jewish law forbids eating or having leavened goods during Passover, which celebrates the Exodus of the ancient Israelites from Egypt after being freed from slavery.

Rabbi Jonathan Gross of the Beth Israel Synagogue in west Omaha had an idea. He would ask Omaha investor Buffett - an 81-year-old agnostic and the third-richest man in the world - to take part in the “Sale of Chametz.”

Gross typed up a letter.

He included a little background on how the sale would work: Buffett would buy the goods, Gross would buy them back later.

“Price is low before Passover. Price is high afterward,” Gross said. “It’s a great short-term investment. So who would really appreciate this better than Warren Buffett?”

Gross also included the name of his friend Rabbi Myer Kripke, for whom the Kripke Center for the Study of Religion & Society at Creighton University is named. Kripke has been friends with Buffett for 50 years, since they were neighbors in Dundee.

An Email from Buffet’s Secretary

A few days later, Gross got an email from Debbie Bosanek, Buffett’s longtime secretary, saying Buffett liked the idea.

“The beauty of being an agnostic is that you are in no position to make any judgment about anything,” Buffett said in an interview. “You can join in on anything.”

He said he decided to participate because it’s “a ceremony of enormous importance to Jews.”

One problem: Passover begins at sunset on April 6, and Jews regularly sell their leavened goods just one day ahead of the observance. Because of his schedule, Buffett wanted to meet Feb. 23 - six weeks before Passover.

**The Sale is Not a Joke**

Gross decided that he couldn’t actually sell Buffett his boxes of goods under Jewish tradition. “The sale is real, not a joke,” Gross said.

He called a mentor rabbi. Scratch the official sale, the mentor advised.

Gross decided to keep the meeting with Buffett, because he wanted to raise awareness about the need for donations to the Food Bank for the Heartland.

During the afternoon of Feb. 23, Gross packed up the goods and his meeting script - he didn’t want to waste any of Buffett’s time. He picked up Yossi Stern, Kripke’s son-in-law, and Rabbi Kripke, who at age 98 uses a wheelchair.

At Berkshire Hathaway’s offices in the Kiewit Plaza near 36th and Farnam Streets, Buffett showed the men around his 14th-floor office.

They saw his signed Shaquille O’Neal sneakers and shelves of Husker memorabilia.

“It’s really very ordinary,” Gross said of Buffett’s office.

In a nod to the ceremonial sale, Gross gave Buffett four 50-cent pieces to finance the deal.

Gross gave him a bottle of single-malt Scotch, home-baked challah - traditional braided Jewish bread - and Buffett’s favorite, a bag of Cheetos.

Gross also handed him two sets of keys - to Beth Israel Synagogue and to Gross’ west Omaha home, where the box and drums of food are kept. (Buffett agreed to donate the food to the food bank.)

The Oracle of Omaha and the west Omaha rabbi shook hands, no signed agreement needed.

Buffett returned the 50-cent coins.

He joked that now that he knows the asking price - four coins - he’ll bargain down to two coins next year.

“Why didn’t anyone tell me about this earlier? This is a great investment,” Buffett said. “I could have been doing this for years.”

*Reprinted from the March 26, 2012 website of Matzav.com. The article originally appeared in the Omaha World Herald*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Missing Pesach Silver**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

In the little lithuanian town of Vabolninkas there lived a saintly woman by the name of Batsheva Shach. her charitable deeds were legendary. despite her own limited means she would deliver baskets of food at the doors of poor families in town and quickly depart before anyone became aware of her good deed.

Her charitable activities reached their peak when the need arose to provide funds for the wedding of an orphaned girl. As she racked her brain for some way to help the poor *kallah*, her eyes fell upon the closed cabinet containing silver vessels that her husband had given her as an outright gift. These were precious vessels that were used only on Pesach and she was sentimentally attached to them. Without even informing her husband she opened the cabinet and delivered the vessels into the hands of the trustees collecting for the wedding.

When Pesach came and her husband opened the cabinet in order to decorate the seder table, he asked his wife where the vessels were. her reply was that those vessels helped establish a Jewish home.

This was the woman whose son, Rabbi Eliezer Shach, was destined to become a leader of world Jewry.

*Reprinted from the Pesach edition of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine of the Internet.*

**Matza: Food of Faith**

**By Rabbi Boruch Shlomo E. Cunin**

The festival of Passover was quickly approaching. I was in the middle of the Bronx and the train I was riding in broke down. I got out and began to walk. Heading in the general direction of Pelham Parkway, I kept asking people where a certain address was. I remember one helpful soul who told me, "Son, you've got a long way to go!"

**Back in 1958 in Lubavitch**

Earlier that afternoon, a group of students in Brooklyn had finished baking the last of the Passover matza. It was 1958, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe had a custom of giving hand-baked matza to people as a spiritual gift before Passover. The Rebbe would stand for hours, greeting people and handing them matza. The mystical Jewish work, the Zohar explains that matza is the "bread of faith," and simply eating it nourishes the soul.

The Rebbe would give matza first to the people who had to travel far, because riding in a car or subway is not permitted on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

I was 16 years old and had to get home to 167th and Jerome Avenue in the Bronx, which was pretty far away. When I approached the Rebbe, he handed me matza and asked if I could deliver some to a certain family.

**The Address Turned Out**

**To be a Housing Project**

Ideally, I would have taken a taxi from the subway station, asked the driver to wait, delivered the matza, and gotten home in time for our family Seder. But life is seldom ideal; it was too late to take a cab. Eventually, I found the address, which turned out to be a housing project. I knocked on the door and out came a man with no shirt, tattoos and a pot belly.

"What is it?" he snapped. In the Bronx, it's proper etiquette to snap when greeting someone. "Excuse me, are you Mr. So-and-So?" I asked. "Yeah," he said.

I noticed the loaf of rye bread sitting on the table, definitely not a traditional Seder food. I said, "The Rebbe sent me."

"The Rebbe? Oh, please come in," he said. The tiny kitchen contained only a small table, some chairs and a hot plate. I didn't understand what I was doing there, delivering matza to a family who wasn't celebrating Passover. Then I thought, perhaps that's exactly why I was there.

I asked the man if he would like to have a Seder. He agreed and called for his wife to come in. She entered, visibly pregnant, with two beautiful little girls, maybe five or six years old, trailing behind. Both girls were blind.

**The Impromptu Seder**

We cleared off the table. I put a hat on the man's head and said, "Okay, we're having a Seder!"

I tried to remember the blessings in the proper order, but it was difficult without a Hagada.

We ate the matza and used water and paper cups to recall the four cups of wine. I tried to think what the Rebbe would do if he was here. I looked at the little girls and at their mother, about to have another child, and began to tell them some things I had learned from the Rebbe.

I told them that we have to have faith. On this night, G-d liberated our ancestors from slavery, and He liberates us, too. The husband and wife seemed to hang on every word, like they were getting nourishment just by listening.

**The Connection Between the**

**Rebbe and the Leather Tanner**

I told them that on Passover, we journey through our personal Egypt to freedom, and that G-d doesn't put on our shoulders more than we can carry. Once you know that, and believe it, you're already liberated. We sang songs with the children and time flew.

At 1:00 a.m., the woman put the girls to bed and it was time for me to leave, but I had to ask the man how he knew the Rebbe. It turned out he was a leather tanner and was acquainted with a rabbi who worked at another section of the meat plant.

Several months ago, the man's wife had become pregnant. Since there was a strong possibility that this child, too, would be born blind, their doctor recommended an abortion. The man was very depressed and didn't know what to do. So he asked this rabbi, who suggested that he write a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe wrote back, saying that they should have faith in G-d and have the child.

As I was about to leave, the man said, "You know, my wife and I weren't sure about this. How are we supposed to have faith? How are we supposed to forget what is and have hope? We didn't think it was possible. But tonight, hearing about faith and how G-d gives us the strength to overcome our personal Egypt, well, now we understand."

Their son was born fully sighted. Over time, I lost track of this family, but years later I learned that the daughters had gotten married and that each had several children, all sighted.

To really describe the Rebbe's love for hundreds of thousands of Jews and non-Jews all over the world would be impossible. The best I could do is to write about a poor family in the Bronx, living in a housing project for the blind. And how the Rebbe had faith hand-delivered to their door.

*Reprinted from Issue #765 of “L’Chaim” (April 2003/Nissan 5763), a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Rabbi Boruch Shlomo E. Cunin has been the Rebbe's Head Shliach (emissary) and Director of Chabad Lubavitch on the West Coast since 1966. This article is reprinted from Farbrengen Magazine, a publication of Chabad of California.*

**Pesach Goy- Jaaber Hussein Buys Israel’s Chometz – Estimated at $150 Billion**

Friday night marks the start of Pesach and Israel will see one of the largest trade deals the country has ever known.



Mr. Jaaber Hussein

For the past 15 years, Jaaber Hussein, a Muslim Arab-Israeli, has been purchasing all of the state’s chometz as part of an agreement with Israel’s chief rabbis.

This deal enables the state to honor religious decrees without wastefully destroying massive quantities of food. The deal is estimated at $150 billion. The chametz is acquired from state companies, the prison service and the national stock of emergency supplies.

Hussein, a department head at the Ramada Renaissance Hotel in Yerushalayim, will entrust the State of Israel with a NIS 100,000 (approximately $26,955) check, making him the “king of chometz.”

Hussein explained that his annual meeting with Rav Ovadia Yosef to execute the deal “a great honor.”

“I get telephone calls from people in the territories and in east Jerusalem, asking me to help them, to please give them some of my bread to eat,” he told Israel Radio. “I have to explain that I ‘own’ it but it’s not here with me in my house.”

*Reprinted from the April 3, 2012 website of Matzav.com*

**Alvin and the Afikoman**

**By Mike Indgin**

 Before we even reached the door of the tiny Miami bungalow, we could smell the aroma of the fresh dill bubbling in the chickenl soup. It made a six-year-old's heart leap with joy. My favorite night of the year had finally come: Passover at Bubbe's.

My mom, dad, brother Alvin and I were the last to arrive. Crowded around the Seder table were Uncle Sammy, Aunt Mona and their four boys; Minnie, Bob and their two daughters; and Aunt Blanche, who was getting a head start with her first glass of Manischewitz.

The Seder progressed as it always did, with Dad leading the service, Blanche sipping wine out of turn and Bubbe running in from the kitchen with more parsley and salt water.

When the time came for dad to go wash his hands, Alvin jumped up and snatched the Afikoman from the table. I followed my eleven-year-old brother out of the room as the Seder continued.

When Alvin was convinced no one was watching, he sneaked into Bubbe's cluttered back room. Somewhere against the far wall, Alvin found the old World Book encyclopedia and ceremoniously hid the Afikoman in the "A" volume between Afghanistan and Alaska.

**Time for Grace After Meals**

We rejoined the group in time for the Four Questions and eventually the Passover feast. As usual, I stuffed myself with matzahh Charoset and eggs to the point that I couldn't even touch Bubbe's famous roasted chicken.

Finally it was time for the grace after meals.

"Where has Alvin hidden the Afikoman this year?" Dad and Uncle Sammy made a half-hearted attempt to find the missing half of matzah, checking behind the TV and under the pillows that were placed on each chair for our reclining pleasure.

"Okay, you got us, Alvin," said Uncle Sammy. "How much do you want?"

"Actually, you don't have to give me anything," stated Alvin, cryptically.

"Shrewd boy, he's holding out for more cash," said Aunt Blanche.

**Commands His Kids**

**To Find the Matzah**

"Oh yeah?" asked Uncle Sammy. "We'll beat him at his own game. Kids, find the matzah."

The Finkel cousins began tearing around the house like escaped circus chimps. After fifteen frenzied minutes, they returned to the living room. Kevin turned in the report. "Sorry, Dad. For a small house, there's a lot of places to hide a matzah."

Uncle Sammy threw up his hands. "Okay, enough. You'll get ten dollars right after Passover. That's twice what we gave you last year."

"No thanks. If you want to finish the Seder, you have to find the Afikoman."

"I'm way too old to play games."

"No games. We all know that the Seder cannot end until we all partake of the Afikoman. If you can't find it, then I guess the Seder won't come to an end."

"Well, technically he's right," said my dad. "Why he's doing this, I have no idea."

Sammy shrugged. "From now on, his Afikoman hiding privileges are officially revoked. You win, Alvie. After Passover, you'll get twenty dollars."

The cousins gasped.

Kevin was the most upset. "That's a whole year of my allowance."

This was becoming serious business. After all, it was 1975.

Alvin raised his hand to quiet his cousins.

"Look, everyone. I'll explain my intentions."

Even Bubbe popped her head in from the kitchen to hear this.

Alvin cleared his throat. "I've been doing a lot of thinking. This fall, Kevin goes off to college. Mitchell and Warren will be right behind him. Sarah will probably marry that doctor she's dating."

Her mother Mamie smiled at the prospect.

**This Gathering Will be Just a Memory**

"Pretty soon we'll all go our separate ways," continued Alvin. "This gathering -- this tradition -- will be just a memory. So I was thinking: What if the Afikoman wasn't found? It would be the Endless Seder. Bubbe would keep cooking her delicious meals. We could stay here forever. One big happy family."

"I'm going to kill him," said Sammy.

Aunt Blanche at least seemed open to the idea. "Well, if we could wander in the desert for forty years . . . "

Sammy turned to my dad for help. "Endless Seder? Talk some sense into the boy, Nathan."

**“An Eternal Seder”**

"He's kidding. An eternal Seder. That's a good one, Alvie."

"I'm not kidding, Dad."

Sammy's voice got low and serious. "It's getting late. I ate too much. We have to go. Twenty-five bucks. That's my final offer."

"Twenty-five bucks?!" Cousin Kevin's face was turning red.

This just made Alvin more adamant. "Uncle Sammy, how can you put a price on something priceless? This simcha? These smiling faces?"

By this point, only Blanche was smiling. She had passed out in her Seder plate.

"I appreciate what you're trying to do," said Sammy. "Your heart is in the right place. But enough is enough."

With a grand gesture, he picked up a matzah from underneath the matzah cover.

"See this? This matzah was the one next to the Afikoman. Perhaps Elijah sneaked in during the Seder and transmuted the Afikoman's Seder-ending powers into the matzah I am now holding. I hereby deem this matzah 'Afikoman by association.'"

He began breaking up the matzah and distributing it to his sons.

**Afikoman by Association?**

Alvin was horrified. "Afikoman by association? Please, Uncle Sammy."

"Okay, prove to me that this matzah didn't come from the same larger matzah that the Afikoman came from? Or maybe this is the original Afikoman and it shifted to the bottom during shipping?"

Dad sat down next to his son.

"I don't get it, Dad," sighed Alvin. "I thought we'd all want this night to last forever."

"It was a noble idea, Alvie. But think about it: if this Seder didn't end, we would miss Shabbat. Not to mention Chanukah and your Bar Mitzvah."

"Chanukah," repeated Alvin quietly.

**Dad’s Philosophy on the**

**Importance of the Change of Seasons**

Dad put his hand on Alvin's shoulder. "Sometimes we wish time would stand still -- that things could always be just as they are. But without the changing of the seasons, life itself could not exist. There would be no sunrise. No dawning of a new day with its promises and mysteries."

For a dermatologist, Dad could be pretty philosophical.

"Who knows? Next year we could all be in Israel, eating dishes you've never tasted, celebrating with cousins you've never met."

Alvin thought about this for a moment, then left the room, reappearing with the missing Afikoman in his hand. He broke off a piece and handed it to Dad. Together they each took a bite.

Alvin smiled for the first time all evening.

"Next year in Jerusalem," he said to his father.

"Yes, Alvin. Next year in Jerusalem."

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org*

**Bitter Heals**

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

A chassid of the rebbe of Dinov suffered from a mortal lung disease, and traveled to the capital city of Vienna for medical advice. The doctors told him that his disease could not be cured, because his lung was not in its normal position; it was pushed to the side, and was filled with phlegm which could not be drained and would cause decay. They suggested that he hurry home, lest he die among strangers.

**Returning Home with a Broken Heart**

The man started on his journey homeward with a broken heart. His way passed through Sanz, and he thought to himself, “The Divrei Chaim (Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz) is famous as a great scholar and authority on Jewish law. I shall ask him what I should do about the eating of *maror*, the bitter vegetable, in the forthcoming Seder on Passover night. I am unable to eat the required amount (the volume of an olive’s bulk—approximately an ounce). Am I, however, still required to eat a lesser portion, and should I pronounce a blessing over it?”

The rebbe listened to his question. “It is written in the Zohar,” he replied, “that *maror* is a ‘healing food.’ You should be able to eat the full prescribed amount, and be healed.”

**Thinking that the Divrei Chaim**

**Had Made a Mistake**

This chassid was an accomplished Torah scholar in his own right. After he left the rebbe’s presence he remembered that the Zohar does not say that *maror* is a healing food, but rather, matzah. The Divrei Chaim had obviously made an error. And, with that thought, he dismissed the incident from his mind.

On the night of the Seder, when the moment for eating *maror* arrived, the sick man took the tiniest portion of bitter herbs. He immediately began to cough strenuously, weakening him greatly.

“If my end is come,” he cried out, “let me at least fulfill the mitzvah properly!” He took a full portion of the strong horseradish and ate it. As soon as he swallowed the whole mouthful, the cough grew worse and his whole body shook dreadfully.

His family became frightened and ran to fetch the doctor. But the doctor was himself conducting a Seder, and did not hasten to come.

When the doctor did arrive, he found the patient asleep. He was told that the man had become exhausted from coughing, had fallen onto the bed and dropped off into slumber. The doctor said that rest was good for him and that he should not be awakened.

**The Doctor Finds a Cured Patient**

He slept until a late hour the following day, and when the doctor came again to examine him, he was amazed. The patient was completely cured. The force of the cough and the shuddering of his body had jarred the lung, and it had returned to its normal position. The phlegm had been able to drain out.

The *maror* had indeed been, as the Rebbe of Sanz had said, a “healing food.”

Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from *Haggadah of the Chassidic Masters* by Rabbi Shalom Meir Wallach (Mesorah Publications). Based on *Divrei Yechezkel Shraga* 143.

*Biographical note:* Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz [1793–10 Nissan 1876] was the first rebbe of the Sanz-Klausenberg dynasty. He is famous for his extraordinary dedication to the mitzvah of *tzedakah*, and also as a renowned Torah scholar; his voluminous and wide-ranging writings were all published under the title *Divrei Chaim*.

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**The Lesson of Pesach:**

**Always Thank Hashem**

**By Savta Kops**

We love You Hashem for caring for each and everyone

Guiding us on the right path as a father for his son.

Being blessed to awake in the morning and open our eyes

We thank You for a new day, saying prayers as we rise.

Are we grateful for everything that Hashem accords us?

Or do we just accept our gifts begrudgingly with a fuss.

We must follow in the footsteps of Our Father and learn

To be eternally thankful for favors received in return.

The Egyptian water turned to blood, but the Jews had drinkable waters

They saw the Hand of Hashem as He attended them in their quarters.

He inflicted the Mitzrim with frogs, vermin, wild beasts, pestilence and boils

To avenge the Jewish suffering, hatred and abnormal bizarre toils.

Then came hail, locusts, darkness and plague of the firstborn

When Pharaoh told Moshe to leave before the break of dawn.

Abruptly they picked up their belongings and their crude dough

And traveled into the desert, happily afar from their Egyptian foe.

As the family sits around the table to begin the Pesach Seder

With the finest of silver, but utmost, thankfulness to Our Creator.

For according us the opportunity to be free and commemorate

The suffering and to recount the story of the Exodus and celebrate.

We recite Hallel because we experienced miracles as never

And Psalms are repeated because Hashem's kindness endures forever.

Today it is essential to attempt intensive Torah learning, to be pure

With complete belief in the A-mighty, immediately to endure.

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**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Pesach 5772 (Part Two)**

Volume 3, Issue #30 14 - 22 Nisan 5772/April 6 - 14, 2012

*For a free subscription, please forward your request to* [*keren18@juno.com*](mailto:keren18@juno.com)

**A Slice of Life**

**The Legacy of My Father**

**By Rabbi Yossi Gordon**

My father was the rabbi of a shul (synagogue) in Maplewood, New Jersey. Originally the shul was in Newark and my parents lived there. When it moved to Maplewood, they moved as well. On certain Shabbat and Yom Tov (Jewish holiday) mornings, my father would walk the long, four miles to immerse in the closest men's mikva, which was situated in Newark. He would leave at 5:00 a.m. in order to be back in time for the Torah class he taught at 8:00 a.m.

**Walking by Foot to**

**Check up on a Bakery**

On the last day of his first Passover living in Maplewood, shortly after the holiday meal, my father announced that he was making another round-trip journey to Newark, despite already having done so in the morning. My father explained that there was a bakery under the kosher supervision of the local Vaad Harabonim (Council of Rabbis) that he was a member of.

He felt a personal responsibility to ensure that the bakery was closed for the entire duration of the Passover holiday, as required by Jewish law. In previous years, when my father still lived in Newark, the baker would not have dared to start baking chametz on Passover. But now, with my father living many miles away, there was the concern that the baker might take the chance.

Obviously, it would have been a lot more convenient for my father to assume that the baker was not up to any trouble. In fact, my father's position with the Vaad Harabonim did not even require him to be personally involved with kosher supervision. However, kosher was of paramount importance to him, and he was ready to greatly inconvenience himself in order to ensure that all was as it should be.

My father set out for the bakery. Unfortunately, his worst suspicions were confirmed. The baker had not been able to withstand the temptation, and was hard at work in the bakery. Surprised at being caught red-handed, he tried to convince my father that Passover really ends right after Yizkor. Obviously, my father stood firm. He removed the Vaad Harabonim's stamp of approval until the bakery agreed to hire a permanent on-site supervisor.

**Surgery Was Scheduled at**

**Newark Beth Israel Hospital**

My father began displaying signs of illness about a year before he passed away. The extent of his illness could not be fully determined without surgery, which was scheduled to take place in the Newark Beth Israel Hospital, where he had served as the Jewish Chaplain for some 40 years.

On the day before his operation, my father arrived at the hospital quite early, and made his usual hospital rounds, as if he didn't have a care in the world. He went from room to room, bringing cheer and comfort to many people. He put on Tefilin with a number of patients, visitors and doctors. Finally, at noon, he presented himself to the admissions nurse. Well known and deeply beloved and respected by the staff at Beth Israel, he was treated like a VIP every step of the way.

**Family Meets the Surgeon**

Prior to the operation, the family met the surgeon, Dr. Donald Brief, Chief Surgeon of Newark Beth Israel. He and my father had been very good friends and professional colleagues for many years. Dr. Brief advised us to hope for a long drawn out surgery. "The longer the procedure, the greater the indication that things are going well," he told us. A quick operation would suggest that the disease was inoperable.

Unfortunately, the procedure was very short, and it wasn't long before Dr. Brief emerged from the operating room. He shook his head as his eyes welled up with tears. "I am sorry. I am just so, so sorry." The tumor was inoperable. Chemotherapy and radiation would be tried, but there was little hope for success.

The entire medical team joined my family in the recovery room. Dr. Brief turned to my father and said very softly: "Sholom, I am so very sorry. If there is anything I can do - anything at all - to help you through these trying days, please ask it of me. I am here for you."

My father looked up, and in a very calm and measured tone of voice, said to Dr. Brief, "If you really want to do something to help me, I have been asking you for about 25 years to put on Tefilin. You have consistently declined. If you are serious and truly wish to help me, I will ask my son to put on the Tefilin with you in my merit."

**Tears Streaming Down**

**The Doctor’s Cheeks**

With tears streaming down his cheeks, Dr. Brief said, "Of course I will put on Tefilin, my dear friend, Sholom." With the tears continuing to flow, he performed the mitzva.

After my father's passing, on the last day of Passover, my brother Rabbi Joshua B. Gordon and sister Chanie Friedman went to the Beth Israel Hospital in Newark, New Jersey, to see the plaque that had been put up in my father's memory. It was already late at night when they arrived and the security guard refused to allow them to enter.

When my brother mentioned that they had come to see the plaque in memory of Rabbi Sholom Gordon, suddenly the guard's demeanor changed completely.

**The Strong Affection of the**

**Guard for Rabbi Gordon**

The guard said, "Rabbi Gordon? You came to see Rabbi Gordon's plaque? Of course, you can come in - you can come in 24 hours a day! You see, when Rabbi Gordon came to the hospital every day to make his rounds, he always noticed me. He always greeted me with a 'Good morning' when he arrived, and a 'Good evening' when he left." My father's simple and sincere gesture went a long way in touching this security guard.

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**Good Shabbos, Good Yom Tov Everyone.**

**The Pesach Proof that G-d Has**

**Not Forsaken His Children**

At an Agudath Yisroel dinner in 1995 commemorating the 50th year since the liberation of Jews from the Nazi death camps, Mr. Yosef Friedenson, editor of the noted magazine 'Dos Yiddishe Vort,' told a moving personal story that lent a historical perspective to the trials and tribulations that Jews have undergone throughout their nearly 2,000 years in the Diaspora.

**Transported to a Steel**

**Factory Labor Camp**

After being a prisoner and slave laborer in numerous camps, R' Yosef was transported to a steel factory labor camp in Starachowitz, Poland, in 1943, where armaments were made for the German war effort. The brutality of the German officers was unspeakable. Adults and children alike suffered pain and death at the hands of barbarians who roared, "No Jew will escape us, not even a child!"

At this particular camp, however, there was one German factory chief, Herr Bruno Papeh, who was kind to Jews whenever he could be. He would provide them with extra rations of food and was a bit more tolerant when the prisoners failed to complete their labor assignments on time.

While R' Yosef was at Starachowitz, a wine merchant, a Gerrer chassid from Cracow, was brought to the camp. Akiva Goldstoff was close to 40 when he arrived, frightened and disoriented; but before his first Friday night in the camp arrived, he had already organized a minyan for Kabbalas Shabbos.

**Encouraging Each Other**

**With Faith and Belief**

Akiva and Yosef, who was 20 at the time, became close friends. Despite the difficult circumstances, they exchanged Torah thoughts and encouraged each other in faith and belief.

A few weeks before Pesach, Akiva called Yosef to the side and said, "I think we should ask Herr Papeh if he would allow us to bake matzos for Yom Tov." "You must be mad," replied Yosef. "Herr Papeh has been kind to us in certain circumstances, but he will never allow us such a luxury!"

"I am older than you," said Akiva. "Listen to me; I believe he will be receptive."

**Agrees to Ask Camp Commander**

**For Permission to Bake Matzos**

After some intense debate, Yosef agreed to go with Akiva to ask the factory chief for permission to bake matzos. When Herr Papeh heard their request, he was incredulous. "Don't you have any other worries? Is this all that is on your minds?" he asked in disbelief. "Yes," replied Yosef. "This is what we are concerned about, and it would mean a great deal to us if you granted permission."

Herr Papeh thought about it for a moment and then said, "All right. If you have the flour, go ahead. Just talk to the Polish workers who are in charge of the smiths' ovens and tell them I gave the consent."

"But we don't have any flour," Yosef said quietly, embarrassed at being granted his wish and not having the means to fulfill it. At that same time, a Polish factory worker was seeking a furlough from Herr Papeh, who controlled the work schedule. Papeh knew that the Polish workers could get the prize commodities of meat and butter from the local villagers and then bring them into the labor camp. Papeh was no saint. He would allow himself to be bribed.

**Arranges with Polish**

**Worker for a Kilo of Flour**

"I'll tell you what," Papeh said, turning to the Polish worker. "You get me a kilo of butter and a kilo of flour, and you can have the time off that you want." The Polish worker agreed, and within a day Yosef and Akiva were called into Herr Papeh's office, where he clandestinely gave them the flour for the matzos.

The two thanked him profusely, but secretly they worried that he could — and with his Nazi temper, would — rescind his permission at any moment.

Several women, including R' Yosef's wife, Gitel, kneaded the dough and baked the matzos in the large melting ovens that had a temperature of 2,000 degrees.

There was an air of controlled ecstasy in the barrack as the matzos emerged from the ovens, ready for those who wanted them.

On the first morning of Pesach, Herr Papeh walked into the factory and suddenly became furious. As always, at 10 a.m., baskets containing slices of bread were passed around the factory and every worker would take a meager slice.

Each slice was accounted for, and no one would dare take more than his share. But instead of taking them, many prisoners left the bread in the doorway.

**Why Are You Loyal to a G-d**

**Who Has Forsaken You?**

Herr Papeh looked around at the people eating matzah and realized they had purposely declined the bread. In a violent, bloodcurdling voice he suddenly yelled, "Your G-d has forsaken you, and you are still loyal to Him?!"

Papeh scanned the room and then roared, "Friedenson! Eat your bread or you will die!" Everyone froze. The fury they had feared had suddenly exploded, and at the worst time. None of the men moved as they waited to see what he would do.

**“Not Totally and Not Forever!”**

Herr Papeh walked directly over to Akiva and yelled, "Has your G-d not forsaken you?" Akiva, standing tall and ready to accept the worst, replied softly but with certainty, "Not totally and not forever!"

Papeh was taken aback by the answer. He could not comprehend such conviction. He knew well the suffering and torment of the Jews. "Not totally?" he demanded, raising his voice. "You let us bake matzos, didn't you?" Akiva replied. (Along the Maggid's Journey, Rabbi Paysach Krohn, p. 168)

Let us be inspired by this story to dedicate our lives to serving Hashem with all of our hearts and all of our souls, especially during the holy holiday of Pesach. **Good Yom Tov Everyone.**

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Good Shabbos Everyone.*

**An Orthodox, Online Version of** **The Deep-Freeze for Passover**

**By Sharon Otterman**

Forget the Lottery. The biggest windfall in the country this Passover season might well be coming to an otherwise anonymous man named Glade who works at a Jewish funeral monument company in St. Louis.

Last Passover, Glade became the proud owner of tens of thousands of closets and cabinets full of bread, fancy pasta and alcohol from Jews around North America. He was the gentile who took official ownership of the leavened bread products [that those Jews sold for the holiday via Chabad.org](https://www.mychabad.org/holidays/passover/sell_chometz.asp?aid=111191&jewish=Sell-Your-Chametz-Online.htm&site=chabad.org), the Web site run by the Brooklyn-based Lubavitcher branch of Hasidic Judiasm.

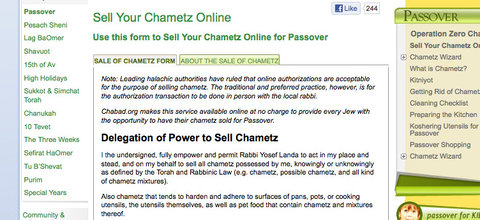


G. Paul Burnett/The New York TimesSell!

The Web site puts a modern spin on a tradition that is centuries old. In accordance with their beliefs, Orthodox Jews must not possess [even a crumb of leavened bread](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/03/nyregion/ahead-of-passover-traditions-transform-borough-park.html) — known in Hebrew as chametz — for the duration of Passover. But to save them from having to throw the prohibited products away, rabbinic authorities long ago came up with a solution.

Jews can put all the chametz they own in a closet, cabinet or room, and assign a rabbi power of attorney over the space and its contents. The rabbi then sells the chametz to a gentile, and leases the gentile the space in which it is stored. At the end of the eight-day holiday, the rabbi buys it all back for the original owners.

Traditionally, a local rabbi would make the sale, but since Chabad started an online version of the service out of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, about a decade ago, an ever growing number of Jews– 56,843 last year– have pointed and clicked to give power of attorney over their chametz to Rabbi Yosef Landa, a Chabad rabbi in St. Louis.

Chabad.orgJust sign here.

Rabbi Landa is among thousands of rabbis dispatched by the Brooklyn-based Chabad movement to work around the world encouraging Jews to uphold Jewish traditions. He is also the rabbinic point person for local chametz sales among St. Louis’s 50,000-member Jewish community. And he appoints rabbis in Russia, Thailand, Britain and elsewhere to handle online requests for the sale of chametz from those regions.

**The Hub for the World’s Chametz Sales**

“Suddenly this has become the hub for the world’s chametz sales,” Rabbi Landa said on Tuesday. “It’s an interesting thing for everybody. It’s unifying.”

Rabbi Landa’s main job is to find a gentile willing to take ownership over the virtual world’s chametz, and sell it by the morning of the first Passover Seder meal. Often, he says, he has turned to Glade.

He does not know much about Glade personally. He first said that Glade was a handyman at a synagogue, then after speaking with him, said he worked at a Jewish monument company. He told City Room that Glade was not interested in being interviewed about his role as perhaps the largest owner of Jewish chametz in the world.

**The Transaction is Quite Simple**

But Glade’s personal status — beyond the fact that he is not a Jew and is willing to participate — is not that critical, Rabbi Landa said. The transaction itself is simple. Glade signs a document, makes a down payment of, say $50, and the chametz is legally transferred to him. After the holiday, Rabbi Landa buys the chametz back for $100. “He is very happy to have me buy it back from him, especially for the profit,” Rabbi Landa said.

Along with a chametz power of attorney form for people to fill out, the Web site asks people to list what time zone they will be in on the morning of the first Seder, so that Chabad can make the transaction on time. One man in Azerbaijan, for example, wrote in to say that he was concerned because the closest time zone listed was in Sydney, Australia. A Chabad representative wrote back to assure him it would be done correctly, according to an e-mail exchange provided by the organization.

**The Number of People Selling Chametz**

**On the Site is Increasing Each Year**

The number of people selling their chametz through the site has grown by about 15 to 20 percent each year, said Rabbi Motti Seligson, Chabad’s spokesperson in New York. Some are Jews without access to rabbis; others find it convenient. It is free, though Chabad does ask for donations.

While the online process raised some eyebrows at first, leading halachic, or Jewish legal, authorities, “have ruled that online authorizations are acceptable for the purpose of selling chametz,” the Web site states. But though Chabad wants to make the tradition widely available, the Web site includes a reminder that the old-fashioned way remains better.

“The customary way is for rabbis to do this is in person,” said Rabbi Landa. And for the purposes of building community and connection, “we think there is some value in having it done that way.”

*Reprinted from The New York Time’s City Room blog site on April 4, 2012.*

**Egypt, Iran & the**

**Passover Miracle**

**By Rabbi Benjamin Blech**

G-d may guarantee the survival of the Jewish people, but individually, the existential threat is alarmingly real.

Sitting at the Seder this year, it's understandable that we Jews have more than the ancient Egyptians on our minds. Today we have good reason to be nervous once more about our survival.

**A New Enemy Who**

**Threatens the Jewish People**

An avowed enemy, making clear his intent to destroy us, is well on its way to having the nuclear capability to carry out his threat. In spite of the countless diplomatic efforts, the sanctions and the political pressure placed on the leadership of Iran, nothing appears to be swaying them from carrying out their version of the final solution.

Like Pharaoh, Ahmadinejad reflects the gravest danger, whose goal is not only to harm, but to totally destroy the Jewish people. And like Pharaoh, Ahmadinejad’s crime is so unimaginable that G-d promises to prevent it from happening.

Let me explain.

**What Prompted G-d to Begin**

**The Process of Redemption?**

In the Passover story, the Jews were in Egypt for 210 years. They suffered for most of that time. Several generations were slaves. So what finally prompted G-d to appoint Moses and begin the process of redemption? What was the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back?

The answer was symbolically given to Moses in his first dramatic encounter with G-d at the Burning Bush.

A simple reading of the story tells us that while tending his sheep in the desert of Sinai, Moses suddenly saw a bush that was engulfed in flames. Yet strangely enough, although the bush was burning, it was not consumed. That defies the laws of nature. Fire always destroys. Moses could not understand.

At this very moment, as Moses stood transfixed by the miracle before his eyes, G-d revealed himself and proclaimed, "I am the G-d of your fathers."

**Couldn’t G-d Have Performed Another**

**Miracle More Striking than the Burning Bush?**

Superficially, the story seems to tell us that G-d performed this wondrous act to impress Moses before asking him to assume the mantle of leadership. G-d chose this sign so that Moses would grasp the meaning of Divine power. But this begs the question. Couldn't G-d have performed another miracle even more striking, more convincing, more indicative of his control over the entire world rather than just a single bush in the desert?

Rabbinic commentators supply us with a beautiful answer. G-d wasn't simply performing a miracle; He was sending a message. G-d knew what was uppermost in the mind of Moses. From the time he fled from Egypt and watched his brothers suffering under Pharaoh’s brutal oppression, Moses worried and wondered: Are my people still alive? And so the very first thing G-d did was to reassure Moses, not only for that time but for the future as well.

**A Parable for the Jewish People**

The bush burned but was not consumed. So too, the Jewish people, against all laws of history, will never perish.

The bush was a symbol of the Jewish people. The bush was burning but, against all laws of nature, it was not consumed. So too, the Jewish people, against all laws of history, would never perish. That was the Divine promise implicit in the first message that G-d gave to Moses at the dawn of his assumption of leadership.

**Eternal Promise**

The miracle of the Burning Bush was the graphic representation of the miracle of Jewish survival. When Arnold Toynbee completed *The Study of History,* his classic 10-volume analysis of the rise and fall of human civilizations, he was troubled by one seeming refutation of his universal rules governing the inexorable decline of every people on Earth. Only the Jews survived in defiance of Toynbee's carefully-reasoned analysis. So Toynbee proclaimed the Jews nothing more than "a vestigial remnant," a people destined to shortly expire.

But somehow, in spite of all those brutal attempts at our destruction, Jews have demonstrated the ongoing miracle of the Burning Bush.

Jewish history defies explanation. It is told that when King Louis XIV asked his resident philosopher, Pascal, whether he believed in miracles, Pascal replied that he did.

Surprised, the King then asked, "Give me an illustration of a miracle that justifies your belief."

**The Jews Demonstrate the Reality of Miracles**

"The Jews, your Majesty. The survival of the Jews – that is certainly a miracle."

The reason for this miracle is the Divine promise made long ago to our patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This promise that assured our ancestors that their descendents would never perish; that their role in history to be "a light unto the nations" would remain in effect until the fulfillment of the messianic dream.

And that explains why G-d chose the particular moment for Moses to begin the miracle of the national redemption from Egypt. When Pharaoh’s plans turned from oppression to extermination and the potential for the demise of the children of Israel, G-d's deliverance was undeniable and inevitable.

As soon as Haman determined to murder all the Jews, men women and children, the Purim miracle was a foregone conclusion and Haman was doomed to hang on the gallows. The disappearance of the Jews from the world’s stage had to be prevented, no matter how unlikely the many coincidences required to bring about the Divinely-desired conclusion.

**Responding to Danger**

As we prepare to celebrate Passover, and as we again face a Pharaoh-like figure who seeks our destruction, we need to remember two crucial things: On the one hand, all those who seek to destroy us invite the same Divine wrath as wrought on the Egyptians who perished in the Red Sea. But on the other hand, we need to assure G-d that we deserve His intervention.

Whenever Jews are threatened, our response must be guided by repentance, prayer and giving of charity.

`In no way do I mean to minimize the danger of the current situation. Whenever we find ourselves threatened, our response must always be guided by the traditional threefold approach of repentance, prayer and giving of charity. The Hamans of history may by doomed to Divine destruction, but we must still do all in our power to mitigate the results of their evil by strengthening our commitment to G-d and to Torah.

We can be confident that G-d will not abandon us; He guarantees our collective survival. But individually, the existential threat is very real. There is genuine cause for fear, an alarming fear that should wake us up and stir sincere teshuva.

**A Message from Tolstoy**

This Passover, when our joy is tempered by the ominous warnings from Israel's neighbors, let us gain hope (*not* apathy) from the words of a famous author who, although not Jewish, understood well the message of the Burning Bush. Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, a Christian best known for penning *War and Peace*, wrote in 1908:

“A Jew is the emblem of eternity. He who neither slaughter nor torture of thousands of years could destroy. He who neither fire, nor sword, nor Inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth. He who was the first to produce the oracles of G-d. He who was been for so long the Guardian of prophecy and has transmitted to the rest of the world. Such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself.

*Reprinted from last week’s email from Aish.com*

**It Once Happened**

**The Apter Rebbe’s Matzas**

The wife of the Apta Rav, Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel, was busy finishing up the last minute preparations for the Passover Seder when there was a knock on the door. A servant opened the door, and there stood two charity collectors who were making the rounds gathering matza for the town's poor. The servant, seeing a stack of matzas wrapped in a napkin on the table, took it and innocently gave it to the men.

When, a bit later, the rebbetzin entered the room and noticed the matza missing, her heart fell, for this was no ordinary matza. They were the meticulously-prepared and guarded matzas which her husband had baked himself just before the holiday was ushered in.

She called in her household servants and soon discovered how it happened, but there was nothing to be done about it. She couldn't bring herself to disappoint her husband by telling him about the mistake, and so, with a heavy heart, she wrapped some ordinary matzas in a napkin and placed them on the table and said nothing about it.

**A Young Couple Comes Seeking a Divorce**

Several days after Passover ended a young couple came to Rabbi Heschel seeking a divorce. The Apta Rav asked the husband why he wanted a divorce. He replied that his wife had refused to cook the Passover food according to the custom requiring that no matza come in contact with water.

The Rav called over his rebbetzin and asked, "Tell me, what kind of matzas did we use for the Passover seder?"

**The Rebbetzin Answers the Question**

His wife was startled by the question, and she was hesitant to respond. The Rav encouraged her and calmed her fears, and she went on to explain to her husband the entire episode that had transpired on the eve of the holiday.

The Rav then turned to the young husband and said in a kind tone, "Listen to me, son. On the first night of Passover I ate regular matza and I pretended not to notice any difference. Why did I do this? I didn't wish to bring about any hard feelings or anger, G-d forbid. And you wish to divorce your wife over this Passover custom!!"

The young man immediately recognized his folly and the couple left completely reconciled.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Ztl**

**What is the Lesson**

**From Eating Matzoh?**

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION:** |

Why was Matzoh chosen to be the symbol of *chipazon*?

|  |
| --- |
| **ANSWER:** |

|  |
| --- |
| http://gallery.mailchimp.com/51050d25b69193df91b43c6e8/images/photo_3_.1.jpg |

*Matzoh* is the food, bread is the mainstay of a person’s nutrition. Bread is called the *mashein lechem*, the staff of life. The most important nutrition of a person is his mind.

Because as we said before, the purpose of the whole story of *Mitzraim* was to create *siechel* in us; *deiah*, *emunah*, understanding. That's what *Mitzraim* is for. We were in *Mitzraim*, and all the *nissim* were *lamaan teidah*, you should know. And just like bread is the most important item of our menu, so we have to know that the most important thing that we have to get out of life is *emunah*.

**Eating Bread Should**

**Give One Emunah**

So as you’re eating the bread and it causes you to thank Hashem, bread has to give you emunah. If you eat bread without getting emunah, so the bread is wasted. It says openly: Hazon es haolam kulo, what's the purpose? Ba'avur shmo hagadol, for the sake of His Great Name. It means that we should recognize His Great Name and speak about Him. So the purpose of the bread is, to arouse within us a recognition of the wonders that Hashem performs when He creates bread.

Where does bread come from? Bread is nothing but carbon dioxide that comes from the air, mixed with some sunlight, and some water, and a small amount of materials from the earth; that's bread. And now it becomes a life giving substance called bread, that's Hashem.

So when you eat bread it's supposed to give you emunah. So besides Matzoh which gives you all these lessons, Matzoh is also hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz. So you can enjoy the Matzoh, too, and think how good the Matzoh tastes. It's a pleasure to eat Matzohs, certainly, it's a good change from eating bread all the time. And as you're enjoying the Matzohs you're enjoying all the lessons that Matzoh and bread give you.

*Good Shabbos & Chag Kasher V'Sameach To All*

*Reprinted from last week’s email of – A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zatzal, based on a transcription of his answer to a question posed by a member of the audience attending his classic Thursday night hashkafah lectures in his Flatbush Shul – the Bais Yisroel Torah Center.*

**Spy Eli Cohen Ate**

**Matzah in Damascus**

**By Maayana Miskin**

Israeli spy [Eli Cohen](http://trailer.web-view.net/Links/0X3667C2C75691714AF06DFE34EBB017D1031C097C00359B50AEDCF5203928E5FA17194A421ED9226A0D983A51873C7143040647B07EA6851C5CFDE0090C8A982F.htm) managed to eat matzah on Passover even while deeply enmeshed in life among the Syrian elite, his widow Nadia told Arutz Sheva.

Nadia explained that she had just heard the story of Eli’s Passover observance recently. “Just now two people from Syria told me that [Eli] knew that there were Jews in the marketplace. He would watch them from afar, then go and ask to taste some of the matzah,” she said.

“He didn’t want them to know he was Jewish, so he would say, ‘Let me taste some of that thing that you eat only on your week of holiday,’” she explained.

Eli Cohen managed to infiltrate the top ranks of Syrian leadership, and used his status to gather valuable security information, which he sent to Israel. The reports he sent were invaluable in helping Israel capture the Golan during the Six Day War, two years after he was [caught and executed](http://trailer.web-view.net/Links/0X8F77C18CA24ED1FA52483EA43138CAC337080E45DF88F755133A2B2F3B53EEA4F2419A49E7C03E070D983A51873C7143040647B07EA6851C5CFDE0090C8A982F.htm).

Passover had a special meaning for the Cohen family, Nadia related. “Eli came to Israel from Egypt, he made aliyah in 1956,” she said.

The family has found a measure of comfort in the decades since his death, she said. “For many years there was a lot of sadness, we felt that the ground had fallen out from beneath our feet,” she recalled. “But slowly, slowly the family expanded, there are children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren… This year we will celebrate the holiday at my daughter Sophie’s house, we will keep smiling.”

*Reprinted from the April 6, 2012 email of Artuz Sheva.*

**The Basement Sedorim**

**In New York City**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

I want to [tell you] a story I heard from a very dear friend of mine (His name was Azriel Wasserman and he tragically passed away 25 years ago).

In New York City there is a thing called ‘Released Hour' once a week (I think it was Wednesdays) that any child who wants to, can get released from public school one hour early and hear a class about his religion from a priest or a Rabbi, etc.

**A Very Gifted and Devoted Teacher**

This friend of mine was a very gifted and devoted teacher and he was one of the volunteers that gave such classes. He loved teaching and his once-a-week pupils loved him.

The Wednesday before Passover he met with his class and he made a ‘practice' Seder for them; Kool-aid and crackers were in the place of wine and Matzot and the kids and he really enjoyed it. (The reader must remember that these children were, for the most part, from totally non-observant homes)

The next time he met with his class was next week in the ‘intermediate days' of the holiday after the Seder night (Passover is seven days long, but only the first and last days are a full holidays), and he noticed that two of the pupils, two little girls, kept falling asleep in class.

He asked them several times if they felt O.K. and after answering each time that it was nothing, they finally hinted that they wanted to speak with him privately after the class.

**Asked by the Girls to Keep Their Secret**

"Please don't tell anyone what we are telling you now" the older sister begged after all the other children left, "We have to tell you, though. Do you promise that you won't tell?"

While she was speaking, her younger sister was watching her but now both of them, were looking up at him with wide almost pleading eyes.

He stared at them for a few seconds and he nodded and said, "I promise".

The girls looked at each other one more time and the older one began the story, her little sister alternately looking at her and then at the teacher.

"Well…you remember that last week you made for us a practice Seder Pesach, right?

**Because this is**

**What G-d Wants**

"Well if you remember, my sister asked you why are we doing all this and eating all these different things.

"And you said because that is what G-d wants.

"And also to remind us how G-d is very very good because He took us out of Egypt… Right?"

He was nodding his head in agreement.

"Well, that day we went home and told our mom what you said, and that we want to make a Seder the night of Passover just like you showed us and our mom sort of liked the idea.

**Our Dad is Not Jewish**

"But our dad didn't. Our dad is not Jewish, so when we asked him he got really mad and said no. Then, when I asked him why, he got even madder and said that if we even talk about it again he would really give us a spanking.

"Then he went over to mommy and started really yelling ‘cause he thought that she told us to ask, and he said other really angry things and we got real scared.

"But afterwards my sister and me talked alone, and we decided that if G-d said to do it, we are going to do it. So we figured out a plan. We took money from our piggy bank and on the way back from school we went to the store.

"We bought two bottles of grape juice one day, and the next day we bought a box of matzas and the next day we took some lettuce from the refrigerator. And everything we hid in the basement.

"Then on the night of Passover instead of going to sleep we just pretended to be asleep.

**Lit a Flashlight and Snuck Down**

**The Stairs into the Basement**

"After mom and dad were really asleep and it was already like one in the morning, we got out of bed, and lit a flashlight, and we snuck down the stairs into the basement. We were really scared because the stairs are creeky, and we were afraid that dad would wake up.

"And in the basement it's really dark and scary, we even saw a rat down there once!

"But we made it down stairs and we took out the matza and the grape juice and everything.

"Then we lit two candles, and turned off the flashlight … and then we made a secret Passover Seder!

**We Ate the Matza and**

**Drank the Grape Juice**

"We did everything just like you said. We ate the matza and drank the grape juice, everything. And then we snuck back up and went to sleep.

"And nobody knows.

"Then, you know what we did the next night?

"We did the same thing over again!!

"But the next night we weren't so scared, and we even laughed once because my sister made funny faces". They looked at each other and smiled a little.

"That is why we're so tired today" she continued. "But you won't tell anyone will you? If dad finds out he'll break our bones!" They looked at each other and then back at their teacher.

He promised once again, they said good-bye and after they left he closed the door, sat down in the teacher's chair and started to cry.

"I don't know if I have the courage to do the same thing that they did." He told me later, "they really put me in my place."

That is what we celebrate on Passover, not just that HaShem saved and helped us, but even more, that we began to serve Him.

This was the main goal of Moshe, as he repeated over and over to Pharaoh "Let my people go that they serve me."

And this will be the main goal of the Moshiach who will rebuild the Holy Temple and bring all the Jews to the highest level of service possible.

And eventually the entire world, billions of non-Jews as well, will realize how much G-d loves them and will fulfill what it says in the end of the Alenu prayer

"The entire world will recognize and know that G-d is the king."

It all depends on us! One more good deed, word or even thought can bring a Happy and Kosher Pesech…**with Moshiach NOW!!!**

*Reprinted from last week’s email on the parsha from Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.*

**Rav Yitzchok Sorotzkin Discusses the Lesson of Krias Yam Suf**

**By Daniel Keren**

A special Pre-Pesach Kinus was held by Hakhel the Sunday night at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin of Avenue L in Brooklyn in order to serve as a zechus (merit) for a refuah sheleima (prayers for the healing of) Harav Elyashiv, Harav Belsky and other Gedolei Yisroel who are ill. Hakhel is a Flatbush-based organization dedicated to promoting a greater awareness of Torah-true values in our community.

Speaking at the Hakhel Pre-Pesach Kinus (Gathering) was Rav Yitzchok Sorotzkin, Rosh Hayeshiva of Telshe Yeshiva and Mesivta of Lakewood. The topic of his discussion was “*From Purim to Pesach: Learning to Breathe Emunah in Times of Trouble – Practical Guidance and Advice*.”

**Believing in Hashem and Moshe His Servant**

Rav Sorotzkin quoted the pasuk (verse) in Chumash (the Five Books of Moses) that tells us that when Klal Yisroel (the Jewish nation) came to Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds) and saw the Mitzrim (Egyptians) destroyed, this resulted in their gaining emunah or faith in Hashem and in Moshe His servant. Furthermore, they were rewarded by Hashem with the gift of prophecy and their being able to sing Az Yashir (the Song at the Seashore) with Moshe Rabbeinu.

What does this mean that at Yam Suf the Jewish nation became believers? Didn’t they leave Egypt in the zechus of having emunah in the Abishter (our Father in Heaven) as a result of having witnessed the incredible Makkos or Ten Plagues brought as a punishment upon the Mitzrim for their cruel oppression of the Hebrew slaves and their refusal to let the Jews go to serve Hashem in the wilderness?

**The Pinnacle of Emunah at Krias Yam Suf**

According to Rav Sorotzkin, the explanation is that their status of emunah, believers in Hashem only reached its pinnacle at the miracle of Krias Yam Suf (the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds.) The Mechilta teaches us that the Bnei Yisroel, the Children of Israel were before Krias Yam Suf only at the level of being “small believers” in Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

Even when they were safely crossing the Yam Suf, the Jews thought to themselves that perhaps their nemesis, the Egyptians were also crossing safely in another section of the Sea of Reeds that they were unable to see.

**The Concept of Seeing is Believing**

Therefore Hakodesh Baruch Hu (the Holy One blessed be He) commanded the Sea to spit out onto the shore all of the drowned Mitzrim. It was only at that moment when the Yidden beheld their former oppressors dead on the land that their emunah reached its pinnacle. Seeing is believing!

Rav Sorotzkin noted that when we bench at the seuda of a bris (the festive meal celebrating the circumcision of a baby boy), there is one blessing that we give to the newborn child in which we wish that its hands should have emunah. This means that the baby’s future faith in Hashem should be so clear as if you were looking at your own hand. One’s emunah in the Abishter should be as real to you as your own hand is.

Chazal teach us that at Krias Yam Suf, the melachim or angels in heaven also wanted to sing songs of shevach, praise to Hakodesh Baruch Hu. However, the Ribono shel Olam silenced them and declared – “How can you sing My praises when the handiwork of My creation is being destroyed?

Rav Sorotzkin noted that we learn one explanation from Chazal as to why we do not sing the whole Hallel on all eight days of Pesach. We only recite the complete Hallel on the first day of Pesach in Eretz Yisroel and the first two days in the Diaspora.

The explanation is that on Chol Hamoed (the intermediate days of Pesach) and the last days of Yom Tov Pesach we don’t recite the complete Hallel because it is not proper to do so when some of Hakodesh Baruch Hu’s creations were destroyed at Krias Yam Suf.

**The King Who Saved a Woman in Distress**

The example is given of a king who saved a woman in distress who was attacked by hooligans when travelling on the road. The king was impressed by this woman and wanted to marry her and develop an enduring relationship. However, once she was rescued, the woman wanted nothing to do with the king and wouldn’t even talk to him.

What did the king do? He arranged for his agents to pretend to attack and threaten this woman the next time she went out to travel. She therefore cried out for help and again the king came to the rescue. This time, however, she recognized her true need for the protection of this benevolent king. She truly desired to establish a serious relationship with this king.

**The Explanation of the Mashal**

The mashal (parable) is that the king symbolizes the Ribono shel Olam (the Master of the World.) This is what occurred to the Bnei Yisroel at Krias Yam Suf. The king (Hashem) originally saved the woman in distress (Klal Yisroel) when He abruptly ended their slavery to the Egyptians and took them out of Mitzrayim. However at that time, the Jews no longer desired a relationship with the King.

Therefore Hashem had to orchestrate events by having Pharaoh and all his chariots come after the Jews to attack them. Seemingly trapped with nowhere to run away to, the Klal Yisroel again cried out to Hashem and this time they realized their great dependence on the King, thus reaching the pinnacle of emunah in Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

**Forcing the Abishter to Bring Tzoras Upon Us**

Throughout our history if we fail to have the proper hakoras hatov (gratitude) and emunah in Hashem, we force the Abishter to resort to bringing tzoras (troubles) upon us in order to make us realize our dependence on Him. Even when things are going smoothly for us and we are successful in our endeavors; that is truly the time for us to understand that it is not us, but rather Hakodesh Baruch Hu who is helping to succeed.

If we could reach such a level, there would be no need for Hashem to bring tzoras upon us in order to bring us closer to Him. However, since we are not on that level, Hakodesh Baruch Hu’s master plan includes giving us tzoras for our own benefit to make us realize our constant dependence upon Him and to inspire us to call out for His help.

**A Way to Strengthen Each and Every Jew**

We should understand that the unpleasant realities are part of Hashem’s effort to strengthen the individual Jew and Klal Yisroel to become even greater in our spiritual service by revealing the presence of the Ribbono shel Olam to the rest of the world

If by understanding the above concept we can stay firm and strong in our emunah in the Abishter as was the case with our ancestors at Krias Yam Suf, then we will be worthy of shortly witnessing the ultimate geulah (redemption) that we all so much desire. The reason that the Jews so joyfully sang Az Yashir was that at that moment they were able to connect the dots and realize that what had happened before during their bitter slavery in Egypt was ultimately for their greatest benefit as it led them to the geulah and more importantly towards receiving the greatest gift of all – the Torah at Har Sinai.

**No One to Trust in But the Ribone shel Olam**

We have to realize, Rav Sorotzkin said, at such moments when our tzoras appear so overwhelming that this comes to teach us that we have no one to trust in but the Ribono Shel Olam. Today we are experiencing unprecedented acts of hatred and brutality from the goyim in places such as France, Eretz Yisroel and Iran. It is vital for us to understand that these are all being orchestrated by the Abishter in order to bring us closer to him by making us cry out to Him in tefillah (prayer.)

We are now in the month of Nissan, a chodesh full of miracles. And if we would only take advantage of our tsoras to grow spiritually in levels of emunah as we should, the geulah would again come to us as when we were in Mitzrayim. We only need make a commitment to daven (pray) properly and make a sincere effort to better understand the words of tefillah that we are reciting.

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**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Pesach 5771**

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**Elijah’s Cup**

**By Rabbi Nissan Mindel**

 Once upon a time, in a small townlet in Eastern Europe, there lived a poor woodcutter named Chaim. Although he was poor he was held in respect as a good, honest Jew.

He made a very modest living by going into the nearby woods, chopping branches and gathering dry twigs which he brought home in his wheelbarrow. He would then tie the wood into bundles, ready for sale.

His best season was, of course, winter, when his customers needed the wood for heating their homes as well as for cooking purposes. For his winter trips to the woods he used a home made sled which usually served his purpose.

However, in that particular winter there was such a severe snowstorm which continued day after day without let up, that the roads were all piled high with snowdrifts, and Chaim was completely housebound. It was absolutely impossible for him to venture out with his small sled.

So Chaim stayed home, trying not to worry, while his worried wife Breina nagged him unceasingly, to add to his misery.

"Don't you know that your competitors, the peasants, will now take advantage of your absence and come into town on their big sleds, bringing enough wood to supply your customers with all their needs for the winter?" she ranted. "So what can I do about it?" protested poor Chaim.

"You know the situation as well as I. It's just our bad luck. All we can do is hope for the best." "And what about Passover that will soon be upon us?" continued Breina. "We haven't any money even for *matza* and wine, not to mention fish or meat."

"The Almighty will surely help us to celebrate the wonderful festival of Passover in a worthy manner. He will not forsake us," said Chaim in a confident voice, and returned to his *Tehillim*. Chaim was no big sage, but he loved to devote all his spare time to his precious *Tehillim* book (Psalms).

As Breina continued to nag her husband, he emitted a deep sigh. "Sighing won't conjure up for us matzos and wine; not even potatoes!" she hurled at him. "Why don't you do as other poor Jews do before Passover? I'm sure the Gabbai will not refuse you a share in Maos Chittim in which do before Passover? I'm sure the Gabbai will not refuse you a share in Maos Chittim in which you yourself always contribute every year."

"I know," answered Chaim wearily, shaking his head. His heart felt heavy at the thought of his changed fortune.

True, the sum he gave yearly to the *Maot Chittim* Fund had not been large, but it was a nice sum considering his modest means. And the fact that he contributed always gave him a good feeling, knowing what a big Mitzvah it was. And now? What now?

"Well Chaim?" Breina cut in on his thoughts. "Why so silent? What about my suggestion?" "I shall not accept charity," replied Chaim firmly. "Really! Then tell me how your stubborn pride is going to provide us with our needs for Passover? Think of our children, if you don't choose to think of yourself or me!

Chaim did not reply immediately. Then he slowly said: "Do you know if there is anything in the house that we can sell or pawn?" Breina burst out in derisive laughter.

"You know full well that we pawned my silver candlesticks long ago, and we sold our pillows and blankets. The only thing left is our Poverty, and I hardly think you'll find any ready customers for that!" she ended bitterly, bursting into tears.

Chaim felt so downhearted; he turned for comfort to his *Tehillim*. Suddenly he realized that his wife was tugging at his sleeve. She had stopped crying and was talking to him in quite a subdued voice.

"You know, Chaim there is something of value we still own. We still have Elijah's silver wine cup. Don't you think you should pawn it so that we can at least buy *matza*, wine and potatoes?" "Do you know what you are saying?" exclaimed Chaim. "What sort of a Seder could we celebrate worthily without Elijah's goblet?"

"Look Chaim, don't get so excited. Elijah will surely understand and it will not stop him from coming to our house at Seder time as always." "Breina, I cannot do it! Imagine when Elijah comes to us and his wine cup is missing! What will it look like? No, I'll not do this to Elijah. G-d will show us a way out of our problem. We can depend on Him."

Suddenly a thought struck Chaim. "The goat!" he called out softly, as if afraid the goat might hear. "Breina, listen. Perhaps we should sell our goat?" "Are you out of your mind?" yelled Breina hysterically. "The goat is our only means of sustenance! Where else will we get milk for our little ones? Look, Elijah's cup gives us no milk, sell that!"

"Heavens forbid," retorted Chaim, "it's out of the question." The night before Passover Chaim got busy with "*Bedikas Chometz*." He went through his small abode searching carefully for *chometz*, though there was little chance he'd find any left.

He then went to the Rav to "sell" his *Chometz*. "Do you have any flour left? asked the Rav. "No, Rabbi," answered Chaim. "Any cereals?" "No, Rabbi," again replied Chaim. "Any *Chometzdige* utensils?" "Yes, Rabbi, we have a few pots and pans." The Rabbi then wrote Chaim's name on his list and concluded the "sale" in the required manner.

As Chaim still remained standing, the Rabbi asked him: "Rabbi Chaim, is there something you wish to ask me?" "Yes, Rabbi," said Chaim, shuffling his feet nervously. "I was wondering . . . Can you tell me if the Torah permits one to use milk instead of wine for the '*Arba Kossot*' (the four cups of wine) at the Seder?"

The Rabbi looked thoughtful as he slowly began to stroke his silver white beard. So poor Chaim was not only lacking in wine for Passover but apparently he had no meat either, otherwise he would not be talking about using milk at the Seder.

Who knows? Maybe he did not even have fish or *matza*? And not a word of complaint. Why couldn't he have turned to the *Maos Chittim* Fund if he was in such great need? The answer is obvious: he was ashamed to ask for charity.

"See here, Reb Chaim," the Rabbi said, as he opened his drawer and began searching for something. "You have given me a hard question to answer, and I have no time right now to look into the matter; it is too close to *Yom Tov*. Do me a favor and wait until after Passover, by which time I will have had an opportunity to study the problem. Meanwhile, here is some money which I give you on loan. Go and buy wine and whatever else you need for *Yom Tov*; the money is lying here doing no good over *Yom Tov* anyway. You'll give it back to me at your convenience. Don't worry; I'm not worried. I know you to be an honest man. Go in peace, I wish you and your wife and family a kosher, joyful *Yom Tov*!"

Chaim expressed his gratitude to the Rabbi and hurried off to the *Matza* Bakery which was still open. He bought a plentiful supply of matzos and also managed to buy wine.

With a light heart he rushed home, and as he entered he called out gaily. "Breinale! Good *Yom Tov*! Look what I've brought!"

"What do you mean `Good *Yom Tov*'?" his wife asked sleepily, rubbing her eyes as she came towards him. "*Yom Tov* is tomorrow." "For me it is already *Yom Tov*, dear wife. Look, we have *matza*, wine, and money for the herbs and all else we need for fine *Sedorim* and a wonderful *Yom Tov*!" Breina thought her husband was either not in his right mind or was day dreaming.

But she opened her eyes wide, and became fully awake as she saw the *matza*, the wine and the money. This was no dream, but beautiful reality!

"I told you that the Almighty would take care of us and our needs," said Chaim as he told her what had taken place at the Rabbi's house. "You see, Breina, we still have Elijah's silver goblet, we did not have to sell the goat, and still we'll have a regal Seder! We surely have a merciful G-d in Heaven!"

Chaim, Breina and their children really had a Seder which, in all their lives, they had never enjoyed as much. When Breina went to the door with a candle in her hand to open the door for Elijah she beheld an old Jew standing there. "Good *Yom Tov*," he said.

At first she was somewhat startled, but his gentle voice and manner reassured her and she invited him in. Chaim recognized him as someone he had seen in Shul that evening; must be a stranger passing through town and "stranded" somehow.

Chaim invited him to join them at the Seder, but the stranger said he could only stay a while as he had already been invited elsewhere. As the guest sat at the table his glance fell admiringly on Elijah's goblet, which Breina had polished until it sparkled and shone. "What a lovely wine cup!" he said.

"May your Mazal shine and sparkle like this goblet!" After chatting with Chaim for a little while longer, he got up, excused himself and left. The following day Chaim looked in *Shul* for the stranger. He wanted to invite him to join him for the second Seder.

When he could not see him anywhere he began to ask if anyone had seen the venerable stranger, but all looked at Chaim wonderingly. "What stranger? There's been no stranger here!"

"What do you mean? I had this man, with the face of an angel, at my Seder table." Chaim turned to the Rav. "Tell me Rabbi, did you see the stranger?" "Surely," answered the Rabbi. "He visited me too. In fact he visits every Jewish home at the Seder, but not everyone has the merit to see him. You, obviously are worthy."

After Passover, the snow long forgotten, Chaim again took his wheelbarrow and went into the woods to gather wood and twigs. He filled the wheelbarrow and set off for home. But the load must have been heavier than usual for the wheels got stuck in the soft soil and refused to budge.

Chaim tugged and pushed; all to no avail. Reluctantly he began to throw away some of the wood he had gathered, to lighten the load. He gave a sudden push and out shot the wheels!

Say, what was that thing shining there? He bent down and, to and behold, a shining golden coin met his astonished gaze!

He quickly began digging in the same spot, and out came a rotting bag, spilling out its contents a whole lot of lovely, glittering golden coins! A veritable fortune!

From that time on, no more was Chaim "poor Chaim," but his *Mazal* shone for him and his family, as did Elijah's precious goblet at their Seder table.

*Reprinted from the Pesach 5771 edition of Chabad.Org Magazine*

**Is Egg Matzah Kosher**

**For Passover?**

**By Rabbi Menachem Posner**

**Question:**

Rabbi, I often see egg matzah for sale and have been wondering whether we can serve it at the seder instead of regular matzah. I have always found it so much tastier…

**Answer:**

The matzah used at the seder must be made of only flour and water. This is because the Torah (Deuteronomy 16:3) refers to this matzah as lechem oni, which can be translated as "poor bread." As you point out, matzah made with juice or eggs is much tastier and is by definition "rich bread." So egg matzah is out for fulfilling the mitzvah of eating matzah at the seder.

But is it kosher for consumption during the rest of the holiday?

On Passover we are forbidden to eat chametz. Now, what constitutes chametz? A mixture of flour and water that has leavened, whether through the addition of yeast or the passage of time (18 minutes). However, flour mixed with other liquids, such as fruit juice, oil, wine or eggs, does not constitute chametz.

So far, it would seem that there would be no problem whatsoever with eating egg (or juice) matzah.

However, there is a caveat: If the flour was mixed with both water as well as those other liquids, it can become chametz. Not only that, it actually becomes chametz at a much faster pace than an ordinary flour and water. Because of this concern, it is forbidden to make matzah for Passover with a mixture of water and other liquids.

But how about matzah made of flour and a liquid—containing no water whatsoever?

Well, in light of the fact that matzah made with water and other liquids becomes chametz so quickly, [Rabbi Moshe Isserles](http://www.chabad.org/article.asp?AID=111847) (16th century) notes the time-honored custom of Ashkenazi Jewry not to eat matzah that contains in its ingredients a liquid other than water, lest even a drop of water is mistakenly added to the dough. He adds, however, that an exception is made for the elderly or unwell, who are allowed to eat certified kosher for Passover egg matzah.

Some Sepharadic communities have also adopted this stringency, while others have not. So if you are Sepharadic, please consult your rabbi to find out about your custom.

Wishing you a kosher and joyous Passover,

Rabbi Menachem Posner

Reprinted from the Pesach 5771 edition of Chabad.Org Magazine.

**Four Boxes of Matzah**

**By Stan Lapon**

 Once upon a time in a small city in Midwestern America, there lived a very kindly and generous rabbi named Rabbi Shmotkin. Every year it was his practice, at Passover time, to mail out boxes of *Shmurah* Matzah in order to bring a feeling of celebration to the Passover Festival. This is the story of four boxes of this *Shmurah* Matzah.

The first box arrived at the home of a friendless, middle-aged accountant, who lived alone and whose sole companions were his tank of tropical fish. Since tropical fish were not known as big talkers, our accountant often sat at home at night listening to the radio and wondering.

He remembers going to the door that afternoon to pick up his mail. When he opened the door, a cardboard box fell at his feet. At first he thought it was a medium size pizza that had been wrongly delivered to his home, but when he opened it up and saw the letter inside, a smile came to his face, a rare one for that time in his life, and he said a special thanks to Rabbi Shmotkin, just for remembering him.

The next afternoon, the friendless little accountant again went to the door to collect his daily portion of "occupant mail." Again when he opened the door, another cardboard box fell at his feet. He examined it closely and again found that it was *Shmurah* Matzah from Lubavitch House. "Strange," he thought, "one box was nice, but two seems a bit extravagant on the Rabbi's part." "Maybe Lubavitch have more money than I think," he said to himself, "perhaps I have been giving in excess," he noted in his accountant-like brain.

The afternoon after that, our sad accountant again went to the door for his mail. This time he noticed a certain trepidation in his step and a slight hesitation as he opened the door. You guessed it, in fell another box of Shmurah Matzah.

Now you must understand that this accountant knew a thing or two about computers, so that his initial thought was that maybe he was in some sort of Chassidic computer loop, like when the government forgets that it has sent you your tax refund and decides to send you the same tax refund every week for the rest of your life. "Why," he pondered, "couldn't I get into a government refund loop, instead of a *Shmurah* Matzah loop? Just my mazel," he said to himself, "everyone else gets money when there is a mistake, I get Matzah."

The afternoon after that, he went as usual to get his mail, opened the door and... you guessed it, in fell a fourth box of Shmurah Matzah. "Shmotkin is trying to tell me something," our accountant thought to himself, "but what could it be?

"Four boxes of Shmurah Matzah has to be a sign, like the four questions, only more expensive," our little friend pondered. "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Finally, after an excess of soul searching, he decided to do exactly as Rabbi Shmotkin had done--to give the Shmurah Matzah away. Since he didn't know many people, he gave away two of the boxes to people at work, one to a Jewish woman who had married a Christian and one to a Jewish man who was married to a non-Jewish woman. The third box he took with him to his Seder dinner and the fourth he kept for himself.

The little accountant's Seder dinner was most depressing. His father's wife was quite ill and could barely sit at the table. Her days were not to be long, it seemed to all assembled, who nodded among themselves with little knowing looks. When it came time to display and taste the first Matzah, the accountant's stepmother brightened up. "Who brought the Shmurah Matzah to the Seder?" she asked, rather strongly, everyone thought.

"Why I did," responded the little accountant.

"I really want to thank you," she said. "Every day to me is now very precious, and with this unexpected gift, you have done the impossible, for you have made this day somehow even more precious to me than usual."

Everyone was beaming at the table and somehow a very sad and distant night had turned into a very close knit one. "Rabbi Shmotkin is doing something right when he gives this Matzah away," the accountant thought to himself.

Three days later when he returned to the office, the man he had given the Matzah to approached the accountant almost before he had had a chance to have his morning coffee. "You know," he said, "that special Matzah you gave me for Passover, it had a rather profound effect on my wife, who not only isn't Jewish, but she's not even very religious. We don't have a Seder at my house on Passover any more, but I passed out your Matzah and she was fascinated by it. She could not believe how ancient it looked, and she said it gave her a feeling of connection with a past she barely knew existed.

"And you know what's really surprising? She made me take down our dusty unused bible and that very night, (it happened to have been Passover eve) she had me read the entire story of Exodus out loud to her and the kids. You know women never cease to amaze me."

"Well that's just astounding," the little accountant thought. "It's hardly a conversion, but this program of Rabbi Shmotkin's certainly has had an effect in the most unexpected of fashions."

He walked slowly toward his office, when the Jewish woman who had married the gentile virtually accosted him in the hall. "I really want to thank you for that Matzah you gave us for Passover. You know every year my daughter, husband and I go to my parents' house for a semi-Seder. It's really just a meal, because my husband isn't much interested.

“When our daughter opened the Matzah box at the house and gave everyone a piece and then she read the rabbi's letter that came with the Matzah out loud, you know, my husband said to me, 'She really likes this service stuff,' and he agreed to let me send her to Hebrew Sunday school. Before that night he was against the whole idea, I don't know what changed his mind, but I think the rabbi's Matzah had something to do with it."

Needless to say, I was in a state of shock from these revelations, and had no small feeling of guilt about hanging on to my own box. Look at the good I could have done for someone else, if I had given all of Rabbi Shmotkin's Shmurah Matzah away.

But then I remembered how I felt when I got my first box and was kind of glad that I had set it aside.

Reprinted from the Pesach 5771 edition of Chabad.Org Magazine.

**A Slice of Life**

**The Matza Lifesaver**

**By Rabbi Uriel Vigler**

After returning home from delivering boxes of special shmura matza to members of our community, a woman emailed me to say "thank you." She wrote that matza holds a cherished place in the hearts of her and her family because it saved her husband's life. Intrigued, I called her to find out the story.

Two years ago on Passover, Lisa and her husband Adam (names changed to protect privacy) sat at the Seder, surrounded by family and friends, crunching matza as is customary. Only, Adam apparently ate way more than he should have. On the last night of the holiday, he experienced severe stomach pain and was rushed to the emergency room. The matza had caused a blockage in his small intestine and the resulting obstruction needed to be removed surgically.

On the table, surgeons discovered Adam had a very rare cancer in his jejunum, a section of the small intestine. The matza had gotten caught in the tumors, resulting in excruciating pain. This kind of cancer is usually diagnosed only during stage four when other organs have already been affected. Adam's cancer had progressed to stage three; his prognosis, a mere six months.

What does a Jew do when a doctor tells him he has six months to live? Change doctors, of course! Due to the rarity of the disease, no chemotherapy treatments had been proven effective, so Adam was treated instead for regular bowel cancer with successful results. The tumors shrunk and no further treatments were necessary. As Lisa put it, "If not for the shmura matza the tumor would never have been discovered in time and there is no doubt I would be a widow today."

Six months later, on Rosh Hashana, a perfectly healthy Adam, together with Lisa, first prayed at our shul. On the holy day when members are called for an aliya to the Torah, I encourage them to commit themselves to keep one extra mitzva (commandment) for the upcoming year.

Call it a new year's resolution if you wish. So when Adam asked me to suggest a mitzva to him, I proposed tefillin. After Rosh Hashana, Lisa called me to find out where she could purchase a pair. When I followed up with Adam months later, it turned out he had not missed a single day since he had bought his tefillin. Until today he remains devoted to his commitment.

This past Rosh Hashana Adam again received an aliya. This time I recommended he take on the mitzva of eating kosher. Due to its challenging nature, we came to a compromise: Adam agreed to keep kosher once a week. Since then, Lisa informed me that the family orders glatt kosher take-outs at least once a week, sometimes more than that.

Kabbalists have described matza as "bread of faith" on the first night and as "bread of healing" on the second.

While it is indeed praiseworthy to remember G-d and thank Him after a recovery, a primary component of the healing process involves initial prayer and a firm trust. Those whose faith sustains them through a dark period, spurring them to constantly pray and beseech G-d's mercy, remain totally healthy at the core. They appreciate that ultimately it is G-d who decides the outcome, no matter how bleak the test results may be.

One of the main functions of the Passover seder is an educational one. During the service, we encourage our children to ask questions by triggering their curiosity with narratives and customs. The Torah allows that every child is unique and each must be raised according to his own personality. Thus the Hagada lists four types of children who grace the seder table each year.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe opened our eyes to the reality of a fifth additional child who differs from the others. While the first four are all present at the Pesach seder, their sibling wanders about, oblivious that Pesach has even arrived. The fifth child, explains the Rebbe, is not necessarily a child, but an adult Jew exclusive to our generation, lost in its modernity and technology, foreign to all things Jewish.

The Rebbe devoted his life to reaching out to all the fifth children of the world, dispatching thousands of emissaries worldwide to locate these individuals and cater to their Jewish needs. Thus, today it is possible to attend a Pesach seder in almost any city on the globe.

It was during the Pesach of 2000 that I was privileged to lead one such seder in Kathmandu, Nepal. The city boasts the largest seder in the world with over 2,000 attending annually. It was by far one of the most incredible experiences of my life. Walking around the room one could hear practically any language, with Jews from places like France, Australia, Morocco or Brazil. Sure, there were a great many differences between us, but the electricity in the room was generated by a certain knowledge that that there is so much more that unites us than what separates us.

As a yeshiva student I would often travel the globe scouting out these "fifth children" hoping to familiarize them with their Jewish roots. The summer following my Passover in Nepal was spent in Eastern Europe. It was in Varna, Bulgaria, that a Jew named Haim invited my friend and me into his home for a chat.

Toward the end of our visit, Haim donned tefillin and promptly broke down during the recitation of the Shema. Amidst sobs he explained his life story. As a child he attended a local Bulgarian cheder right until his Bar Mitzva. Around that time the country turned Communist, the transformation washing away all remnants of his Judaism.

Retrieving a family album, he showed us photos of his family. "I married a non-Jewish woman," he explained. "My children are not Jewish and my grandchildren too, will never know the beauty of our faith. I have lived a life devoid of Judaism. Not once have I put on tefillin, no Rabbi officiated at my wedding, and I have never behaved remotely Jewish since I was a child." Yet despite the total alienation with all things Jewish, one thing intrigued Haim. "Rabbi, now as the tefillin are strapped to my arm and head, I feel such an intense connection to G-d..."

Such is the nature of the fifth child. Although far removed from anything Jewish, at the core each one nurses a tiny G-dly spark, waiting to be nurtured and fired into a flame. And each one, no matter his level of observance, can always find his place among the fold. Wherever you find yourself this Pesach, don't spend your seder alone.\* In almost any location, your Jewish brothers and sisters are looking to welcome you into their homes!

*Reprinted form this week’s edition of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, New York. Rabbi Uriel and Shevy Vigler direct Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side in New York City. From* [*www.chabadic.com*](http://www.chabadic.com)

*Visit passover.org to find a Chabad-Lubavitch Seder location near you!*

**How Do You Say ‘Good to**

**The Last Drop’ in Hebrew?**

**By Stuart Elliott**

In advertising these days, a long-lasting relationship between a client and an agency is one that continues for three or four years. But a leading coffee brand and its agency are closing in on nine decades.

Since 1923, Maxwell House coffee has been using Joseph Jacobs Advertising in New York as its agency to reach the Jewish consumer market. Maxwell House is believed to be the first mainstream product to have aimed pitches at Jewish shoppers, making it perhaps the pioneer of what is known today as multicultural marketing.

So venerable are the ties between Maxwell House and Jacobs Advertising that they go back to the brand’s original owner, the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company of Nashville.

Why was a Southern-based marketer appealing to Jewish customers then? One reason is that in 1921, Cheek-Neal opened a factory in Brooklyn.

Cheek-Neal was acquired in 1928 by the Postum Company, a predecessor to General Foods. In 1989, General Foods was merged with [Kraft Foods](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/kraft-foods-inc/index.html?inline=nyt-org) to form Kraft General Foods, known since 1995 as Kraft Foods.

The relationship between Maxwell House and Jacobs Advertising is usually in the spotlight this time of year for a promotion that predates the administration of [Franklin D. Roosevelt](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/franklin_delano_roosevelt/index.html?inline=nyt-per). But [this year is special](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/09/nyregion/09haggadah.html), as an article in The New York Times pointed out on Saturday, with some new touches in the long-running tradition.

In 1932, Maxwell House began publishing a [Passover](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/p/passover/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) Haggadah, the book that is read at the Seder table to retell the story of the exodus from Egypt. The Haggadot (the plural of Haggadah) are given away in supermarkets and grocery stores with a purchase of Maxwell House.

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| HAGGADAH2-popup | spacer |
| spacer Richard Perry/The New York Times  Copies of the Maxwell House book from 1934, the 1950s and 1998. |  |

It is estimated that more than 50 million Maxwell House Haggadot have been published, making it by many accounts the most widely distributed and used in the world.

Down through the decades, the Haggadot have typically been light on the hard sell. About the most notable plug for the sponsor has been their use of the color blue on the covers, inspired by the long-time trade dress of Maxwell House.

Sometimes there have been Maxwell House logos, sometimes not. The cover of the first Haggadah featured the famous brand slogan, “Good to the last drop,” but the rest have not.

Several of the covers described the Haggadah as “compliments of the coffees of Maxwell House” or “brought to you by Maxwell House.”

For Passover 2011, which begins at sundown next Monday night, Maxwell House has significantly revised the text of [its Haggadah.](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/09/nyregion/09haggadah.html) The changes are meant to update the language for contemporary Seders or, as Maxwell House puts it on the first page, “create the most meaningful Seder experience.”

For instance, God is a “Monarch” rather than a “King,” and the tale about the “four sons” now refers to “four different sorts of children.”

More than a million copies of the new version of the Maxwell House Haggadah, which also sports a new cover, have been published. The 2011 Haggadah runs 58 pages.

An ad on the inside cover of the new edition, which carries the headline “At your Passover Seders for 80 years,” depicts the covers of the eight editions of the Haggadah.

“When it first began, three owners ago, it was about introducing ourselves,” says Becky McAninch, senior brand manager on Maxwell House coffee at the Kraft Foods office in Tarrytown, N.Y.

Now, “it’s about being part of the community,” she adds, and “offering a time-honored tradition during this important part of their year every year.”

Asked if the Haggadah promotion is emblematic of multicultural marketing, Ms. McAninch replies: “We absolutely believe so. We’ve seen the power of this, the power it’s had in the community, and what it’s meant.”

“What brand wouldn’t want to be a part of a cherished tradition?” she asks. “And we really believe in continuing to honor that tradition.”

And because “Maxwell House is a brand that’s been around for a long time,” Ms. McAninch says, “we want to contemporize and stay relevant, so consumers see us growing and changing with the times.”

That accounts for the periodic changes to the covers of the Haggadot along with the updating of the text for Passover 2011.

“It’s a great way to provide something new to this special target market,” Ms. McAninch says.

Joseph Jacobs Advertising is “our strategic partner,” she adds, “as we look to unlock what are the insights” to better reach the Jewish consumer.

Maxwell House also has Hispanic-focused consumer marketing, Ms. McAninch says, led by Lopez Negrete Communications in Houston. The brand’s creative agency for general-market advertising is the Chicago office of McGarryBowen, part of the Dentsu Network West division of Dentsu.

Joseph Jacobs Advertising immediately proved its value to Maxwell House when they began working together in 1923 on “targeting the Jewish consumer,” says Elie Rosenfeld, chief executive at the agency.

The founder, Joseph Jacobs, “was creating the concept of target marketing,” he adds.

Jacobs noticed that coffee sales among Jews fell considerably during Passover because they believed the coffee bean was a legume and thus not kosher for Passover, Mr. Rosenfeld says.

In stores in Jewish neighborhoods, he adds, the grocers would set the coffees aside during Passover and not sell them.

The agency hired an Orthodox rabbi who declared the coffee bean was “actually a berry or a fruit,” he adds, and therefore acceptable under the holiday’s dietary strictures.

Ads were run in newspapers read by Jews like The Jewish Daily Forward, which proclaimed the rabbi’s certification that coffee was O.K. to drink during the eight days of Passover.

The creation and distribution of the Haggadah that started nine years later was an effort to dispel whatever remaining doubts there were about the status of coffee.

The idea was that Maxwell House would tell Jewish shoppers that “we’re so much a Passover coffee that we’ll give you the Seder, almost,” Mr. Rosenfeld says.

In fact, the ad in the new Haggadah describes Maxwell House as “the original Passover coffee.”

The Haggadot have “over the years become such an identifiable part of the Maxwell House as a brand,” Mr. Rosenfeld says.

“It’s tough to get a brand so emotionally connected with a consumer,” he adds.

That is beneficial for Maxwell House not only among consumers, Mr. Rosenfeld says, but also among retailers that “now see Passover as a huge opportunity” to stimulate sales of Maxwell House coffees.

“For some chains, Passover is second in importance” as a coffee-selling season only to the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas, he adds.

Kraft ships the displays offering the Haggadot to stores, which “put them up in the Passover aisle or the coffee aisle,” Mr. Rosenfeld says.

The concept is that shoppers “can go to the supermarket and get everything they need for the holiday,” he adds, “including the instruction book.”

In recent years, Joseph Jacobs Advertising has also created campaigns for the Jewish market for Kraft brands like Breakstone’s dairy products and Philadelphia cream cheese, Mr. Rosenfeld says.

The agency also worked on ads aimed at Jewish consumers for Post cereals, he adds, when it was still owned by Kraft. (It is now part of [Ralcorp Holdings](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/ralcorp-holdings-inc/index.html?inline=nyt-org).)

Joseph Jacobs Advertising also works for marketers like the Manischewitz Company and Empire Kosher, the poultry marketer, and is the Jewish agency for the ShopRite supermarket chain.

Nowadays, “it is a sell to go to major brands and tell them they should target some marketing dollars and effort to the Jewish consumer base,” Mr. Rosenfeld says.

“Even some that are going kosher” do not reach out specifically to Jewish shoppers, he adds, referring to the mainstream marketers that are manufacturing products so they are kosher for everyday use.

According to news reports, [President Obama](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/o/barack_obama/index.html?inline=nyt-per) used the Maxwell House Haggadah at Seders at the White House in 2009 and 2010.

It is also popular at the Rosenfeld house, says Mr. Rosenfeld, who is an Orthodox Jew.

“I sit with two,” he says. “One is always the Maxwell House.”

For many years, there was a campaign each year to announce the arrival of the Maxwell House Haggadot in stores, but Kraft has not run those ads recently.

The company declines to discuss the costs of the promotion.

“It’s not about the dollars and cents,” Ms. McAninch says. “We’re very proud to be a part of what has become a cherished tradition, a tradition at the table of the Jewish community.”

*Reprinted from the April 11, 2011 edition of The New York Times.*

**Yom Tov Stories for**

**Pesach (Passover) 5770**

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Reb Shea of Yerushalayim**

Preparations for Pesach, which begins Monday night, are in full swing.  On the second night of Pesach we begin counting the Omer. We count 49 days of the Omer and then celebrate the giving of the Torah on the Yom Tov of Shavuos. 49 Is the Gematria - the numerical value of the Hebrew word "Midah," which means character trait. The Sages tell us that the time between Pesach and Shavuos is a special time to work on ourselves. The following beautiful Pesach story shows what makes great people great, namely, their great character.

**A Quiet Man of Great Holiness**

Reb Shea was a Jew who lived in Jerusalem several years ago. He was quiet man of great holiness, who performed acts of kindness in unassuming ways. Only after he had passed away did stories surface as to how much he had actually helped so many. In each situation he had made a fellow Jew's problem his own personal problem.

It seems that a number of years before a terrible tragedy occurred in Brodie's Houses, an apartment complex in Jerusalem. Just two weeks before the holiday of Pesach, a young man suddenly passed away, leaving a large family behind. He was a man who had always struggled financially, and now his family was left destitute, with very few relatives in Israel who could be of assistance.

**Tries to Find Someone to Lead the Seder**

**For the Widow and Her Orphans**

Aside from the terrible travail that the family would have to deal with in the long term, there was the immediate pressing problem regarding the upcoming Yom Tov. Pesach is a time when the father of a household is the dominant figure as he conducts the meaningful Pesach seder for his family. Who now was going to be able to conduct the seder for the bereaved widow and her young children? R' Shea looked for a candidate who would be willing to forgo his own seder at home, but couldn't find one.

Finally, just a few days before the holiday, he located a young man learning in a yeshivah, with no relatives of his own in Israel, who said that he would be willing to conduct the seder for the family. The night of Pesach arrived, and as R' Shea left his home to go to shul he told his wife that he might be a bit detained because he wanted to check, on the way home, that everything was working out at the home of the widow.

Once in shul R' Shea began to look around for the young man who had agreed to conduct the seder, but he was nowhere to be found. R' Shea wondered whether perhaps the fellow had forgotten about his commitment, or maybe he was simply davening in another shul. That would be strange, though, because R' Shea and the fellow had agreed to walk together from R' Shea's shul to the home of the family in Brodie's Houses.

**Can’t Find the Young Man**

**Who Agreed to Conduct the Seder**

When the davening ended, R' Shea once again searched the shul but he couldn't find the young man. R' Shea left the shul with his children and told them to go on home to wait for him there. He hoped to be home shortly himself. He also hoped that he would meet the fellow outside Brodie's Houses so that he could take him to the home of the widow and her children.

But when he got to the complex, the young man was nowhere to be seen; and when R' Shea walked into the apartment itself, no one was there but the young mother and her children. The children were scampering all over the apartment and the mother seemed to be walking around aimlessly. After waiting a short while, R' Shea decided to conduct the seder himself. He called everyone to the table and then slowly and patiently he made Kiddush, gave everyone at the table a small piece of the karpas, had the children ask the Four Questions, and began to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt - all this as his wife and family, along with his own widowed mother, were sitting home and waiting for him. R' Shea sat with the family as they ate their meal (although he alone did not eat).

**Enlivens the Table with**

**Conversation and Zemiros**

He enlivened the table with his conversation and zemiros (songs) until finally the mother and children ate the afikoman. By the time he was ready to leave, some of the small children were already asleep, for he had been there for close to three hours! The young widow thanked him profusely, and R' Shea made his way home.

When he came into his house, his wife, his mother, and his children were waiting for him with mixed feelings. On one hand, they understood that he had probably helped that family in their moment of sorrow. On the other hand, here in his own home he had kept a widow (his mother) waiting, in addition to his own children, who had been looking forward to this night for months. R' Shea began to conduct the seder by once again reciting the Kiddush - this time for his own family.

However, because it was already very late, the children hurried through the Mah Nishtanah (the Four Questions, traditionally asked by the children at the beginning of the seder), they all drank each of the four cups of wine at the proper point in the seder, had their meal, and made sure to eat their afikoman - all before midnight, as is required by halachah.

After their seder was over, the children of R' Shea respectfully approached their father. "We understand that you wanted to help the widow and her family," they began, "but what about your own family? We were kept waiting for hours'. And besides, what about your own mother? She is an older woman, and she too is a widow! Why did you favor the widow there over the widow here?"

R' Shea understood that their questions were justified. Patiently he said to them, "My dear children, your questions are legitimate. I will answer them with a story that happened to me many years ago with the Chazon Ish." This is the story he told them… *To be continued.* Good Shabbos Everyone.

*Reprinted from this week’s Good Shabbos email (gs@notspeeding.com)*

**Pesah is Not Just a Celebration of a Past Historical Event**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"*In every generation it is one's duty to regard himself as though he personally has come out of Egypt*."

The Peninim Haggadah quotes Harav M. Gifter Shlita who explains that all the events which occurred to Bnei Yisrael were not singular, transitory events that were meant to be immediately forgotten. Every miracle, every incident bespeaks eternity. The events are eternalized in such a manner that when that date on the calendar arrives, the Jew must relate to "then" as if it were "now." Indeed, as the Haggadah says, one must regard himself as though he came out of Egypt. This is not an event of the past; it is occurring in the present. Consequently, one is obligated to recite Hallel even at night, since it is viewed as if the miracle occurred to him personally.

**Time is a Circle Through**

**Which We Travel**

In a similar vein, Rabbi E. Dessler z"l observes that time is not a line that passes above us, but rather a circle through which we travel. Periodically, we return to those events which have been eternalized as a result of the spiritual values with which they have been suffused. During these unique periods, one has the opportunity to interface with the experiences which have consecrated these moments in time. Thus, at the specific time of the year when we remember zeman herutenu, the time of our liberation, we are infused with the spiritual concepts that highlight that moment in time. We are inspired by the kedushah, holiness, of the moment; we are elevated by the experiences as we relive yesiat misrayim.

May we merit to truly experience these feelings during this holiday season and may we be privileged to celebrate Pesah in Jerusalem with the Mashiah speedily in our days, Amen. Happy and Kosher Pesah to all.

*Reprinted from this week’s Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin*

**True Celebration**

Hacham Obadiah Hedaya of Aleppo, Syria, gives a beautiful mashal in the Shabbat Hagadol Derashah which appears in Vayikah Ovadiahu.

There once was a king whose only son was captured and imprisoned. The kind did everything in his power to rescue him – and his efforts finally bore fruit, as his son was released. After the prince’s recitation of the horrors he had endured, the king decreed that once a year, on the anniversary of his liberation, the prince should make a feast in honor of all that his father had done for him. And so it was – the prince did what his father had bidden him to do.

Years later, the prince set out on a dangerous expedition. Just as before, he was captured, only this time, he was forced to work as a menial laborer in the fields. Many a night he cried when he remembered his father, the king. How he missed him!

**The Anniversary of His Liberation**

As the anniversary of his liberation from the first captivity drew near, the prince found himself in a quandary: What should he do? On the one hand, how could he celebrate this important day in life, being so distant from his father, and now in a new captivity? On the other hand, the king had commanded him to make a feast on the anniversary of the original emancipation day. How could he disobey his father?

He finally decided to honor his father’s request and make the commemorative banquet – but that he would begin the affair with a declaration that he was doing so because his beloved father had so commanded him and he would end with the fervent prayer that just as his father had saved him before, so he would save him now.

Eventually the king learned of his son’s whereabouts. After inquiring as to the prince’s state of mind – whether he seemed sad at not being reunited with his father or was wasting his days in partying and other frivolities – the king was moved to learn that his son did make one large se’udah, only because his father had asked him to. Furthermore, the king was told of his son’s solemn declaration and sincere hope for his future redemption and reunification with his father.

Hacham Obadiah concluded that this story is really about us. “Banim atem Lashem Elokechem: You are sons to Hashem your G-d” (Bemidbar 14:1). Hashem, Who is both our Father and our King, took us out of bondage in Egypt. The se’udah that we make on Pesah, even though we are in a new galut, is because the Torah commands us always to remember that Hashem saved us from Egypt. Similarly, we fervently hope that He will rescue us from this galut, quickly in our days.

Only then will our se’udah be entirely filled with the radiant joy of our being together, once more with our Father, our King in Yerushalayim Habenuyah.

*Reprinted from ArtScroll’s “The Sephardic Heritage Haggadah” by Rabbi Eli Mansour and Rabbi David Sutton.*

**To Blunt the Teeth of**

**The Rasha (Wicked Son)**

Based on an Insight

By Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Shlita, provides the following insight into our response to the Rasha in the Haggadah. We are instructed by the Ba’al Haggadah to “Hakheh Es Shinev.” This is often misinterpreted/translated as knock out the Rasha's teeth. In truth, it means to blunt his teeth. Hakheh is spelled with a Kuf not a Kaf. The difference is explained by Rabbi Reisman with the following story:

HaRav Aharon Kotler, Z’tl, together with another Gadol (Torah leader) went to collect for Chinuch Atzmai -- and there was a stingy G’vir who did not contribute. So they went to his office--without an appointment -- and asked his secretary if they could see him. The secretary said he was not in.

They knew what that meant. So they said they would wait for him. So they waited. And waited. And waited him out. Finally, the G’vir burst out of his office and gave it to them. He was furious. “You come here without an appointment and you harass me for money. I have no Menucha.” He continued his harangue without Derech Eretz to these Gedolim.

After the fury of the G’vir was put to rest, the Gadol accompanying Rav Aharon said to the G’vir, “Now that you gave us what we deserve, could you give Chinuch Atzmai what they deserve?" Quieted, the G’vir cut them a handsome check.

That is P’shat (explanation) in blunting the Rasha’s teeth. Further, Chazal say that in Gematria if you subtract Shinav (teeth) from the word Rasha, you get Tzadik…there lies a Tzadik in every Rasha once his sharp teeth are removed!

Hakhel Note: If this is a key element in defining a Rasha, we should be especially careful in this regard. Why only end up being a Tzadik, if we can start out being one?! Perhaps this is another great lesson of the Haggadah -- using our mouths for hours in a positive, beautiful, thankful, and inspiring way!

*Reprinted from the Hakhel Email Community Awareness Bulletin of 9 Nisan 5770/March 24, 2010.*

**Questions on Pesach**

**As Heard From**

**Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

“*Avadeem hayeenu l’pharoh b’misrayeem*” *We were slaves to Pharaoh in Misrayeem* (Pesach Haggadah)

The son has just completed asking the four questions and now the father begins his obligation to tell the Haggadah to his children.

“My son, you are asking, why we do certain thing?” Now this question is not only four questions, it’s 613 questions. Why we do all the laws of the Torah and in each law there are many questions. And there is one answer to all of them.

“We were slaves to Pharaoh in Misrayeem and when they gave us any orders we couldn’t ask questions why we have to do this. If you asked a question they knocked out your teeth. And then Hashem took us out.

**Exchanging Pharaoh for a “Better” Master**

And so, we exchanged one master for another. Instead of being forced to do things which are not for our benefit, now you are being forced to do what is for your benefit. All the Misvot are for your benefit”.

Although the obeying of Misvot is not contingent upon knowing reasons, however there is a reason: the reason for everything is “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Misrayeem” and Hashem took us out.

Because of that we are so full of love to Hashem. We are so grateful to Him, that we’ll do whatever He’ll tell us. So, the reason we do Misvot is because Hashem took us out of Misrayeem. That’s the basic fundamental reason for obeying the Torah. When Hashem began speaking to us on Har Sinai He said, “I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out of Misrayeem.”

He brought us out with a Mighty Arm, which means that Hashem turned all of nature upside down for us by bringing Ten Plagues on Misrayeem. There never was such a time and there will never be such a time until the end of days.

A person must obey the dictates of a decent conscience. And a decent conscience says ‘be grateful’. You have to be grateful to everybody, if not you are lacking in the attributes of humanity.

Gratitude to Hashem supersedes every other form of gratitude.”

*Quoted from “The Making of a Nation” and recorded lectures Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l.*

**Record U.S. Matzoh Sales for Pesach Approaches $90 Million**



Matzoh sales in the US may hit $90 million this Pesach, which begins on March 29th, a survey by KosherToday revealed, but it also highlighted some dramatic changes in the Matzoh market. Sales of the hand-made shmurah (guarded) matzohs represented nearly a third of the sales, largely as a result of their sharply higher prices per pound, but may be closer to 15% of individual matzohs sold.

Shmurah matzoh sales are said to have risen nearly 18% over 2009. Matzos imported from Israel have significantly cut into the sales of US machine matzoh manufacturers by as much as 25%. Some industry sources reported that several stores only carried the Israeli matzoh.

US manufacturers have long maintained that the Israelis were undercutting the US manufactured matzohs largely because they were subsidized by the Israeli government. However, officials of the Israel Export Institute say that it is no longer the case.

Jewish community leaders say that many Jews prefer the Israeli matzohs as a sign of solidarity with Israel during Passover, a holiday observed by more than 80% of US Jews, according to the 2001-2002 Jewish Population Study of the United Jewish Communities.

The good news for the US manufacturers is that their matzoh sales rose despite the Israelis and despite matzoh being one of the designated loss leaders in dozens of supermarkets around the country. In some stores under SuperValu, a purchase of as little as $25 of Passover foods yielded a free 5 lb. box of matzohs. The price of the hand-made matzoh averaged around $20 lb., up from approximately $19 last year. Special matzohs like gluten free and spelt went for as high as $25.99 lb. Israeli shmurah was available for under $15 lb., but the Israelis have not been able to dislodge the Americans from major market share.

Some retailers complained that to satisfy customers, they had to carry as many as 12 brands with one store showing 14 brands on the shelf. KosherToday staff working on the survey in some cases could only calculate the value of the Matzoh rather than sales because they were part of a promotion and were technically not sold.

But one retailer said: “Like all loss leaders, while we do not make money on the Matzoh, rest assured that we make it up elsewhere.” For the squeezed American manufacturers this was little consolation.

Reprinted from the March 23rd website Matzav.com ([*Kosher Today*](http://www.koshertoday.com/news.asp#story184)/Noam Amdurski-Matzav.com Newscenter)

**No “Empty” Seats at**

**The Pesach Seder**

Someone once approached the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l) to ask for his help in promoting the suggestion to remember the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust by leaving an empty chair at the Passover Seder. (In the 70s a similar suggestion was made to leave an empty chair to remember Jews in the Soviet Union.)

The Rebbe disagreed with this suggestion. One of the reasons was that the suggestion puts the focus on the negative. The Rebbe agreed that there should be an extra chair at the Seder. But why, he asked, should it be empty? Let it be filled by a person who, had he not received this invitation, would not have attended a Seder at all!

The Rebbe was not just offering a different suggestion. He was showing an entirely different approach to the issue. Instead of having our thinking about the loss of six million Jews result in an empty chair, he wanted that the emotion aroused be directed to a positive purpose.

Take a Jew who is alive today who doesn't even seek to take part in a Pesach Seder - and make him feel part of the Jewish people. This counteracts Hitler's efforts and demonstrates that nothing - neither Pharaoh, nor Hitler, nor for that matter the openness of American society - can break the connection that a Jew shares with his spiritual heritage.

The person replied disappointedly that what the Rebbe was suggesting would be very difficult - too difficult. Not everyone could go out and pull in a Jew from the street.

The Rebbe responded by saying that first, although his suggestion was harder, it would add to the joy of the holiday. And second, it's not as difficult as it seems! G-d gives special powers and the bigger the obstacles the greater are the powers that G-d bestows upon us.

*Adapted from The Chassidic Approach to Joy by Rabbi S. Majeski*

**A Slice of Life**

**A Passover in Chiang**

**Mei (Thailand)**

**By Levi Stein**

It isn't often a person from West Bloomfield shares Passover Seder in Thailand with someone from Sydney, Australia, but that's exactly what I did this past year.

Rebecca Saidman Engel of Sydney, Australia, had gotten married a few days before Passover and looked up the nearest Chabad House during her travels in the city of Chiang Mei, Thailand.

"It was really quite incredible and weird to be in Thailand and to be in a location where a Seder was taking place. I have never before had a Seder with 350 people," Rebecca said.

The relaxed yet festive Seder made a positive impression on the newlywed couple, who said they wouldn't hesitate to visit the nearest Chabad House if they ever again found themselves away from home for a Jewish holiday. "The non-judgmental atmosphere, which made everyone feel so welcome, is a huge part of what made this holiday so special for us," Rebecca said.

Meeting the Saidman-Engels was one of many reasons that made all the time and effort it took to get to Thailand worth it. Giving up spending the holiday with my own family was difficult, but hearing positive feedback about spending Passover with Chabad made it a bit easier.

Last year, the Chabad emissaries in Chiang Mei, Rabbi Moshe and Elisheva Haddad, hosted 350 guests for the first Seder and more than 60 for the second Seder. I was offered the opportunity to come and help.

Getting there was an adventure in itself, with stopovers in Germany and Singapore, and then finally arriving in Bangkok and starting the last leg of our journey, a short flight north to the mountain resort town of Chiang Mei. I left from New York at 4 p.m. on Sunday, we arrived at our destination at 9:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Though I arrived only a day before the festival, there was still plenty of work left to do. One of the major tasks was preparing lettuce for Seder. Jewish dietary laws forbid eating bugs, and Jewish tradition dictates using lettuce, which can be infested with little white bugs. Lettuce is one of the symbolic foods for the Passover Seder, so we had to individually check more than 2,000 leaves of lettuce to make sure they were bug-free.

Finally, after a long day of feverish preparations and a Seder that lasted until 11:30 p.m., we thought we were ready to go to sleep. Then another 20 people showed up who had needed a Seder, so we did it all over again. Sleep didn't come until the early hours of the morning.

There were other adventures and unusual circumstances - some unique to Jewish tradition, some unique to Thailand, and many due to the intersection of cultures.

This past year, Passover and the Thai New Year overlapped, which meant that Jews coming to and from the Chabad House had to navigate their way through Mardi Gras-style festivities in the streets. Many of us were doused as revelers happily sprayed each other with water guns during the celebration.

One afternoon, while we were in Chiang Mei, the King of Thailand's son decided to take a stroll in the area around the Chabad House. All cars, trucks and tuk tuks - a type of bicycle - were towed away to clear the streets. This happened during afternoon prayer service. When Chabad guests went outside, they had to search for their bikes. No one understood what had happened. Then it became clear that officials had simply moved everything to the side to clear the area for the prince and his entourage.

Unfortunately, not everything happening in Thailand during those days was so festive or orderly. As I left during the intermediate days of Passover, rioting in the capital city, Bangkok, intensified. Many governments issued warnings to their citizens traveling in southeast Asia. The Chabad Houses, meanwhile, were urging visitors to call home and let their families know that they were safe and sound. It is one of the many services Chabad in Thailand has grown accustomed to providing for Jewish travelers.

*Approximately 2,200 people attended Passover celebrations coordinated by Chabad-Lubavitch of Thailand last year at the central Chabad House in Bangkok or centers serving the resort destinations of Chiang Mai, Koh Samui and Phuket. A total of 500 Rabbinical students are sent each year to conduct Passover seders in remote locations worldwide that are not (yet) served by full-time emissaries. Last year, Chabad-Lubavitch organized 4,340 Seders for Passover, with 500 of them in the former Soviet Union and nearly 500 in Israel.*

**Pesach in Siberia**

**By Eliezer Naness**

*Excerpted from his book Subota, which details his experiences in a Russian labor camp where he was imprisoned for nearly two decades*

Just before Passover in 1938, I was summoned to the camp office. The commandant's aide informed me that my wife had sent a package containing warm clothing, a hundred rubles and a packet of matzot. He gave me everything except the matzot. "Because you do not work on Saturday, you will be having enough troubles. I advise you, for your own welfare, not to take the matzot. Ask the commandant to return them to your wife. Then there can be the possibility of discussing transferring you, and maybe your friend too, to some lighter work."

**Requests the Matzot Anyway**

I thanked him for his advice and good intentions, and asked him to give me the matzot because I would not eat chametz (leaven) on Passover.

The representative apologized and added, "I can only warn you that you are doing yourself, and especially your young friend [Shmuel], a grave disservice. There is talk in camp already that you are demoralizing the other prisoners of your brigade. You know that there are plenty of ways of eliminating undesirable elements here. They'll send you off some place. On the way 'something' will happen. Your bones will never be found."

He gave me the matzot and said no more. I walked off delighted that we had matzot for Passover. The day prior to Passover, we went out to work as usual.

In the evening, when all the prisoners went to eat, Shmuel and I prayed the Passover evening service. Then we spread out a sack on the shelf where we slept at night and set the seder on it. We put out three matzot for both of us. We didn't have maror (bitter herbs) but we didn't lack bitter experiences. We had no wine either, but we had it in our thoughts, and we began the seder. First we recited the Kiddush. Then Shmuel asked me the four questions.

**Reflecting on Their Family Back Home**

Shmuel and I spoke of our relatives. I thought of how my wife and my mother were now sitting in their houses alone, and that they were surely shedding tears over my condition in this brutal camp.

Shmuel's thoughts were of his parents, also sitting at the seder without him. We decided then, that whatever awaited us the next day, on the holiday of Passover, we would not work. Just as the nation of Israel believed that G-d would redeem them from Egypt, so we believed that G-d would save us from this camp and that He would take all the Jews from Russia and bring them to Israel; just as the Jews could not escape from Egypt, so the Jews could not escape from Russia. Only G-d could take them from Russia and bring them to the Land of Israel.

Late that night we presented our brigadier with some matzot. He was very grateful and promised to help me.

"You'll have to go out with the rest of the brigade. Otherwise I'll have to report you. Out there we'll find a way to keep you from working on the holiday."

On the first day of Passover, Shmuel and I evaded the brigade. The brigadier pretended not to notice our disappearance as we went wandering around the area. We found a tiny abandoned, unheated room, where we huddled in the intolerable cold. In the evening, when the brigade finished its work, we came out. Our reception was unfriendly.

**Conducting the Second Seder**

After roll-call, everyone went to the mess hall while we prayed, conducted the second seder, and lay down to sleep. The following morning, the brigadier had a paternal conversation with us.

"You know that there are no secrets in camp. The commandant has already been informed that you did not appear for work yesterday because of your holiday. The rumor is that you will be tried for 'collective refusal to work.' You are well aware that your reward for this can be a rope. I won't force you to work on your holy days, but I will not suffer along with you. Do as you wish without involving me. I want nothing to do with the whole thing."

Avoiding work that day was much more difficult than the first day, but we managed. Frozen and famished, we wandered around the work area. When night finally fell, we davened and then returned to our brigade and started working. Returning to the zone, we found our supervisor waiting for us.

**Warned of Great Danger to His Life**

"Look here," he said to me. "If you want to destroy your life, that's your affair. I don't wish you any evil, G-d forbid. The commandant isn't the least interested in your trial, because this can cast a shadow on his whole career. He can send you to the other world without any trial, and he has done exactly that more than once to others. Consider very carefully how to get out of this danger."

In the commandant's office we found an NKVD colonel. The colonel spoke calmly and patiently, as though he counted his words. "What is the nature of your refusal to work on Saturdays and Jewish holidays?"

"Only religious."

"We have taken a particular interest in this matter. We are informed that, according to Jewish law, work is permitted on Saturday if danger to life is involved. Hence, it is clear to us that your refusal to work, especially in a collective manner, is of an absolutely political nature. Crimes of this sort may be punished by execution. We shall grant you one more chance. If you assure us that henceforth you will work honestly and diligently every day of the week, as do the others, we will give you your proper sentence. In addition, if your conduct is good, we might transfer you to lighter work."

He paused for our answer. "Well, what do you say?"

"I will not work on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays under any condition," I answered categorically. Shmuel said the same.

"I believe you will reconsider this," the colonel answered in a mixture of anger and exasperation. "In the meantime, go to sleep." Despite threats, beatings, and torture, Eliezer Naness never "reconsidered" when it came to the observe of mitzvot.

In 1965, ten years after he was released, Eliezer Naness and his wife were finally allowed to leave and settle in Israel, where he lived until his passing.

*Reprinted from L’Chaim, a weekly publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*

**Utilizing the Pesach Seder**

**To Educate Your Children**

**By Daniel Keren**

Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff, Rav of the Agudas Yisroel Bais Binyomin in Brooklyn, spoke at a Hakhel lecture program hosted by his shul on 28 Adar/March 14th. The topic of his lecture was “Making the Most of Your Seder and the Practical Halachos of Yom Tov.” Hakhel is a Flatbush-based organization dedicated to promoting a greater awareness of Torah-true values in our community.

Quoting the Rambam, Rabbi Lieff declared that all of the secrets of the universe are hinted in the words and rituals of the Haggadah and Pesach Seder. What is the yesod of the Makkos? One must realize that Hashem created the world from nothing. We have to talk at the Seder about emunah and how all of our Avos are connected to each of the three Yom Tovim.

**Pesach is Connected to Avrohom Avinu**

Pesach relates to Avrohom Avinu who traveled telling people of their obligation to have emunah in the Abishter. Today, Rabbi Lieff said, we don’t have to travel like our first forefather. For on the Pesach Seder night, we have a captive audience – our own children and grandchildren who have joined us for the family Seder.

Rabbi Lieff recalled how a prominent Rosh Yeshiva once braved a severe winter snowstorm to come to his yeshiva and deliver his regularly scheduled shiur. Only two students managed or attempted to come. Yet, the Rosh Yeshiva spoke with all his strength and enthusiasm. Afterwards, one of two talmidim asked why he had bothered to give his utmost when his audience only consisted of two bocherim.

The Rosh Yeshiva responded that when he gave his lecture that morning, he didn’t just see an audience of two. Rather he saw thousands. He was able to look into those two talmidim and speak to their yet unborn children and those unborn children’s future offspring.

Just like that Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Lieff emphasized, we must understand that we too are not just speaking to our children and grandchildren at our family Seder. If we properly utilize the opportunity, we will be effectively making the Seder an experience that our family will remember for many years to come.

The Rav of the Agudas Yisroel Bais Binyomin noted that to this day, he continues to be inspired by the way his father and father-in-law of blessed memory conducted their Sedorim. And he has added some of their approaches to the way he conducts his own sedorim to this day. And no doubt, this will be continued by his own children and grandchildren who view the way he has incorporated those aspects into his Seder.

**The Important Mitzvah for the Father**

**To Teach His Children at the Seder**

Rabbi Lieff quoted Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt”l, the famed Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath who criticized the fact that many fathers encourage their children to take large portions of the Seder and relate over vortlach on Pesach that they learned in Yeshiva. The true avoda of the Seder is that the father or zeidie instruct the children on this special night. The mitzvah of hagaddita labincha is to retell the important story of our yetzias Mitzrayim to our children in the same manner that we heard it from our fathers and they heard it from their fathers.

It is not only important that we make our Seder complete with delicious foods. But we must also make sure that our less fortunate brethren also have the ability to celebrate the Pesach Seder with kavod and joy. Rabbi Lieff told the story of how once a poor Jew came to the Brisker Rav and asked if one could be yotzei the mitzvah of arba koses by drinking milk instead of wine. The Brisker Rav told the Yid that he would prefer if he used yayin instead of milk and he gave him money in order to buy sufficient wine for all the members of his family.

**The Brisker Rav’s Explanation**

**Of the Poor Yid’s Question**

One of the Brisker Rav’s sons noticed however that his father had given the poor Jew an incredible amount of money, much more than was needed to purchase even the finest wines. He asked why and the Brisker Rav explained that if a Jew can ask if he could fulfill the four cups with milk instead of wine, it must be obvious that he also has no money to purchase meat or chicken for the Seder. Therefore he gave money not just for the wine, but also in excess to purchase whatever else was necessary to make his Seder proper and joyous.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of the Yated Ne’eman.*

**Israeli Supreme Court: Arab Prisoners**

**Can't Demand Bread on Passover**

**By Malkah Fleisher**

Israel's High Court for Justice has denied an appeal from an Arab prison inmate who tried to force Israel's prison service to provide him with leavened bread during the Passover holiday

Mudabba Mahmoud Rayik, who is serving time in a mixed-religion prison for a criminal offense, told the court Wednesday that he is being forced to eat matzah during Passover even though he is a Muslim.

During the week-long holiday, Jewish people do not eat leavened products such as bread or cakes, due to a biblical injunction. They substitute with matzah, an unleavened bread baked according to strict standards, commemorative of the food eaten by the Israelites who fled from Egypt in the Passover story.

Passover laws, however, also require that no leavened food be visible or extant on Jewish owned premises, and that the kitchen and vessels used for cooking food be very thoroughly cleansed of any leavened bread, including the smallest crumbs. Alternate dishes and utensils are used to be sure they are free of leavened products.

Rayik argued that non-Jews do not have to eat matzah on Passover, and that state facilities do not have to be kosher. He also complained that being deprived of bread was a denial of his basic human rights.

**Non-Jews receive bread**

According to the Israel Prison Service, facilities with mixed populations are kosher. They stated that Rayik's desire for bread could not supersede the religious need of Jewish inmates to eat matzah and avoid leavened foods during the holiday, which begins at sundown on Monday. They also noted that Rayik would be able to eat bread after Passover, and that serving him bread during the holiday would cause unnecessary cross-cultural tension in the jail.

Judge Elyakim Rubinstein said in his ruling that the state is obligated to provide food for inmates, but not a specific type, and that culinary substitutions for a matter of days should not be considered harmful.

According to the Prison Service's chief rabbi, non-Jews in separate non-Jewish wings are provided with amounts of bread prior to the holiday, which they may opt to eat over the course of Passover. In mixed wards, prisoners' lockers are not checked for leavening, which means prisoners with leavened food products could eat them whenever they please, even during Passover.

*Reprinted from the Arutz Sheva email of Nissan 10 5770/March 25, 2010 (*[*www.IsraelNationalNews.com*](http://www.IsraelNationalNews.com)*)*

**How to Be Wicked Without**

**Saying or Doing a Thing**

In anticipation of Pesach, which is just around the corner, I'd like to share with you an insight from Maharal which is truly one of my favorite ideas and critical for anyone involved in kiruv.

The Hagaddah lists the Four Sons, their differing approaches to the Seder night proceedings, and our responses to them. The Wise Son receives a detailed response to his inquiry, the Simple son receives a proper but less detailed response as befits his intellectual level, and the Wicked Son receives an answer that is designed to blunt his teeth.

**Same Answer Given to the Son**

**Who Knows Not How to Inquire**

For some reason, the Son Who Knows Not How to Inquire receives an answer that is identical to that of the Wicked Son. This is surprising, because one would have thought that this child should receive an answer similar to that of the Simple Son - a simple response. Shouldn't one who does not know how to inquire receive an answer that stimulates him to ask about and better understand the events of the evening? Why is our response so aggressive?

Briefly, the Maharal explains that it is simply unheard of and unacceptable for someone to sit at a Seder table and not have any questions. After all, a good number of the customs we practice were instituted specifically so that the participants should be stimulated to ask. Truthfully, one would expect any minimally intellectual person to have his interest piqued even without those innovations, but our sages took no chances. They desired that everyone who partakes in a Seder be stimulated to ask, bar none. If so, how can it be that this son sits there, witnesses the proceedings, and has nothing to ask? Even if he cannot articulate an intelligent question, is he not curious enough to ask (as the Simple Son does) "What is this?" How can it be that nothing at all bothers him about the strange events of the evening?

**Human Nature is Such that**

**People are Naturally Curious**

Furthermore, human nature is such that people are naturally curious. Children drive their parents crazy with questions about how and why things are as they are. Many parents will openly admit that they're lucky that curiosity only killed the cat and didn't claim their own children as victims, too! One of the challenges of parenting young children is not to stifle their natural desire to learn and explore, although at times it can prove quite a challenge. How is it that while sitting at a Seder table, this child can think of absolutely nothing to ask?

The answer is that the Son Who Knows Not How to Inquire does not suffer from a lack of intelligence, nor is he simple. His reasons for failing to ask stem from a very different deficiency. Quite simply, he'd rather not know. He is intellectually lazy and unwilling to invest in the "difficult job" of contemplation. He refuses to allow his mind to explore and analyze, lest he discover a concept that obligates him to change his lifestyle. Thus, he merrily proceeds through life pretending never to notice anything perplexing taking place around him. He remains utterly oblivious to external stimuli, reasoning that by doing so he can always blame his shortcomings on ignorance.

**The Maharal Sees “A Grave Sin”**

This, explains Maharal, is a grave sin. What distinguishes man from an animal is his ability to perceive and distinguish. Man can be stimulated to analyze and is expected to change as a result of his findings. Absent this ability, man would have no power to elevate himself above the animal. When one decides to ignore this faculty and allows it to lie dormant, he is no better than the Wicked Son who consciously decides to choose improperly. The only difference is that the Son Who Knows Not How to Ask never allows himself to recognize that he has a choice.

This is not a case of abject simplicity, but a sign of internal wickedness, and therefore he receives an answer befitting of the Wicked Son.

**People Seek Justification**

**Because of Their Ignorance**

People often ask me how they were supposed to know the truth about Torah if they never learned it in school or at home, insisting that as the innocent victims of ignorance, G-d surely has no expectations. My answer is blunt. Now, as adults, they are able to ask, and must do so, even if the answers they receive may obligate them.

Burying their heads in the sand is no longer an option.

As a young child, my daughter would close her eyes and think that she was hiding. She reasoned that if she couldn't see us, we must not be able to see her either. Ignoring obvious questions is not an excuse for failing to discover the truth of our existence. Just as there are many aspects to the Seder that beg for further inquiry, so there are countless happenings in our lives that cannot be dismissed as random coincidences. Our job is to allow ourselves to ask the uncomfortable questions and then follow the answers wherever they may lead us.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “Mentor’s Talk” published by Partners in Torah.*

**My Plastic Pharaoh**

**By Tzvi Freeman**

So here I am, scrubbing out the crumbs from my ergonomic keyboard, faxing in my Deed of Chametz Sale and downloading a new Haggadah. In other words, its almost Passover already. I'll soon be sitting at the Seder table with family and friends and the same question as with every one of these holidays is going to come up: What are we celebrating? What are we all here for?

My kids tell me that's no question: We're here to celebrate our freedom. That's what the holiday is called, "The Festival of Our Freedom." We were slaves in Egypt, now we are free. So let's get to the meal and celebrate.

**Still Feeling Like a Slave**

I'm glad they feel so free. As for me, I'm still a slave and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, never died. I labor for him all week long. He tricked me into it: First, he let me have all these nice things I really wanted for nothing. Later he started demanding money for them. When, one time, I didn't pay all the money, he demanded even more money. So I have to keep working real hard to give him all the money he demands.

I carry a picture of Pharaoh in his present incarnation in my wallet. It has his very intimidating new name engraved on it. He's called "Master Card."

But my kids don't go for that. They say that in the Haggadah it says Pharaoh let us go free. Well, I know the Haggadah a little better than them. The fact is, the Haggadah, like every other piece of Torah, is full of puzzles and seeming contradictions, there just so you'll ask questions. If you read any piece of Torah, especially the Haggadah, and you don't have any questions, you obviously aren't reading right.

**The Problem with the Son**

**Who Doesn’t Ask Questions**

(That's why the "Son Who Doesn't Know How to Ask Questions" gets put at the very end of the table. Not the Wicked Son. Not the Simple Son. The "Unquestioning Son." Not just because unquestioning is very unJewish, but also because it means you’re plain not paying attention to what's going on.)

To get to the point: We just finished making Kiddush, in which we call this "The Festival of Our Freedom." What do we say next? "This is the Poor Man's Bread...Now we are slaves, next year we will be free men."

Now is that a contradiction or is that a contradiction? Are we free or are we slaves?

So my kids tell me that we're celebrating that once we were slaves and then we got free and so we're celebrating. The fact that we all got into a mess and became slaves again, well, too bad. We can still commemorate the past. As long as the dinner is good.

Let me tell you something: I'm not into commemorating the past. If I'm going through all this trouble in the year 5770, 3,322 years later to clean my house for Passover and make a big Seder, it's got to have more significance than commemorating something that cancelled itself out with history anyway.

The problem of being a slave with all these contradictions, coupled with the stress of cleaning for Passover, really bothered me. So I went to see a psychotherapist. The psychotherapist listened, took notes and then told me that MasterCard is not Pharaoh. I am Pharaoh. More specifically, my unreasonable demands upon myself is the Pharaoh.

I told him my only real demand upon myself is that I should not be a slave. He said I shouldn't use that word, "should." The word "should" means I'm making an unreasonable demand upon myself. That causes stress. Stress, in his Haggadah, is slavery. Apparently, the Hebrews in Egypt were really stressed out. Building pyramids was nothing. It's the stress that did them in.

**“What Should I Do?”**

"So," I asked, "What should I do? I don't want to be a slave."

He told me I shouldn't do anything. Wanting is ok. I can want to not be a slave. Shoulding is bad. It's unreasonable to should.

Now I was really confused. I had always understood that "I should" was my liberator and "I want" was the one that got me in all this trouble to begin with. But the hour was up and there I was in the office showing my picture of Pharaoh to the psychotherapist's secretary.

"In summary," I thought, "I shouldn't say should." I needed to make another appointment with the shrink to ask whether I should or should not say that I shouldn't say should. But, at these professional rates, I didn't think my little Pharaoh would let me.

At any rate, I decided, I don't need a shrink to achieve liberation. After all, liberation is a form of enlightenment. When is the last time you met a spiritually enlightened psychotherapist? What I needed was a guru. An elevated, transcendent soul who is essentially liberated and could pull me out of all this muck and mire.

**Emailing the Guadalajara Rebbe**

So I sat down and keyboarded out a letter, explaining everything, to the Guadalajara Rebbe. Then I fired it off to enlightenment@guadalajara.guru. I stayed online awaiting my reply. In the meantime, I electronically paid the bills I was incurring by staying online so long in order to get a swift reply. My little Pharaoh came in useful again.

Then it came. Verbatim, as follows:

"We are all prisoners. The act of existence is our crime. The universe is our prison. Our bodies and our personage is our cell. The keys to liberation are held tight in the fists of our own egos."

Then a little note: "see Tanya, chapter 47. Also read Bringing Heaven Down to Earth by Tzvi Freeman."

I meditated, I sipped licorice tea, I meditated some more, and I got it. MasterCard is not Pharaoh. "I want" is not Pharaoh. Neither is "I should". It's not the want or the should, it's the "I."

I looked in Tanya, the classic Chassidic work by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, chapter 47. There he says that when G-d gave us the Torah, He gave us Infinitude. We connect to Him with the Torah and we are free because we are then infinite and unbounded as He is. And he writes, "...and so there is nothing stopping anybody except for his own will, for if a person does not want..."

**Our Egos Clutch Tightly the Keys**

Again, the same idea. We are all free. But our egos clutch tightly the keys.

How do I get my ego to let go of the keys?

For philosophy you can go to an enlightened tzaddik somewhere in Mexico. For practical, real-time liberation, I need The Rebbe. The Lubavitcher Rebbe.

This is the practical advice of the Rebbe, in a talk one Passover:

"Make a part of your life an act that takes you beyond your bounds, helping people that are not part of your family or circle of friends, doing something that does not fit within your own self-definition. Invite someone to your seder who you're not so comfortable with. At first, it may not feel so good. But you have set yourself free."

**Leaving My Own Little World**

So, again this year, I come to my seder. I leave my own little world of my own puny self and I walk through the door into something infinite, timeless and eternal, because it is bound with an infinite, timeless and eternal G-d. I am no longer part of me. I am part of us and part of His Torah and therefore part of Him.

And to prove it, I say, "Let all those who are needy come and join our seder. No matter who."

I have broken free. This year, we should all break free. Not just at the seder, but for every moment of our lives. Forever.

This year in Jerusalem.

Reprinted from this week’s Chabad.org Magazine (www.chabad.org)

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Shemini 5770**

Story #645 (s5770-30) 23 Nisan 5770

**Perils of Pita and Pesach**

**Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles**

**From a recent issue of**

**The Jewish Leadership Newsletter, #7025**

In the first Lebanon War in 1982, the IDF essentially forced the PLO terror organization out of Lebanon and into exile in Tunisia. The PLO was in complete disarray. One of the prisoners in the Israeli detention camp, Ansar, was a senior terrorist, admired by his henchmen. His name was Salah Taamari and he was a broken man.

In the book about Taamari, Mine Enemy, penned by Israeli journalists Amalia and Aharon Barnea, Taamari told Barnea of the transformation he underwent in Ansar. While in prison, he had completely despaired of any hope that the Palestinians would one day realize any of their territorial dreams. He was ready to renounce the struggle and was well on the way to convincing his prison-mates that they would never defeat Israel.

Then, one Passover, he witnessed a Jewish prison guard eating a pita. Taamari was shocked, and asked his jailer how he could so unashamedly eat bread on Passover. The Jew replied: I feel no obligation to events that occurred to my nation over 3,000 years ago. I have no connection to that.

That entire night Taamari could not sleep. He thought to himself: A nation whose members have no connection to their past, and are capable of so openly transgressing their most important laws, has cut off all its roots to the Land.

He concluded that the Palestinians could, in fact, achieve all their goals. From that moment, he determined to fight for everything - not a percentage, not some crumbs that the Israelis might throw us - but for everything. Because opposing us is a nation that has no connection to its roots, which are no longer of interest to it.

Taamari goes on to relate how he shared this insight with tens of thousands of his colleagues, and all were convinced. Taamari did indeed influence his co-terrorists and breathed new life into the war against Israel. It is hard to exaggerate the damage done by the pita in the mouth of just one Israeli prison guard on the holiday of Passover.

Moshe Feiglin is the leader of the Jewish Leadership faction of the Likud party in Israel <manhigutyehudit.blogspot.com>. In the quoted article he goes onto lament the damaging folly of [past and] present Israeli government leaders who voluntarily and publicly dine on non-kosher food at state dinners in [the USA,] Russia [and around the world].

Connections (2): Seasonal Passover, and Weekly Reading kosher diet

*KabbalaOnline.org is a project of Ascent of Safed www.ascentofsafed.com*

*To subscribe to weekly emails of inspiring stories related to the parsha, send your request to:* [*ascent@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1270674003)

**Good Shabbos Everyone**

**Rav Shea of Yerushalayim: Part Two**

**Continued from our last Email**

Good Shabbos Everyone. After their seder was over, the children of R' Shea respectfully approached their father. "We understand that you wanted to help the widow and her family," they began, "but what about your own family? We were kept waiting for hours'. And besides, what about your own mother? She is an older woman, and she too is a widow! Why did you favor the widow there over the widow here?"

R' Shea understood that their questions were justified. Patiently he said to them, "My dear children, your questions are legitimate. I will answer them with a story that happened to me many years ago with the Chazon Ish."

This is the story he told them: Many years earlier, R' Shea and a group of friends were studying in yeshivos in Bnei Brak. One of the older fellows in their group was having a difficult time finding a shidduch (partner in marriage). One day a number of the young men in the group were told that the Chazon Ish wished to see them. Immediately they made their way to the home of the great sage.

After inquiring as to their own personal welfare, the Chazon Ish said to them, "As friends of this young man [with the shidduch problem], it is your obligation to work on his behalf as diligently as possible to find him a suitable partner in marriage."

The Chazon Ish stressed the importance of this mitzvah and encouraged them to do whatever they could. The young men obeyed his directive and dedicated themselves totally to the effort. They contacted everyone they knew, they made calls, they visited people, they spoke, they cajoled - and finally they were told about a girl who would be suitable for their friend. The young man was introduced to the young lady, and within a short time the two of them decided to marry.

The young men in the group were thrilled. They had accomplished what they had set out to do, and now they couldn't wait to tell the Chazon Ish. They ran to his home to announce that they had fulfilled their mission. The Chazon Ish was overjoyed. The boys informed the great sage that later that same evening there would be a t'na'im (official engagement) and they invited the Chazon Ish to come, for they assumed he would want to participate in this wonderful simchah. The Chazon Ish told them that indeed he would like to come, but that he was occupied at the time with certain matters; however, he asked that once all the people were assembled and the families were ready to make the t'na'im, they should please call for him and he would come.

That evening the families and friends got together, the chassan, and kallah made their entrance, and after some joyous singing, two young men (one of them was R' Shea) were sent to bring the Chazon Ish to the festivities. When R' Shea and his friend came to the home of the Chazon Ish the door to his room was open, so they knocked softly and walked in. They saw that he was involved in a detailed discussion with a man and a woman. The Chazon Ish realized that the young men had entered, but the two young me understood that they could not interrupt the Chazon Ish. They were sure that he would finish with the people shortly and then make his way with them to the t'na'im of the new chassan and kallah.

But the Chazon Ish was in no rush. The two people had a very long list of items written on a sheet of paper from which they were reading. The man would mention an item and the woman would say, "Should we buy this?" If the Chazon Ish said, "No," they would go to the next item. If he said, "Yes," one of them would ask, "How much should we pay for it? Is that the cheapest price we can get it for?" Over and over the same questions were asked for every single item on that sheet. Patiently and carefully the Chazon Ish thought about each item mentioned and then gave his opinion as to whether they should stock the item or not.

Finally, after more than an hour, the man and the woman rose to leave. They couldn't stop thanking the Chazon Ish for his valuable time. Only then did the Chazon Ish get up to go with the two young men. "You must be wondering," began the Chazon Ish, before the two young men could even ask, "why I kept you waiting so long, and what was so important about my discussion with those two people.

“Let me explain. You see, that husband and wife are survivors of the concentration camps. They recently came to Eretz Yisroel, hoping to rebuild their lives. They decided to open a store and they came to me for help. I couldn't help them with money, so the least I could do is help them with advice. Every shekel they invest is important for their future and so I tried, to the best of my ability, to help them decide what to purchase for their store. It is my mitzvah to assist them, but it is not only my mitzvah - it is your mitzvah as well- because by your waiting you also had a share in that mitzvah, as did all the people who were kept waiting at the t'na'im. We all had the obligation to help those two get started in business again so they could begin a new life."

"And that is the reason," said R' Shea to his children, late into the night, that Pesach, "why I went to the widow with the young children and helped them with their seder before coming home. Because all of us - myself, you, your mother and grandmother - as members of Klal Yisroel had the obligation to help her. By your waiting patiently for me to come back, you too shared in the mitzvah of helping that unfortunate family through this seder night."

The Talmud tells us that a Jew is distinguished by three character traits: Shyness, Mercifulness, and the tendency towards doing of acts of kindness.  (Yevamos 79b) The Talmud goes so far as to say that someone who lacks one of these qualities must be checked out to make sure that he is really Jewish.

Let us use these weeks between Pesach and Shavuos to work on ourselves, especially in the area of helping others. The more desperate one is for our help, the bigger the mitzvah it is to help them. Sometimes we wonder in life how and why certain opportunities to do chesed (kindness) for others, materialize in our lives. The answer is, that Hashem is sending us a test, to see where we are holding in the midah (character trait) of kindness. Good Shabbos Everyone.

*Reprinted from last week’s Good Shabbos email.*

**Obama: Passover Teaches Hope;**

**Palin: Next Year in Jerusalem**

**By Malka Fleisher**

Despite staggeringly low approval ratings in Israel and international attention for his administration's staunch opposition to Jewish growth in Judea, Samaria, and eastern Jerusalem, US President Barack Obama held his third Passover seder on Monday.

A statement signed by President Obama said the story of the miraculous redemption of the Jewish people from under the lash of Egyptian slavery is a lesson in fighting suffering, discrimination, and oppression.

"In retelling this story from generation to generation, we are reminded of our ongoing responsibility to fight against all forms of suffering and discrimination," Obama wrote, saying "wherever we live, there is oppression to be fought and freedom to be won."

Obama also said the seder encourages hope "that we can repair this world."

Just a week ago, however, Obama [reportedly snubbed](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/136708) Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu when the Israeli leader was in Washington. According to reports, Obama excused himself from a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu in order to have dinner with his wife Michelle -- a dinner to which the Netanyahus were not invited.

Prime Minister Netanyahu also recently endured a [long tirade by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/136488), who chastised the prime minister for embarrassing US Vice President Joe Biden by allowing the announcement of a new building plan in Jerusalem during Biden's visit to Israel.

**“Next Year in the White House!'**

Obama's first seder took place on the campaign trail, in the basement of a hotel in Pennsylvania with three of his Jewish staffers, according to the *New York Times*. At the conclusion, Obama implored "Next Year in the White House!" a play on the traditional prayer of seder night, "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

Since then, Obama has attended two seders as President.

Monday night's seder was attended by daughters Malia and Sasha, who took part in the customary search for the *afikoman*, the "dessert" piece of matzah at the end of the meal, often hidden by children who barter for a prize in exchange for it.

**Message from Palin**

Yet President Obama was not the only significant American politician to issue a Passover message. Republican rival Sarah Palin had a powerful message for Passover celebrants. Often touted by activists and pundits as pro-Israel, Palin directly addressed the Jewish people, and offered her solidarity with Israelis:

Tonight Jewish families all over the world will gather to celebrate Passover, the story of Exodus and the freedom of the Jewish people from bondage. This holiday reminds us of the sacrifices that are still being made for freedom – the U.S. troops who are away from their families so that we can be with ours, and the Israeli people, who struggle for peace with their neighbors even as they face the threat of war.

“Next year in Jerusalem” will be the refrain echoed by Jewish families as they finish their Seders tonight. It is a stark reminder that whatever the threats the Jewish people have faced, whatever the struggles, their connection to Jerusalem is ancient and unshakable. On this Passover holiday, our family sends our best wishes to all who are celebrating. Chag kasher V'Sameach. Happy Passover. And next year in Jerusalem.

*Reprinted from the Arutz Sheva email of news concerning Israel.*

**Story #646 - 29 Nisan 5770**

**A New Cousin for Seder**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

In our holy books it is written that every Jew should take upon himself one mitzvah to do it with special devotion. Sometimes, for our own good, we are even sent from heaven a special trial in the mitzvah that we seek to excel in.

For the tzadik Rabbi Elazar (Lezer) from Reishe, a city in Galicia, Poland, the mitzvah was hospitality, as is fitting for the descendants of Abraham. He strived always to bring home guests and honor them, and never more so then for the first night of Passover, for the Pesach Seder. So it was no wonder that when he saw an unfamiliar face in shul after the holiday Evening Prayer, he approached him and thought to invite him home.

But when he approached closer to this poor man, he saw how he was struck with a leprous-type skin disease, and because of the stench of his disease, it was difficult to get near to him. Even so, I must not let such minor matters repel me from performing this great mitzvah, he thought.

**How will My Wife React?**

But, what about my wife? She is a most righteous woman, but she also has her limits. So he told the wayfarer, I want you to come have the Seder and the meal with me, but first I have to arrange something. Wait here, and I will come back to take you home.

So off he went to his house, walking in with a somber face more befitting Tisha B'Av than Pesach. Lezer, git yom tov ('Good Holiday')! his wife warmly greeted him, but he barely whispered back a subdued git Yom Tov.

What is the matter? she asked, concerned, for it was most unusual for him to display even the minutest trace of sadness on a holiday.

He asked her if she remembered their second cousin Moshe from some other town. Embarrassed to admit that she did not, she responded, Nu, so what is with him? He is here in shul.

What? she exclaimed. Everyone in the world you bring home, and our relative you leave in shul? What an embarrassment! Go back fast and bring him here! I would like to, the Rebbe said quickly, but he is leprous, and has a bad smell.

Even so, he is our relative, she said firmly. I will make a separate table for him. So the Rabbi went and brought the relative. After the Seder, the Rebetzin started asking him questions about mutual relatives, such as what is with Uncle Yitzchak and how is Aunt Rivkah, but the poor guy didnt know what she was talking about. Finally she caught on and said, Lezer, you are such a wise guy!

**Preparing a Bed for the Guest**

She prepared a bed for the guest, but didnt want to give him a pillow, because it would have to be thrown out afterwards. The tzadik said to her, that pillow will be a 'michaye' (pleasure) for you in your grave, so she gave in.

Before they went to bed, they locked all the doors and windows, so there simply was no way to enter or leave the house in the middle of the night. Yet, in the morning, they found the bed of the guest empty. Eliahu Hanavi (Elijah the prophet) doesnt sleep!

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[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a submission by Ezra Radhun, who heard it from Rabbi Mordechai Tachaver, zl, a man who brought many wandering Jews back to their faith, and started a cheder school for young boys here in the Old city of Tsfat.]

Connections (2): Seasonal Passover, and Weekly Reading skin disease

Biographical note:Rabbi Elazar of Reishe (1839-15 Tamuz 1910), a city in Galicia, Poland, was a great-grandson of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lyzhinsk. He was best known for miraculous healings, and for his book, Mishna Lemelech, on the weekly Torah readings.

finished before Shabbos.

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*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed. To subscribe to this email, please send your requests to:* [*editor@ascentofsafed.com*](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1271196491)

**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Pesach 5769**

Nisan 5769/April 2009

**Passover & Four Questions For a Financial Crisis.**

**By Rabbi Benjamin Blech**

*What insights does Passover provide into our current financial crisis that can help alleviate our collective pain?*

A fresh look at the Seder's traditional four questions offers much food for thought around your Seder table.

*1. Why is it that in all other years we eat bread and matzah, but this year we eat only matzah?*

Bread is the staff of life. Matzah is the symbol of poverty. To make money, in slang, is to "make some bread." To be blessed with much is to "have a lot of dough." But this year as we look at our bank accounts, our retirement plans and our depleted wallets, we are all too often reminded of the "bread of affliction" our ancestors subsisted on in the land of Egypt.

**Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone**

Why did this happen to us? Perhaps it's because G-d wants us to understand a biblical truth that we seem to have forgotten. "Man does not live by bread alone" the Torah teaches.

We dare not confine the strivings of our lives solely to accumulating money. We must not make material gain our sole priority. There comes a time when we have to learn to negate our overriding emphasis on "making more bread." While society stresses wealth as the primary measure of personal worth, Judaism insists that once a year on Passover, we demonstrate the moral courage to renounce the power of bread as the ultimate ruler of our lives. Surrounded by our families we declare we can survive without the trappings of luxury.

**The Sad Lesson of Sam Walton**

It's ironic that one of the wealthiest men in the world didn't learn this lesson until it was too late. Sam Walton was the multibillionaire CEO of Wal-Mart, the fourth largest US Corporation. As he was lying on his deathbed, he struggled to get out his last three words on earth. He had given his life for his business. In that area, he succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

Yet, it was at a price. He hardly spent any time with his wife, his children, and his grandchildren. He didn't allow himself the moments of loving interaction, of playing and laughing with his loved ones. His final three words? "I blew it!" He had the billions, but by his own admission he had failed. Maybe we now should be thinking about and thanking G-d on Passover for this important reminder.

*2. Why is it that in all other years we eat all kinds of vegetables, but this year we eat only bitter herbs?*

**Why Does G-d Sometimes**

**Make Our Lives Bitter?**

Why does a good G-d sometimes make our lives not better, but bitter? The Jews asked it in Egypt with regard to their servitude. We ask it today with regard to our dwindling financial assets. It is a problem that every believer has to face in one form or another.

We can learn a great deal from a story that is told about the saintly rabbi, the Chafetz Chaim. Meeting a former student after many years, the rabbi asked about his welfare. The student, in difficult straits, responded, "Unfortunately things are very bad."

The rabbi immediately shot back, "G-d forbid, you are not permitted to say that. Do not ever declare that things are bad. Say instead they are bitter."

Perplexed, the student asked, "Bad, bitter -- what's the difference? My life is terrible."

"No, my son," the rabbi answered, "there is all the difference in the world between them. A medicine may be bitter but it isn't bad."

True faith requires an understanding that life often presents us with challenges -- bitter moments that temporarily leave us with an acrid taste, but help us to grow, to mature and to eventually become better human beings.

**The Bitter Egyptian**

**Slavery was for a Purpose**

G-d planned the Egyptian experience for a purpose. In Deuteronomy He refers to it as "a fiery furnace" -- the way in which precious metals were purified. As harsh as it seemed at the time, it was all for a reason. The Torah tells us that the Jews who had endured and survived were all the better for it. And that too must be our hope as we confront our contemporary crisis. Yes, it is bitter -- just like a medicine that will make us better.

*3. Why in all other years do we not dip even once, but in this year dip two times?*

The past led many of us to believe that we could expect no dips in the economy. The good times would always roll without interruption.

**The Hubris of Man Clearly**

**Needed to Be Humbled**

It was in 1929, just before the Great Depression, that many of the brilliant economists of the time predicted that the "age of cycles" was over. The rules that limited human progress were no longer applicable. The stock market could now only go up and up. They claimed unlimited wealth was inevitable. The hubris of man clearly needed to be humbled. The crash of the 30s silenced those who had previously put all their trust in "my might and my power."

The prognosticators of our new millennium proved to be just as blind as their predecessors. They, too, assured us the old rules no longer applied, that we could spend without regard to the future, that we need not save because the value of our homes would only keep rising, that in short we were invincible and almighty.

**Desiring the Prayers of His Beloved**

In a striking passage, the Talmud explains why Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel were all barren from birth, requiring divine intervention in order to conceive. It was, the rabbis teach us, because "G-d desires the prayers of His beloved." When things come too easily to us we fall victim to a sense of entitlement. We think we no longer have to pray for blessings to come to us if they arrive even without being asked for. Prayers answered before they are spoken deny us the need and the opportunity to express them. Blessings too freely granted can also make us lose sight of our requirement for gratitude.

So we have dips in our fortunes. The good news is that they need not be permanent if we learn from them. All they ask of us is that when times are once again good we don't forget the source of our blessings.

*4. Why is it that in all other years we eat either sitting or reclining, but in this year we eat only reclining?*

**No One Can Remain Insensitive to**

**The Suffering of Those Around Them**

To recline is to lean. And this year there are many who are forced to lean on others for assistance. The demands placed this year on charitable organizations are unprecedented. No one can simply sit back comfortably in his or her own chair, insensitive to the suffering of those around them.

That, in fact, is the very reason G-d tells us He forced our ancestors to spend all that time in Egypt before He brought them back to the Promised Land. “Be kind to the poor and to the stranger,” He commands us, “because you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.” The purpose of Egyptian slavery was meant to teach us to empathize with the oppressed in every generation. We know what it means to be poor, to be hungry, to be mistreated. We were schooled in misery precisely so that we would not fail in our mission to be a light to the world, teaching compassion and kindness.

**Sharing Our Festive**

**Meal with the Needy**

"This is the bread of affliction -- let all those who are hungry come and eat with us, let all those who are needy come and share our festive meal with our family." This is the way we begin our Passover Seder. It is the most fitting introduction to the holiday whose very story took place in order to teach us this lesson.

We all strive to be happy. We search for different ways to achieve this goal. What is the best way to secure it? We have tried so many different ways unsuccessfully. Social scientists have recently come to a remarkable conclusion. A recent issue of the prestigious Science magazine reveals that studies prove helping others is perhaps the most surefire way to gain personal happiness.

Strange then, isn't it, that we spend so much of our days dedicated to getting, when we would be so much better off if we put more of our efforts into giving. We could all learn much from Michael Bloomberg, the self-made billionaire founder of the Bloomberg financial information firm and New York Mayor, who donated $235 million in 2008, making him the leading individual living donor in the United States, according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy. In explaining his philosophy, he said he intends to give away most of his fortune, because "the best measure of a philanthropist is that the check he leaves to the undertaker bounces." And that will insure that he dies a very happy man.

**Permitting Us to Realize**

**Profound Issues in Life**

These explanations may not resolve our pressing contemporary problems, but they do permit us to realize that there are profound issues implicit in the Divine reaction to our difficulties that transcend our understanding. Our struggle for meaning must always be matched with our firm belief that the G-d who cared enough for us to perform miracles in days of old continues to love us in the same measure to help us overcome our present crises. That is, after all, why we celebrate Passover.

Reprinted from the Pesach 2009 website of Aish.com

**From Oporto to Georgia**

**By Gershon Kranzler**

The family of old Manuel da Garcia, the wealthy merchant from Oporto, Portugal, was very happy when they finally arrived in their new home in the State of Georgia. It was a beautiful estate they had purchased with their very last jewels while still in Amsterdam.

 They were fortunate, for everything else they had had been lost to pirates who boarded their ship only hours out of the secret port where they had hidden.

Their summer villa had been ravaged by agents of the Inquisition, who had made the Garcias' servants believe they were bringing the belongings to a safe hideout. But the torture of the brutal pirates could not force old Manuel, his brother Noah, their wives and children to betray the secret of their last treasures.

The silver *mezuzot*, and the jewels which Noah's wife Donna Denah had so cleverly sewn into the stitched hems of the ladies' petticoats, would never be spotted by the greedy bandits. The pirates ripped Don Manuel's *tefillin* open and snatched Donna Marima's silver candelabra. But when they found nothing of value inside, their rude search came to an end.

**The da Garcias Had**

**What to Be Grateful for**

Surely their booty was rich enough! They needn't bother any further. The da Garcias were grateful that at least they would not have to start at the very bottom, as had so many less fortunate friends and relatives.

Half of their precious stones paid the Dutch governor for permission to land. The rest paid for the estate, far to the south of New Amsterdam. Within days, the da Garcias had built two wooden huts large enough to accommodate the two families.

They hoped, with the help of the L-rd, to soon build regular stone houses, even if they would be a far cry from the elegant marble front villas of their old homes in the suburb of Oporto.

**The Entire Family Pitched In**

It was all very exciting, the planting of the soil, the fencing of the garden, and the setting of bushes and trees. There was not enough money left over to hire many hands, so the entire family pitched in.

Shalom in freedom and peace.

But Divine Providence determined otherwise. One of their field hands, an old Mulatto, took ill with severe cramps on the eve of Passover. Like wildfire a rumor spread that the Spanish Jews (as they were called by their neighbors) were poisoning their gentile workers as part of the Passover ritual.

At once the plantation workers fled to the surrounding estates, spreading tall tales regarding the bizarre preparations of the Jews for their celebrations that very night.

Troubled, but steadfast in their faith, the da Garcia family and their new friends conducted their Passover service in full glory. They sat down at the long white tables made for the main hall in order to celebrate the *seder* together.

Though there were few of the elegant and luxurious furnishings such as had decorated their old homes in Spain and Portugal, these Jewish families were proud of the simple wooden, earthenware and brass utensils that now took the place of their silver and gold and fine china. The children had made a large *seder* plate out of wood and covered it with an old piece of red velvet.

**Everyone Contributed to**

**The First Communal Seder**

The seven families who had joined the da Garcias had salvaged two of their prayer books and a *Haggadah*, of which the men had made rough copies. Everyone contributed something to make this first communal *seder* a special and a memorable occasion.

As Don Manuel da Garcia rose for the *kiddush*, the strange sounds of drums, the beating of many feet and savage shouts approached from afar.

"Remain calm, my dear ones," assured Manuel, "the Lord who has helped us thus far will surely not forsake us now."

But he himself turned a sickly pale when torches began flashing through the dark evening and the noise came ever closer.

**Cry of “Kill the Murderers!”**

"Kill the murderers."

"Get rid of the vermin."

"Hang them all, before they murder us," shouted the large mob as the Jewish men rushed out to see what they could do.

"Will there never be an end to this constant terror and fright?" cried Donna Marima. "Even here, after a flight half way around the world, they come to spoil our *seder* with ghastly accusations."

But a look from her husband helped still her fears. She must take charge of the women and children, who had huddled fearfully in the corner of the main hall.

**A Plea to Listen to Reason**

"Friends, neighbors, please listen to reason!" shouted Don Manuel, as the mob approached, led by a huge dark-skinned giant of a man.

"We Jews have done nothing wrong. We are happy to be free and to live peacefully. Do not accuse us of a crime which our faith forbids, and which we would abhor. The servant's disease has nothing to do with the harmless celebration of our ancient Passover feast.

You are all invited to join us and see for yourselves that tonight we celebrate liberty and freedom for all of mankind."

"Shut him up! He wants to poison us all," shouted the giant, who Manuel recognized as "Big Jim," a brute known for his lawlessness and the evil treatment of his slaves. "Burn the place, kill the rats, all of them, smoke them out!"

**The Violent Mob Pressed Forward**

He flung his big torch through the air. With hoarse shouts, the mob pressed forward, tearing down fences, bushes and small trees, as they surged forward to the main house. There Don Manuel and his men bravely stood, ready again to face death rather than forsake their precious faith. Big Jim rushed up the wooden steps to the porch, yelling, swinging his fire brand, ready to toss it into the house.

Don Manuel stepped forward and met the big brute face to face. For a fraction of a second the giant bully stopped, awed by the power and nobility of Don Manuel da Garcia, dressed in the traditional white garb for the seder. But the mob was pushing on, and their blood curdling cries encouraged Big Jim to push the old Jew aside.

**Loud Trumpet Calls Sounded Through the Night**

At that very instant loud trumpet calls sounded through the night. Within seconds, a troop of uniformed men rode through the mob.

"Make room for the governor," shouted the officer in charge. Respectfully the large crowd pressed back to allow the tall, stately man through. The governor's keen eyes seemed to take in all there was to be seen. His very voice commanded respect.

James Edward Oglethorpe knew much about the vicious persecution of the Jews. In fact he had made it possible for many groups, victimized by the Inquisition, to set sail and start life anew in the southern American colonies.

**“Throw Aside Your Torches!”**

"Throw aside your torches!" he commanded. Not a single man in the mob would dare to contradict Oglethorpe. "Since when do we in the free colony of Georgia persecute others for observing their religious faith?"

Only Big Jim, trying to maintain his defiance, stepped forward

He blurted, "The Jews poisoned one of their field hands to use his blood for their ritual celebration tonight!"

"How do you happen to know that?" asked the governor of the Georgia colony sternly.

"Why, everyone around here knows it. They saw the worker rolling on the floor, screaming of pain from the cramps, before he passed out. It is well known that the Jews use blood for their Passover feast," Big Jim responded.

**Everyone is Free to Believe**

**And Practice His Religion**

"It is an old lie!" thundered the wise official. "Here in this country everyone is free to believe and practice his religion as he desires, and as he has inherited from his forefathers.

“Mind you, no one will interfere so long as I am the head of this colony, and as long as the founders of our new nation remember why we have all come here! But big Jim was not one to yield so easily.

"But what about the worker who was poisoned today on the plantation, is that also a lie, Governor?"

"How do you know that he died? And how many slaves have died on your own plantation, by your own hand?"

**The Old “Dead” Mulatto**

**Steps Forward**

That very moment the old "dead" mulatto stepped forward. "Governor, it was I who suffered the cramps this morning. But they are all gone now, and I know where they came from. I ate something I should not have eaten.

But this Big Jim here has killed my brother with his whip, and a number of his other workers as well. Believe me I'd rather stay here on this plantation with these kind people, than with him!"

This turn of events ended Big Jim's bravado. He disappeared out of sight just as quickly as his huge hulk of a body could carry him. And with him went all those who had gathered to join in the burning, looting and killing of the new Jewish settlers of Shalom.

Old Manuel da Garcia thanked the kind governor in the name of his family. He invited Ogelthorpe to partake in the traditional *seder* meal.

"Your Honor, see for yourself that our ancient rituals symbolize the purest and highest ideals of liberty, freedom and faith in the Almighty Creator

of the Universe."

"My good man," replied James Ogelthorpe, who had won the love of his colony's people by pursuing justice and fairness for all, "you need not convince me of your righteousness and the purity of your faith. I only wish I had the time to stay and celebrate your holiday with you.

“But Divine Providence has seen fit to have me pass your plantation just this evening as I was returning to Savanna from an important mission. There is still urgent business waiting for me. So, go on and celebrate your feast in the proper spirit. Keep your faith, obey its commandments, and continue to work with all of us for the betterment of mankind."

**A Thunderous Applause Breaks Out**

Everyone who witnessed this scene broke out in thunderous applause as the Governor of Georgia rode off into the distance.

Samuel da Garcia, his dear family, and their new guests and associates returned to the *seder* table, grateful and happier than ever before. The unexpected threat to their peace had been averted by the grace of the kind L-rd.

It was a mighty chorus of both young and old who sang the traditional melody of *Vehi she'amda laavotenu*. Its words reaffirmed the family's own experience that Divine Providence guards and protects the Jewish people from the threats of destruction at all times and in all places.

*(Editor’s Note: The above story is excerpted from the “The Glass Blower of Venice” by Gershon Kranzler. It is published and copyright by Kehot Publication, Brooklyn, NY. and is reprinted with their permission.*

**A Blast from the Past (March 27, 2007)**

**From Rabbi, the Eclectic**

**Shul Aid Matzo Test**

By Anahad O’Connor (The New York Times)

SPRING VALLEY, N.Y., March 26 — Call it a bus mitzvah. Or maybe “bus matzo.”

Behind Aaron Winternitz’s home in this heavily Hasidic town about an hour’s drive north of Manhattan sits a white school bus with a metal smokestack. Inside the gutted bus, Rabbi Winternitz pedals a stationary-bike contraption that he outfitted to grind wheat.



Susan Stava for The New York Times

In a converted school bus, 100 pounds a day of matzo is being prepared over three days for a congregation in Spring Valley, N.Y.

At peak operation, Rabbi Winternitz and up to 20 helpers can churn out more than a dozen pieces of matzo in five minutes. In this week before Passover, they will make 100 pounds a day for three days.

“Think about it: they’re built very strong, and they’re made to be fireproof,” Rabbi Winternitz, a schoolteacher, rabbi and amateur inventor, said in explaining how he always thought an empty school bus would be great for matzo-making. “To me, it makes a perfect oven.”

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| http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2007/03/27/nyregion/27matzoh_650.jpg | http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/misc/spacer.gif |
| * Susan Stava for The New York Times * The bus sits in Aaron Winternitz’s backyard. “To me, it makes a perfect oven,” he said. |  |

He has been making matzo in his backyard for the past three years, not just for himself but also for many members of Congregation Mivtzar Hatorah. But last week a neighbor called the police complaining of heavy smoke emanating from Rabbi Winternitz’s backyard.

**Concerned About a Possible Fire Hazard**

Sgt. Lou Scorziello of the Spring Valley police said officers who visited the bus on Friday were concerned that it could be a fire hazard and that it seemed to be fueled by gas lines illegally extending from the two-story home. The police issued no citations, but referred the matter to the local fire and building departments.

Town inspectors visited the house on Monday and looked around in disbelief. A call to the building department on Monday was not immediately returned.

Rabbi Winternitz said the bus is legal — and powered by wood, not gas, which explains all the smoke. Neighbors may be irked by the smoke, but Rabbi Winternitz sees it as an added benefit. “The matzo tastes better,” he said. “It even comes out with a better color.”

It all started about three years ago when Rabbi Winternitz overheard older members of the congregation here saying that traveling from Rockland County to a Brooklyn bakery to make their matzo was becoming too much of a hassle.

**Creative Wheels Began to Turn**

His creative wheels began to turn.

Flipping through the classifieds, Rabbi Winternitz found a large white school bus for sale that had been gutted and stripped of everything but its windows, engine and wheels. Then he bought bricks, metal, stainless steel and insulation. With the help of an engineer and some friends, he turned the bus into a wood-fired, matzo-making machine.

Tucked behind Rabbi Winternitz’s home on a quiet street, the matzo-making bus stayed a secret among the congregation through one Passover, then another, until last week’s complaint from a neighbor. He is determined to continue production for this year’s holiday, which begins Monday at sundown.

**Symbolizing the Jews’ Rushed Exodus from Egypt**

Matzo, unleavened bread that symbolizes the Jews’ rushed exodus from Egypt, must be made in 18 minutes or less, so there is no time for it to rise. The bus, therefore, is not just an oven but an intricate operation.

The bus sits about 15 feet behind the house, and in between is a makeshift room for preparing matzo that looks like the back of a pizza parlor. A long table sits in the middle, covered in paper that is replaced each time a piece of matzo is made.

**Sinks Along the Walls of the Bus**

Several sinks sit along the walls of the bus and one in the room so Rabbi Winternitz and other members of the congregation can wash their hands, according to Jewish law, after they make each piece of matzo. The dough is prepared in the room, where members hang it on a long wooden stick, also covered in paper, then turn around and place it in the oven.

The oven is the width and height of the bus, occupying its rear section. In the front of the bus, Rabbi Winternitz stores freshly picked wheat and the stationary bike with two sets of pedals (one where handlebars would be), which serves as a wheat grinder.

As he sat on the bike pedaling away on Monday afternoon, Rabbi Winternitz said children from his congregation usually pick the wheat on Long Island, then ride the bike to grind it and help make the dough.

“The kids love it,” he said. “It’s unbelievable. They’re involved in the whole process: the picking, the grinding, the separating.”

He laughed off the idea that the oven might be a fire hazard, saying it was insulated with heat-shielding material designed to withstand 2,400 degrees Fahrenheit. In three years, he said, there has never been a problem.

**The Matzo with the Taste**

And everyone at the synagogue seems to love it.

Thomas Pontos, a member of the congregation, said he calls the food “the matzo with the taste.”

“When it comes to matzo, it all depends on who is making it,” he said. “I know the rabbi who’s making it, and that alone makes it that much better.

*Reprinted from the March 27, 2007 edition of The New York Times.*

**The White House**

**Passover Seder in 2009**

**By Hana Levi Julian**

 U.S. President Barack Obama invited friends and staff members to a Seder at the White House on Thursday night to mark the second night of the Passover holiday in what is believed to be a "first" for the executive mansion. President Jimmy Carter attended a Seder in 1979 at the Washington home of adviser Stuart Eizenstat.

**Service Led by a Jewish Campaign Aide**

The Jewish service at the table was led by Eric Lesser, a campaign aide. First Lady Michelle Obama and the couple's two daughters also attended the special meal, believed by aides to be the first attended by a president.

Earlier in the day, Obama signed a letter that wished Jewish Americans "a peaceful and relaxing holiday" and noted that the story of the Jews' Passover flight from Egypt was "among the most powerful stories of suffering and redemption in human history."

Obama added, "As part of a larger global community, we all must work to ensure that our brothers and sisters of every race, religious culture and nationallity are free from bondage and repression, and are able to live in peace." He ended the letter with the Hebrew holiday greeting, chag sameach ("happy holiday" - ed.).

The Seder, which included the reading of the traditional religious text, the Haggadah, also featured the regular seder plate, with its roasted egg, matzah, bitter herbs and greens.

**Not the First Seder for the Obama First Family**

It is not the first time that this First Family has attended a Seder, and many of this year's guests were at the table last year in the Sheraton hotel in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for a Seder during the campaign. Taking a page from the Haggadah's closing wish of "Next year in Jerusalem," Obama and others had jokingly added, "Next year in the White House," according to an official.

However, the administration's two top observant Jewish aides said they would not be able to be there: White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel did not come to dinner, and senior adviser David Axelrod planned to be with his own family in Chicago.

**Kudos From the Jewish Sector**

National Jewish Democratic Council deputy executive president Alexis C. Rice praised Obama lavishly in response to the news he would hold a Seder, saying it proved "Obama is a true friend of the Jewish community."

William Daroff, head of the Washington office of the United Jewish Communities organization, said the move "speaks to the inclusiveness of today's America and of President Obama. This night is indeed different from all other nights."

Various media also viewed the celebration as a sign that the new president would invest much in a close relationship with his Jewish supporters.

The week-long Passover holiday began Wednesday at sundown.

**Inspiring Haggadah Insights**

**From Rav Yehonatan Eybeshitz**

**By Daniel Keren**

(“*Vayaged Yehonatan, The Eybeshitz Haggadah: Experiencing Redemption*” by Rabbi Shalom Hammer, Devorah Publishing, 225 pages, 2008)

*Pesach* (Passover) is just around the corner as we have now entered the month of *Nissan*. The lesson of *Pesach* is that the redemption of the Jewish people by Hashem from Egyptian bondage is an eternal gift. When we celebrate the *Yom Tov* (festival), we do so not to commemorate a major historical event (i.e. July 4th). Rather the gift of freedom, especially for the *Yiddish neshama* (Jewish soul) is eternal, even in times and places where our brethren have been physically persecuted.

*Chazal*, our Sages of blessed memory teach us that the final and ultimate redemption of *Klal Yisroel* (the Jewish nation) from this last and harsh *golus* (exile) will occur during the month of *Nissan*. As the days towards *Chag HaMatzos* quickly approaches, Jewish hearts around the world anticipate with excitement the beauty of the *Pesach* night when gathered around the *Seder* table, we read from the *Haggadah* and recount according to our intellectual abilities the wonders of Hashem’s redemption of our forefathers from Egypt.

**A Noted 18th Century Torah Scholar**

An interesting *Haggadah* just released this year is Rabbi Shalom Hammer’s adaptation of insights from Rabbi Yehonatan Eybeshitz, *zt”l*, that is titled “*Vayaged Yehonatan – The Eybeshitz Haggadah: Experiencing Redemption*.” Rabbi Eybeshitz was an acclaimed Torah scholar who was noted for his expertise and commentaries on the Talmud, halachah and Kabbalah.

Many readers may be familiar with the famous dispute between Rabbi Eybeshitz and another great Torah luminary of the 18th Century – Rabbi Yaakov Emden, *zt”l*. In the aftermath of the debacle caused by the Shabtai Zevi sect of false messianists that created terrible disillusionment in the Jewish world, Rabbi Emden was suspicious of anyone demonstrating “Shabbatean tendencies.” Rabbi Eybeshitz aroused Rabbi Emden’s concern because of his strong interest in the study of *Kabbalah* and his related enthusiasm in creating *kabbalistic* amulets.

**The Controversy Between Rabbis Emden and Eybeshitz**

Rabbi Emden’s condemnation of Rabbi Eybeshitz in the aftermath of the latter’s refusal to not continue making amulets, temporarily split the 18th Century Torah world. But among those who defended Rabbi Eybeshitz were the Vilna Gaon and the Noda B’Yehudah. Today, both Rabbi Eybeshitz and Rabbi Emden remain highly respected and their seforim continued to be studied by serious Torah scholars around the world.

Interestingly enough, the new *Pesach Haggadah* by Rabbi Hammer constitutes the first time that the writings of Rabbi Yehonatan Eybeshitz has been translated into English. In his introduction, the author explains:

“Rav Yehonatan did not write an official commentary on the *Haggadah* (although he did write a lengthy and extremely complex commentary on “*Chad Gadya*”), but using the *Haggadah’s* text as a guide, I planned to choose and organize a multitude of different sources and ideas from his *sefarim* in the format of a commentary upon the *Haggadah*…

**Not a Literal Translation**

“So I decided that rather than translating the Hebrew original [of Rabbi Eybeshitz], I would base myself loosely upon it: embellishing and elaborating upon some of Rav Yehonatan’s original commentary, omitting some material cited therein…adding a series of my own brief essays concerning issues raised by Rav Yehonatan…They (Rabbi Hammer’s personal insights and commentaries on Rav Eybeshitz’s writings) will be typographically differentiated from Rav Yehonatan’s original commentary.

Rabbi Hammer has served as a rabbi and Torah teacher both in the United States and Israel and currently teaches in the Yeshiva Hesder Kiryat Gat and Yeshivat Hesder Sderot. He also broadcasts a weekly radio program for the OU (Orthodox Union) called The Sleepless Sermon and has lectured in Jewish communities throughout the United States, South Africa and Israel.

**Why We Eat Matzah on the Seder Night**

A sample of his translation, adaptation and explanation of Rabbi Eybeshitz’s varied writings on the Pesach theme included in the new *Haggadah* published by Devora Publishing is the following excerpt which analyzes the reason we eat *matzah* on the *Seder* night:

“Why does the author of the *Haggadah* introduce the section dealing with *matza* by proclaiming, “*Matza* – This is what we eat,” and then asking, “Why do we eat [this unleavened bread?” He could have skipped his brief proclamation and his opening question by beginning with the reason we eat *matzah*: to commemorate that “the dough of our forefathers did not have time to become leavened.”

“Rav Yehonatan explains that this complex opening recalls the two different reasons why *matzah* is eaten: to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt and to commemorate Avraham’s serving the three angels *matzah* on Pesach.

**The Halachic Ramifications of One’s Reasoning**

“Whether we choose to commemorate the unleavened bread of the Exodus or Avraham’s hosting of the angels has *halachic* ramifications. The Torah dictates: ‘You shall not eat leavened bread with it, for seven days you shall eat *matzot*.’

“The Talmud explains that only dough with the potential to become leavened bread can be used to make *matzah*. This is especially true of the *matzah* eaten by Biblical injunction upon *Seder* night. The Talmud concludes that *matzah* consumed to fulfill the Biblical injunction cannot be made out of rice or millet because dough made from these grains cannot become leavened bread.”

Rabbi Hammer studied under Rabbi Berel Wein, the world renown Torah educator and historian who praises his student’s new book on the *Pesach* philosophy of Rabbi Eybeshitz by stating: “This is a book not only for the *Seder* table, for it is certainly that, but for study and perusal all the days of the year.”

**A Recent Profusion of English Language Haggadahs**

It has only been in the last 40 or so years that a growing library of valuable *Pesach Haggadahs* with English commentaries have been published. My parents often tell me that when they celebrated the Pesach Seder, the only English *Haggadah* available to their families was the pamphlet version published and distributed by Maxwell House Coffee and it was just a translation of the text, completely lacking even a simple commentary of the *Haggadah*.’

“*The Eybeshitz Haggadah: Experiencing Redemption*” by Rabbi Shalom Hammer is available in Jewish bookstores or direct from the publisher by emailing [sales@devorapublishing.com](mailto:sales@devorapublishing.com) or clicking [www.devorapublishing.com](http://www.devorapublishing.com).

**Why Does G-d Allow Our Enemies**

**To Attack Us in Every Generation?**

**By Rabbi Moshe Lieber**

"*It is this that has stood firm by our fathers and us. For it was not one alone who arose against us to annihilate us. Rather in every generation there are those who rise against us to annihilate us. But the Holy One, Blessed is He, saves us from their hand*."

(*The Pesach Haggadah*)

"It is this that has stood firm." The promise He made to our fathers at the Covenant Between the Parts, that He would be with us always, has stood firm for our forefathers and for us.

According to the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 44:22), when G-d promised Abraham that He would exact retribution from the Egyptians and eventually free his offspring from bondage, the promise included salvation from all future exiles as well.

Assured on National Survival

Even when Israel sins, it remains G-d's people and is assured of its national survival. This assurance was reiterated at the conclusion of the Tochacha, admonition (Leviticus 26), with which G-d warned the Jewish people if they would fail to live up to their obligations.

At the conclusion of a series of the increasingly severe and appalling punishments that are intended to influence the people to repent, G-d comforts His exiled and tormented children:

"But, despite all of this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not be revolted by them nor will I reject them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them - for I am Hashem, their G-d" (ibid. 26:44).

**We Always Remain**

**Hashem's Beloved Children**

Let us never think that the atrocities of exile prove that we are, G-d forbid, no longer His Chosen People. Even in exile, we are still His beloved children whom He will eventually redeem.

G-d assured Abraham that and also the nation that they shall serve, I shall judge (Genesis 15:14). The word "also" indicates that, like the Egyptians, the Four Kingdoms - i.e. all the nations that persecute Israel throughout its history - will not escape punishment.

While the Jewish people will survive, their oppressors will be paid back for their cruelty (Rashi ad loc.) This Divine assurance served our fathers in good stead during the terrible times of subjugation to Babylonia, Persia and Greece, and which has been our lifesaver in the darkest days of our tragic existence in the present exile (Shibbolei HaLeket, Maharal.)

In every generation, there are enemies who would exterminate us. It is only because of the promise that He made to Abraham that G-d rescues us from their hands (even if we truly deserve punishment) and punishes them (Abarbanel, Avudraham).

**The Benefits of Being Strangers**

According to the Netziv, "It is this that has stood firm by our fathers and us," refers not to G-d's promise of salvation and protection, but to Israel's exile status of strangers and sojourners, for this quality allows us to survive the spiritual ravages of exposure to foreign and often degenerate cultures.

G-d's promise to Abraham that his "offspring would be aliens in a land not their own" was the greatest insurance against assimilation. Israel's refusal to allow its personal and national identity to be obliterated in the melting pots of exile has proven to be its most successful survival tactic.

A Jew should never feel completely at home or at ease. Wherever he is, he must sense that he is not truly at home. This perception saved us from disappearance. Rabbi Marcus Lehmann captures the sentiment:

**A Guarantor of Jewish Eternity**

It is this very persecution which is the guarantor of Jewish eternity. Often in our history, the cordiality of a host has tempted us to assimilate and abandon our sense of apartness. Then, anti-Semitic hatred has reminded us that we are indeed unique. We may forget is temporarily, but our enemies will always remind us that we are Jews. Thus, it is the underlying enmity of our enemies that has stood to protect us.

[The] Maaseh Nissim sees yet another aspect of the exile experience as the element of our salvation. That G-d redeemed us from Egypt before we were totally swallowed up in its impurity offers hope that G-d does not abandon Israel. The thought that G-d seeks to sustain us through our difficult existence in exile provides us with the strength and courage to persevere.

In sum, G-d's promise to Abraham and His Divine Presence are always with us and protect us from our enemies (Iyun Tefillah.) Furthermore, He will never allow our enemies to fully unite against us (Sfas Emes), nor would He allow them to go beyond the stage of "merely" oppressing us and succeeed in totally annihilating us (Ohr Yesharim).

**An Important Numerical Acronym**

[The Abarbanel] views the word "Vehee" ("It is this") [spelled with the Hebrew letters vav, hay, yud and aleph] as a numerical acronym for key ingredients of Jewish survival. Thus the vav refers to the Six Orders of the Mishnah, the foundation of the Oral Law; the hay to the Five Books of Moses, the basic text of the Written Torah; the yud to the Ten Commandments which encapsulate the general principles of all the mitzvos; and the aleph to the One and Only Lawgiver. The Torah and our loyalty to it and to its Giver have stood by us.

"For it was not one alone who rose against us to annihilate us." During all of our exile, we have been threatened by physical and spiritual enemies and G-d has saved us from them (Rokeach). This, too, was a result of G-d's promise to Abraham.

Abraham was called "Ivri" ("Hebrew"), because all of the world stood on one bank (ever) of the "river" and he stood on the other bank. In response to this courageous resolve to follow G-d's law even at the cost of such isolation, G-d created, in the Egyptian smelting furnace, a people who would be different. They would be G-d's people.

**A Higher Moral Standard**

It is this insistence on being different and maintaining a higher moral and ethical standard that elicits such venomous hatred on the part of the nations of the world. Our unique, unnatural origin and unusal nature has brought us enemies in every generation (Rabbi A. Wolf.)

While innumerable enemies have risen against us, we are confident that none of them can prevail, since G-d is still with us. Thus, homiletically we might render the passage "For it was not one alone" [as] "for the One and Only has not turned against us," and for this reason we rejoice in His salvation (Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibezh).

"Rather in every generation, there are those who rise against us to annihilate us."

In every generation, Providence arranges that someone arises who seeks to fatally harm us. G-d does this so that He will be able to save us from them and thus demonstrate that we are His special people over whom He constantly watches (Avudraham).

**Limiting Our Punishment**

Even when G-d finds it necessary to bring pain and punishment upon Jews, He does so in small installments so that the pain never becomes overwhelming. It is for this reason that in every generation some nation or individual arises against the Jews.

Rather than having one nation arise that could deliver one overpowering and crippling blow, G-d arranges that foes arise in every generation, thus dissipating the intensity of the hardship so that we can survive it. This is G-d's way of softening the blow of exile by parceling out the pain over many generations. It has preserved our forefathers and us (Yismach Yisrael).

[The] Geulas Avraham suggests that the Haggadah's mention of adversaries other than Pharaoh is in order to show that G-d's promise to Abraham was ongoing and not limited to one particular historical occurrence. For this reason, the Haggadah spoke earlier of the fact that G-d keeps (present tense) His promise.

**G-d's Ongoing Redemption**

As adversaries continually rise against us throughout history, G-d provides us with ongoing redemption, and He uses this concern with Jews as a means to display His control of human destiny. This itself is an indication of His intense love for His people.

Were the Exodus to have been a one-time episode, G-d's omnipotence may have been long forgotten by the nations of the world. By allowing them to rise up against His people and then thwarting them, He reiterates to the nations of the world that there is none like Him in the midst of the earth (Maasei Hashem).

(*Editor's Note: The above is excerpted from "The Pesach Haggadah Anthology: The Living Exodus [the Rechnitz Edition] with Commentary and Anecdotes from Talmudic and Rabbinic Literature" by Rabbi Moshe Lieber and edited, with an Overview by Rabbi Nosson Scherman. It is reprinted with permission of Mesorah Publications, Ltd. "The Pesach Haggadah Anthology/The Living Exodus" is available in Jewish bookstores or from the publisher: (718) 921-9000.)*

**Serving Hashem Because of**

**Gratitude (Hakarat Hatov)**

**As Heard From**

**Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt'l**

The most basic idea of Passover is that Hashem took us, His nation, out of 210 years of bondage in Egypt. As the pasuk states "Asher hotzetecha meeretz Mitzrayim."

However the pasuk continues" lehiyot lachem Lelokim", which means, in order that you will serve Me. From this we see clearly that Hashem took us out of slavery from Egypt in order to serve Him.

The primary lesson and yesod (foundation) that is manifesting itself on Pesach and on which our Torah is built is that of gratitude, hakarat hatov. This requires us to Recognize and acknowledge all of the tremendous gifts of kindliness that Hashem is bestowing upon us and on our families.

This underlying principle is realized right in the first of the Ten Commandments that was heard by our Nation directly from Hashem. "I am Hashem your G-d that took you forth from Egypt from the house of slavery."

The question is asked, why didn't Hashem introduce Himself as "the Creator of heaven and earth"? The reason is because the Bnei Yisrael did not witness the Creation of the Universe. However, we did experience slavery and brutal treatment at the hands of the Egyptians for 210 years. The scars were still fresh on our backs and on our children.

It is for these reasons, in order to teach us the great principle of feeling gratitude to the Benefactor who has redeemed us, that Hashem connects it to the time of the rebirth of our Nation and in the First Commandment.

**The Root of All True**

**Service of Hashem**

*Hakarat hatov, gratitude, is at the root of all true service of Hashem*.

Just keep in mind that your body, your mind, your parents and children and wife, all of your possessions, the ability to make a living and your soul/life have all been given to you as a gift from Hashem.

They have been given on the condition that you recognize these special gifts, and scrutinize them as you would any diamond. Now you are ready to thank Hashem every day for 120 years.

This is the prerequisite to being able to serve Hashem from gratitude.

(*Editor’s Note: The above was prepared by Sam J. Gindi, editor of the weekly email dvar Torah – “As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt”l” that is distributed by the Friends of Yeshiva Gedolah Bet Yisroel. Mr. Gindi is also the coauthor of “Emulating Our Creator: Based on the Teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller,” a book published last year by Targum Press.)*

**Pesach Dentally Speaking**

**By Dr. Joshua J. Canter, D.M.D.**

Many of the mitzvos of Pesach involve eating, and while none of us need instructions in how to eat, there are some dental concerns to be aware of. Some people are afraid that their teeth may crack on matzah. For most of us, this does not happen.

However, a tooth with a larger filling or which has had a root canal, without a crown, has a greater risk of fracture. If you are having a crown made and have a temporary crown in place, realize that this material is not as strong as the permanent restoration.

Denture wearers have other concerns. People with new dentures who have difficulty chewing, would be well advised to break the matzah into pieces and put the pieces on both sides of their mouth.

Dentures, orthodontic retainers and mouth guards must also be prepared for Pesach. Strong abrasives or dropping these devices into boiling water can cause damage or warpage. Many suggest avoiding hot chometz for twenty-four hours, although cleaning, soaking and pouring of boiling water on both sides of these prostheses instead.

Others say that dentures cannot be worn for twenty-four hours prior to Pesach or at least not to eat chometz during this time. There are those who even suggest that those with braces should have a professional cleaning Erev Pesach.

After eating your last chometz meal Erev Pesach, do not forget to brush your teeth and have your new unused toothbrush ready for Pesach use.

This article is meant only as a brief overview. Please consult your rabbi on all halachic issues.

(Editor’s Note: Dr. Joshua Canter can be reached at (718) 972-2970.)

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**Keeping a Low Profile**

“And now, please let your servants dwell in the Land of Goshen”

It would seem more appropriate for the order of the verse to be different: “And he descended to Egypt with few people, and he sojourned there,” since Jacob descended to Egypt with few souls, and only afterward lived there as a foreigner.

Thus the verse teaches us a cardinal rule of survival in exile. Even when Jews enjoy financial success, it is imperative that they maintain an understated lifestyle.

Ostentatious displays of wealth or highhanded political power can often backfire, arousing the jealousy and wrath of our host nations. Thus, we are taught that when Jacob descended to Egypt, he sojourned there with a humble and diminished lifestyle. (The Imrei Emes as quoted in “The Pessach Haggadah/The Living Exodus’)

**Similar to the Evil Inclination**

“They (the Egyptians) set taskmasters over them (the Jews) in order to oppress them with their burdens…”

The Mesillas Yesharim (Chapter 2) asserts that Pharaoh’s plan was analogous to the strategy of the Evil Inclination. If man can be kept harried by an overwhelming work load, he will never have the time or peace of mind to focus on his goals in life and on whether he is headed along the proper path.

On this night, as we re-experience our freedom from Pharaoh, we can refocus our attention on giving our lives direction and meaning (The Sephardic Heritage Haggadah.)

**A Religion Open to All**

*“Who has chosen us from all nations.”*

There are those who see in these words, and in other, similar statements in the liturgy, an expression of chauvinism, a declaration of our superiority over all other peoples.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky noted that in fact the Jewish approach is the complete antithesis of such sentiments. On the contrary, it is other peoples who have developed the concept that one who is not a native-born member of their race cannot join the ranks of their nation.

Even if they allow for a naturalization process, a foreigner – and, quite often, all his descendants – is always considered a stranger and regarded with suspicion or even hostility.

The Jewish people, on the other hand, believe that all mankind, having been created in “the image of G-d” is considered beloved before G-d (Pirkei Avos 3:18)). However, the Jews, who accepted the Torah upon themselves thereby merited an even higher level of regard in G-d’s eyes (ibid.).

If a person – any person, regardless of his ethnic origin – decides to make a similar commitment to acceptance of the Torah and its mitzvos, he is regarded as an absolutely equal member of the Jewish nation, and becomes “chosen from all other nations” to the exact extent as all other Jews. (Reprinted from “The Haggadah of the Roshe Yeshiva”).

**In Each and Every Generation**

While Pharaoh decreed only against the males, Lavan desired to uproot all. It was because Lavan schemed to uproot the Jewish people to the very last one that Hashem foiled his plans. Similarly, Haman planned to kill every last Jew, as it is written – “To destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day” (Esther 3:13).

Therefore, he was not successful. Even Hitler, the ugliest and most monstrous of Jew-killers, planned to kill all the Jews under his rule, and therefore, planned to kill all the Jews under his rule, and therefore, although he nearly succeeded, he ultimately failed.

The Exodus is active in every generation, and Hashem protects us from the tyrants of today as He did in the days of Pharaoh. (The Sfas Emes Anthology: Reflections on Redemption” by Rabbi Moshe Apter).

**Urhatz (Washing)**

Faith in Man, Faith in G-d. The term Rachatz, which in Hebrew means to wash, has the meaning to trust in Aramaic. Man can succeed at purifying himself and cleansing his soul of the filth and residue of sin only if he has firm trust that G-d frees those who wholeheartedly repent from sin. Furthermore, one must profoundly believe that the tiny spark of good and G-dliness in man will eventually triumph. (The Sephardic Heritage Haggadah)

**The Night of Exile**

The Ben Ish Hai explains that “Why is this night different from all other nights?” may also be understood to mean “Why is this galut (exile) different from all other galuyot (exiles) in that is has lasted so long?” (The Sephardic Heritage Haggadah).

**Looking for Answers**

“The wicked son – what does he say? ‘Of what purpose is this service to you?’”

The Abarbanel points out that one of the indications that this child is wicked is the way he poses his “question.” Actually, he is not even phrasing his statement as a question, thereby showing that he is not interested in an answer.

Therefore, the Torah tells us about him: “And it will be when your children will say to you” (Exodus 12:26).

Furthermore, the wicked son evidently views Pesah as a burden, as sheer work. A proof of this is that the verse cited above continues, “What is this work (Haavoda) to you?” The Torah is hereby informing us that the wicked son is making a statement that as far as he is concerned, this whole Passover business is just toil and exertion – and he wants no part of it! (The Sephardic Heritage Haggadah).

*Reprinted from the April 2006 edition of the Flatbush Jewish News*

**Pesach the Melamed**

**By Eugene & Annette Labovitz**

“Let me tell you about my father,” said Reb Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov. “His name is Pesach. He is not a wealthy man, but a simple, humble shtetl Jew from Yavornik, which is in Galicia...”

He knows how a Jew is supposed to live, and often he does not hesitate to open the eyes of people who need to improve their ways. He is descended from distinguished lineage, the great-nephew of Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk.

His mother is the Rebbe’s niece. But that did not ensure him a decent living. He had tried his luck selling wine to the peasants who lived in the area. His one barrel sprung a leak and that ended that business. Then he attempted to farm a small field he leased, but a drought destroyed the small crop that he had planted.

He decided to accept the offer of Berel, a wealthy man living in a neighboring shtetl, to be melamed (a religious teacher) to his children. My father would live in Berel’s home from the week following Sukkos until the week before Pesach, the entire winter.

**A Heavy Burden for Mother**

He knew this was placing a heavy burden upon my mother, leaving her alone with their young children. But, he didn’t know what else to do. Before he left Yavornik, he assured the grocer that when he returned before Pesach, he would pay up the cost of whatever food my mother needed to sustain the family. Reluctantly the grocer agreed to allow her to buy on credit.

My father presented himself in Berel’s house the Monday after Sukkos. The house was beautifully furnished, and my father thought he would be very comfortable. But, Berel scowled mercilessly at the melamed who had come to teach his children, at the man who would be a member of the household for the next six months.

In the next few days, the character of his host became all too apparent - he was tight-fisted, begrudging, stingy. The few poor people who dared to knock on his door, seeking a few kopeks with which to feed their famished bodies, were all turned away empty-handied. They left his doorstep embarrassed and despairing.

The first Shabbos approached, and from what my father had seen all week, he understood that there would be no guests gracing the Shabbos table. After the Friday morning lesson, he asked Berel for a few moments of his time to report on the progress of his children. After concluding his report, he casually asked, “And who will be your guests for Shabbos?”

**Never Invites Guests for Shabbos**

“What do you mean?” Berel sputtered angrily. “I never invite guests!”

“In that case,” said my father, “I cannot eat at your Shabbos table.”

Berel was so set in his miserly ways that my father’s declaration did not perturb him one bit. My father had to figure out another strategy that would sway Berel.

“Let me tell you something,” he said. “You hired me to teach your children, but I have something to teach you.” He spoke to him about the holiness of Shabbos, about the importance of having guests and presenting to the world a happy countenance.

“What kind of example are you setting for your children?,” he said. “I can teach them the meaning of the words, but how can I teach them how to live as Jews?”

Berel was not moved. Nothing my father said changed his mind.

“All right, then,” my father said. “Since I will not remain in this house without your inviting guests for Shabbos, and you won’t pay for the guests’ food, deduct the amount it costs to invite guests for Shabbos from my wages.”

This was a plan that appealed to Berel. The shtetl poor thought he had had a change of heart. Each week another poor family was invited to grace his Shabbos table. Each week, he deducted the amount it cost him from my father’s salary.

The six months my father served as a melamed to Berel’s children passed. He was ready to return home. He approached Berel to get his wages. To his astonishment, Berel exclaimed, “What! You owe me money. You used up your entire salary, and another five hundred rubles.”

**Father Almost Fainted**

My father almost fainted. He was counting on that money to pay the grocery bill. And he needed money to prepare for Pesach and to sustain our family for the next few months until he found other employment. He was breathless. He felt totally beaten.

He gathered his few belongings and started the long trek back to Yavornik on foot. He arrived after ma’ariv had ended, but he could not go home and face the family. He knew that my mother had repeatedly assured the grocer during that long winter that her debt would be all cleared up before Pesach. Feeling he had no other place to turn, he decided to sleep on a bench in the shul.

**Discovers Father Sleeping**

**On a Shul Bench**

The next morning, I went to shul to daven shacharis. To my horror, I found that my father had slept all night on a bench. I ran over to him. “Tatte! Mama is waiting for you. She even prepared a special meal to welcome you home. Why have you slept here? Why have you not come home?”

He shrugged, unable to speak coherently. We prayed shacharis together. But, when it ended, he rolled his tefillin so slowly. I could not understand his delay. After all, he hadn’t seen his family for six months.

I was impatient. But, who could blame me? How could I perceive his embarrassment, his pain, when I didn’t know about his experience.

**A Wagon Quickly Approaches**

I grasped his arm and guided his footsteps. I tried to urge him forward, but he walked so slowly. As we crossed the main road, which bisected the marketplace, I noticed a wagon hurtling toward us. The wagoner seemed anxious. He called to us.

“I am looking for Pesach the melamed. Would you happen to know where I might find him?”

“If you are looking for Pesach the melamed,” my father answered, “you have found him. I am Pesach the melamed.”

“In that case,” said the wagoner, “this is for you!”

He threw a sack at my father’s feet. I stared at the driver intently. As abruptly as he had appeared, he vanished.

**My Father Picked Up the Sack**

My father picked up the sack and carried it home. At the house, after enthusiastic greetings, my father placed the sack on the table and opened it. It was filled with rubles worth the exact amount Berel had agreed to pay him for teaching his children plus the additional five hundred Berel had claimed my father owed him for his having invited guests for Shabbos.

I can’t describe the joy of that seder night. Our family had not been together for six months, and the white-clothed table was laden with every Pesach ritual symbol and delicacy. It was truly a night of redemption, not only recalling the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt, but thankfulness for our deliverance from the hardships of that winter. And in the words of the Haggadah, “We sang a new song, a song of redemption, a song of deliverance!”

**Drinking the Third Cup of Wine**

By the time we had finished the meal, recited the Grace after Meals, and drunk the third cup of wine, I imagined that I was there with the three million Jews who left Egypt. I wondered why the Jewish people were commanded to remain inside their homes with the doors closed during the tenth plague, the slaying of the firstborn Egyptians.

My father gently prodded me, interrupting my reverie. “Tzvi Elimelech, it is time to open the door for Eliyahu HaNavi.” Each year, during the seder, it was my task to open the door. To my suprise, there was a man standing on the doorstep.

“Tatte,” I called, elated, “do you remember what the wagoner looked like when he threw that sack at your feet? I had a good look at him. Now, he is standing on our doorstep!”

“So how does Eliyahu HaNavi look dressed up as a wagoner?,” my father inquired.

I turned to invite him inside. But, before I had a chance, he disappeared again.

(*Editor’s Note: The above story adapted from “Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov: A Biography” by Nosson Ortener and published by the Institute for the Publication of Galician Chassidus, was excerpted from “The Legendary Maggidim: Stories of Soul and Spirit” by Eugene and Annette Labovitz. It is reprinted with permission of the distributor. “The Legendary Maggidim” published by Targum Press.*)

*Reprinted from the June 2002 edition of The Flatbush Jewish News.*

**Additional Items for the Pesach Anthology**

**Passover Prep Takes Spring Cleaning to a Whole New Level**

**By Michele Chabin| (Religion News Service)**

JERUSALEM — During the month leading up to Passover, which this year begins April 6 at sundown, Chevy Weiss, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish mother with five kids and a demanding career, scrubs and vacuums almost everything in her Baltimore home.

In keeping with their strict interpretation of Jewish law, which forbids Jews from possessing and consuming chametz (fermented grains) during the eight-day festival, Weiss and her husband, Yoel, clean every one of their five children’s toys by hand, with bleach.

**Washing Every Piece**

**Of Lego Individually**

While some families clean items in a washing machine, “we wash every piece of Lego individually, like my mother did,” said Weiss, a 39-year-old political consultant. “We vacuum every single pocket on every jacket. And we spend significant time with toothpicks getting into cracks of tables and chairs that have been around food.”

Like other Orthodox families, the Weiss’s also purchase chametz-free toiletries, makeup and cleaning supplies for use during the holiday.

“I know that people have mocked our traditions to buy kosher-for-Passover tin pans, disposable plates and toilet paper, but it’s not going to the extreme. Often, these things are made of chametz products.”

Even so, Weiss has a red line: “I don’t start washing the curtain rods high up on the walls like some may do, because I know chametz isn’t going to be there,” she said.

While Passover cleaning of one form or another has been around since the Israelites fled from bondage in Egypt — Passover’s central theme — some say the lengths to which many contemporary Jewish families go to avoid chametz has turned the “festival of freedom” into a season of domestic slavery.

**Doing Things Not**

**Required by Jewish Law**

“There are important laws related to not eating chametz on Passover, but some people go overboard and do things that aren’t required by Jewish law,” said Rabbi Jay Karzen, a modern-Orthodox rabbi in Jerusalem. “They clean their chandeliers and change their sink faucets” out of fear a cookie or breadcrumb may have touched them.

In Israel, some Haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, rabbis have instructed adherents to drink only bottled mineral water on Passover because people have been known to throw bread into the Sea of Galilee, Israel’s main source of drinking water.

Within the global Jewish community, where Passover is an almost universally celebrated holiday even among secular Jews, people poke good-natured fun at the cleaning mania.

**The Broken Toilet**

Karzen recounted a joke in which a family’s toilet dies just before Passover.

“Their plumber tells them to buy a new toilet and that he’ll install it during the intermediate days of the holiday. On their way back from the store, a neighbor sees them hauling the toilet and tells her husband, ‘Next year, we should change our toilets for Passover.’”

Growing serious, Karzen cautioned, “being this ‘machmir’ (strict) can destroy the joy of the holiday. It can be especially hard on the women.”

Well aware of the problem, over the past few years several well-known Orthodox rabbis in Israel and the U.S. have admonished families not to confuse spring cleaning with Passover cleaning.

Which is not to say that less religious and secular Jews, especially in Israel, aren’t fazed by Passover preparations.

In Israel — where cleaning materials are stacked high at every supermarket entrance a month before the Seder meal; where the national fleet of planes is scrubbed; and where huge cauldrons of boiling hot water are set up on street corners to cleanse cutlery and pots — everyone seems to be caught up in the frenzy.

**Being in Line at the Car Wash**

During the many years he lived in Israel, Joe Millis, who now lives in London, recalled how, “just before Pesach (Passover) I’d be in line at the car wash with several other secular Israelis” in order to rid the upholstery of crumbs.

“It was madness. I rationalized it as a spring clean, but I could have done that another time.”

While many Jews dread Passover preparations, and a sizeable number largely avoid them by going away for the festival, Weiss said she eagerly awaits the holiday ever year.

“I enjoy being as stringent as possible and upholding the customs and traditions of my ancestors,” Weiss said.

*Reprinted from the March 30, 2012 edition of The Washington Post*

**How I Prepared My House For Pesach in 59 Minutes**

**By Fradl Adams**

I am one of those women who men will always laugh at come Pesach cleaning time. I start cleaning the day after *Rosh* *Chodesh* *Cheshvan*, and I’m still finishing up as my husband makes his *bedikas* *chometz* rounds. I scrub every square inch of floor, ceiling, wall and counter until I’ve peeled off a layer of its surface along with any stubborn molecule of *chometz*, both visible and invisible.

**One of Those “Fanatics”**

I move every moveable and not-so-moveable appliance and piece of furniture and attack the area behind it with a vengeance that frightens the hardiest of onlookers. Every sock, every paper clip and every toothpick gets scrubbed down with soap, water and my magic cleanser. Don’t even get me started on the toys. You get the picture; I’m one of *those.*

I get mocked and I get hocked, mostly by the male population, but still I staunchly stick to my Pesach cleaning rituals and take great pride in my work. I keep a collection of some of my more interesting finds, exotic specimens discovered in the most unlikely places. These I show to any man who dares question my methods. I regale anyone who will listen with the story behind each piece of chometz (or pseudo-chometz), cherishing my precious stash until *Erev* Pesach, when I’m forced to burn it.

**Finding a Cheerio Inside**

**A Filing Cabinet Drawer**

“This Cheerio was stuck to the inside wall of the filing cabinet drawers where I keep my pay-stubs from when I was still single.”

“This mold-growing pasta was sandwiched between two headbands in my 9-18 months ‘girls summer clothing bag’.”

My pride and joy: a piece of *lokshen* *kugel*, glued with some mysterious substance to the underside of our *seder* plate. That one I save for those who wonder why I have to Pesach clean the Pesach things.

Again, you get the idea.

I won’t go into great detail about cooking, but suffice it to say that, for about two months before Pesach, my life-saving kitchen in the basement sees a non-stop flurry of activity, from the oven to the freezer, and then back again.

One particular year, I was due to give birth three weeks before Pesach. We decided to spend Pesach with my parents in Baltimore to spare me what I call my labor of love, but what the rest of the family deems backbreaking, excessive and unnecessary. I must admit, I was kind of relieved to be able to take it easy that year. It was a difficult pregnancy and waking up the morning after *Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan* with nothing but the usual daily chores on my agenda felt great.

**Using the New Spare Time to Focus on Her Children**

I used my spare time to focus on the children, giving each my full attention while they spoke, spending ample time with them on their homework, even sitting down and playing games, making projects and having a great time. Gone was the rush, the madness and the “Let’s get this over with quickly because I have to clean and cook for Pesach.”

As Pesach neared, we consumed as many *chometz* products as we were able and got rid of whatever was left. When I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy a mere two weeks before *Yom* *Tov*, we planned the *bris* without the added pressure of cooking and cleaning for Pesach.

**Super Relaxed on Bedikas Chometz Day**

Then, *Bedikas Chometz* day dawned crisp and clear, and I was super relaxed. No last minute cleaning for me. All I had to do was clean one room for my husband to do a *bedika* on, have him call our Rabbi to sell the remaining chometz, wherever it was hiding, to the non-Jew, and we’d be off early tomorrow to a relaxing Pesach. Or so I thought.

Erev Pesach was a great day for interstate traveling. In the early afternoon, after a day and a half of frenzied packing, we piled into the car with our new addition carefully bundled into his car seat. It was with a true feeling of liberty, of *z’man cheiruseinu*, that we pulled out of our driveway.

Our liberty was pretty short lived. It began with a slight rumbling, then continued with a more ominous hissing. The *coup de grace* was the billowing smoke emanating from under the hood of our car. Barely two hours into the eight hour trip, we found ourselves on the side of the I-80 at a safe distance from our smoking car. *My heart sank.*

Shivering in our thin sweaters, my six girls and I huddled together while my husband attempted to get in touch with the AAA. Thankfully, the newborn was more appropriately attired and was comfortable for the moment, but a glance at my watch told me that he would very soon get hungry.

Thus began the waiting… and the whining… and the waiting… By the time the tow truck showed up, an hour later, the sinking feeling had begun to settle deep in my stomach.

**Desperate Plea to be Towed**

**To Baltimore is Rejected**

While my husband and oldest daughter traveled home in the tow truck, I and the rest of the crew had to settle for a car service. Our desperate plea to be towed to Baltimore elicited incredulous laughter from our kind but businesslike tow truck driver. The cost of taking the car service the rest of the way to Baltimore ruled out that option. We piled into our home exactly sixty minutes before candle lighting time, with the alarming awareness that Pesach has to be made… *Now!*

The panic that had been slowly rising over the course of this surreal day shot up exponentially. I attempted to quell it by closing my eyes and inhaling really deeply. After ascertaining that this was not some nightmare I had yet to wake up from in the warmth of our car, I took mental stock of the situation. We had spent a minute talking and strategizing, meaning that *candle lighting* was now in fifty nine minutes. In that time we would need arrangement for our meals, out of the house, obviously, and we would need to clean and do a *bedikah* of our entire house.

**With Shaking Hands and Swallowing Hard**

I steadied my shaking hands, swallowed hard and opened my eyes to face my troops.

“Okay, everyone, gather round for your assignments. We have exactly 59 minutes until *yom tov*, and that means we have 59 minutes to get this house ready for Pesach. What do you say; think we can do it?”

The gleam in my older daughters’ eyes told me they were up for the challenge, Hashem should bless their souls. Because a mutiny was the last thing I needed on my hands at that moment.

My husband made arrangements for us to eat out for the first days at least, miraculously at one house. We could buy supplies after that or make the trip, a bit late. The first order of business for me was to map out the battlefield. I assigned two adults, or semi-adults, to each level of the house. The oldest girls would tackle upstairs; my husband and middle daughter would take on the main floor until he would begin the *bedika*, and the “Younger Middles”, as we like to call them, would handle the basement. My youngest girl, the new baby, and I would supervise.

I designated one of the bedrooms upstairs as the “Lock-Up room”, where we stowed anything that likely contained *chometz* but was too complicated to clean. We would lock up this room and that would be the room where all the non-Jew’s chometz would be stored, should he honor us with a visit.

**Banished to the Lock-Up Room**

The three displaced girls would bunk with their sisters. I had already packed the children’s clothing for Yom Tov, so all the other clothing went in the Lock-Up room, as well as toys, games and books and select pieces of furniture.

We turned the music on loud enough to reverberate through all corners of the house, ensuring that only the fastest tunes with the most invigorating beats play, to help us maintain the tempo and rhythm of our cleaning.

Following behind me, by just a few steps, was my husband doing a quickie *bedika*, the shortest he had ever done for a full house *bedika*, and this year even he discovered “real” *chometz.*

**Getting Guidance from the Rav on the Phone**

Meanwhile, I tried to close my eyes to this short-cut version of Pesach cleaning that was transpiring in my very own home. My husband kept our devoted *rov* on the phone nearly the entire time, asking checking, receiving guidance and inspiration (and counseling). It was amazing how little I truly knew about what was required, what was recommended and what was ridiculous.

“Move the stove?”

“No!”

“The fridge gaskets?

“Pour ammonia!”

“Coat pockets?”

“Whatever they’ll wear on Pesach.”

The questions were endless. Chairs, mattresses, window shades, sock drawers… we’d never thought to differentiate between what was necessary and what wasn’t; we’d always just cleaned it all.

Couches that would be used on Pesach were opened, moved and vacuumed. Toys were all stowed out of sight, besides for a select few that were easy to clean and would suffice to keep the children busy for the entire duration of our *Yom* *Tov* at home.

**Didn’t Bother Checking the Books**

We didn’t even bother checking the books, generally a job that took two weeks, as I had very strict no–eating–and–reading rules. Tables were covered tightly with waterproof material, and the *chometz* kitchenware wasn’t even glanced at.

We scrubbed, we covered and we taped shut. We laughed, we sang, and we screamed.

Some time in the middle of all the madness, my husband recited with particular intensity the words that nullified any *chometz* we’d overlooked, and ran out to shul, six blocks away.

**Adrenaline Coursing through Her Veins**

I took over. The adrenaline coursing through my veins helped me forget that I was still recovering from birth and not exactly operating at peak strength. We swept and vacuumed till the kids said it’s time to light.

When my husband returned from *maariv,* it was to a home smelling of lemon-scented cleanser and hefty doses of Ajax and to a tired but glowing troop of women lining up to greet him. 59 minutes and we had done it (or it had done us in). Right then and there, all I could think about was, if I did *this* I could do anything.

**A Lesson for the Future**

I could make a wedding two weeks before Pesach, and I could have 50 guests over for the *seder.* I could compromise slightly on my self-imposed pressure to be perfect and I could make Pesach no matter what else may be going on in my life.

Because in future years, if circumstances will seem difficult and I’ll wonder how to cope, all I’d have to do is remember the time I made Pesach in 59 minutes.

*Reprinted from the May 2012 edition of KASHRUS Magazine.*

**Rabbi, Wife Share Tradition**

**Of Iconic Jewish Bread:**

**Vancouver Children Learn the Passover Story:**

By Jacques Von Lunen

Matzo must be done baking within 18 minutes of the moment water meets flour, to prevent accidental rising.

Rabbi Shmulik Greenberg had the kids’ full attention.

“Are you ready to bake matzo?” he shouted out after telling the story of the iconic Jewish bread.

“Yay!” the two dozen children yelled back excitedly.

They had come to the Gan-Garrett Jewish preschool in Orchards to prepare for one of the high holidays of the Jewish calendar in a way none of them ever had — by baking matzo.

**The Reason for Eating Matzo**

The reason why Jews eat matzo is to remember their ancestors’ history, Tzivie Greenberg, the rabbi’s wife and director of the preschool, told the children.

The matzo was baked differently from other bread out of desperate necessity, according to Hebrew teachings. The Jewish people during their exodus from slavery in Egypt had to flee so hastily that they had no time to leaven their bread, that is, to let the dough rise.

And matzo is a poor man’s bread, made of only water and flour, lacking all the flavorful ingredients enjoyed in breads today, the rabbi’s wife told her students.

[](http://www.columbian.com/photos/2012/mar/27/42553/)

Photo by [Steven Lane](http://www.columbian.com/staff/steven-lane/)

*Rabbi Shmulik Greenberg shows Shalom Dinberg, 3, Cameron Hatton, 12, and Levi Greenberg, 5, how to grind wheat to make matzo at the Gan-Garrett Jewish preschool. Telling children the story of Passover is an integral part of the holiday, the rabbi said.*

Jews all over the world eat matzo during the seven days of Passover, which this year doesn’t start until April 6, Shmulik Greenberg said.

But he wanted to build the mood of the holiday in his community’s children. He leads Chabad Lubavitch of Clark County.

“A major part of the holiday is to tell the children the story of Passover,” Greenberg said.

And to make the holiday story interesting to children, he brought the holiday to life.

When the children filed into the preschool Tuesday, stations decorated in historic motifs were set up. After some short introductions, the children soon were separating wheat from chaff, grinding the wheat into flour by hand, adding water and rolling out the dough with wooden dowels.

They couldn’t dawdle with the dowels — no more than 18 minutes were allowed to pass from the time flour met water until the finished matzo loafs emerged from the oven.

That’s because the dough will start to rise after 18 minutes, which would mean the children and their families would disobey the ancient commandment to eat unleavened bread on Passover, Greenberg said.

He didn’t just learn how to make matzo out of a book — it’s a deep-rooted family tradition for him.

**Illegal to Bake Matzo**

**In Communist Russia**

Greenberg’s grandfather lived in communist Russia before emigrating to Israel in 1966, the rabbi said.

It was illegal to bake matzo in Russia in those days, so his grandfather built a hidden chamber in his fireplace and baked matzo at night.

Rabbi Greenberg can now pass on the tradition to the next generation. On Tuesday, he watched his 5-year-old son, Levi, make the traditional bread in the ancient ways of his people.

*Reprinted from the March 27, 2012 edition of The Columbian daily newspaper in Vancouver, Washington.*

**The Night We First Had Guests Come to Our Seder**

**By Yerachmiel Tilles**

In 1976, after several years of marriage, my wife and I finally mustered the courage to make our own Passover seder, at least for the second night. As soon as we made the decision, we began to invite guests. As the festival drew closer, the guest list grew. And grew. And grew! All of a sudden we were expecting sixteen guests!

After nullifying and burning the chametz on Passover eve, a new flush of excitement overtook me. Every year, for the few hours before the festival began, the Lubavitcher Rebbe would stand in the doorway of his office and distribute pieces of his matza, which had been baked earlier that afternoon. I decided that I would tell the Rebbe how many guests we were having and surely the Rebbe . Then, surely, he would give me extra matza.

**Underestimating the Amount**

**Of Work Left to be Done**

Over-enthusiastic and impractical as usual, we sorely underestimated the amount of work left to be done that day. When I finally reached the Rebbe's office, it was too late! The Rebbe had gone back inside to prepare for Maariv (the evening prayer). "Oh no," I thought. "From one piece of matza, to a lot, to none. How will I face my wife?"

"Don't be upset," I was told by an old-timer. "The Rebbe will give out some more after Maariv for a short while."

"Thank G-d!" I exhaled. Immediately after the final "amen" of the services (or perhaps even a bit before, I must admit), I charged out of the shul and sprinted up the stairs to the Rebbe's office. I wasn't first on line, or even close to it, but thank G-d I could tell from the pace we were moving that I would get in. No sweat.

My turn came. The Rebbe sized me up with a rapid glance and turned to break off a piece of matza for me. Before he could do so, I quickly mustered my courage and blurted, "We have sixteen guests."

The Rebbe looked at me. Time froze. I froze. Finally the Rebbe spoke: "For the first Seder or the second?"

"The second," I answered, much surprised at the question.

"Then I can not give you matza now," the Rebbe declared.

**My Face Must Have**

**Registered Great Perplexity**

My face must have registered great perplexity, or perhaps the Rebbe sensed I was about to faint. The Rebbe hastened to explain (and in English!), "It is already the first night of the holiday. We are not allowed to do anything on a festival or Shabbat in preparation for the following day, even if the next day is also a festival. Do you understand?"

I nodded, choking back my disappointment. But the Rebbe hadn't finished. "So come again tomorrow night after Maariv, and I will give you then. Gut Yomtov. A kosher freiliche Pesach (a kosher and happy Passover)."

Good Yomtov and what a Yomtov! I excitedly ran home to tell everyone what the Rebbe had said. Immediately after the prayers the next night, I proudly marched up to the Rebbe's door, whereupon his attendant, may he be well and live many more long years, refused to admit me. "The Rebbe doesn't give out matza tonight. Only the first night," he said, turning away.

**The Rebbe’s Attendant Didn’t Believe Me**

"But the Rebbe told me to come," I gasped in panic. He clearly didn't believe me. In desperation, I told him the whole story. I could see he was still skeptical. He could see I was about to either explode or collapse. Or both. Finally, he agreed to ask the Rebbe. I peeked after him and saw the Rebbe nod.

How did the Rebbe know to ask me for which night I need the matza? I can't answer that. He hadn't asked anyone else that question: I had asked around to find out. I know only that I'm grateful the Rebbe made an exception for me, on both nights.

Oh yes. The Rebbe did give me a large amount of matza which I happily shared. I don't know about the other sixteen people, but over 25 years later, I still remember my matza from the Rebbe!

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**The Conservative**

**Cantor’s Matzos**

**By Yehuda Grossberger**

In the early days of Internet, I subscribed to an online forum dedicated to halachic discussions. The members of this forum came from a wide spectrum of Judaism, and debates often raged over different halachic and Torah issues.

One contributor to this exchange was a Conservative cantor from Nevada who quickly became known for his outspokenness and opinionated liberal views. On one occasion, he posted an article he had written about Jewish marriage, which was not exactly according to halacha.

**Compelled to Set the Record Straight**

I felt compelled to reply and set the record straight. The cantor responded to my rebuttal, sparking a candid and heated debate. Eventually, this led to a general discussion of other topics concerning Torah and Judaism, as well as personal conversations about our families.

Around Pesach time, the conversation turned to matza, and I asked my friend how had he conducted his seder. He replied, “Well, since the point is to remember the story of the Exodus, I actually eat whatever I can get a hold of to symbolize the matza.”

**Sent Him a Box of Shmura Matza**

He did not seem concerned that the matza be kosher for Pesach. Despite his objections, I sent him a box of shmura matza for the seder. After Pesach, I got an e-mail from my friend who, in typical fashion, complained that all the matzos had come broken and were also pretty tasteless.

Nevertheless, the following year he contacted me and requested that I again send him matza. This began an unlikely tradition that continued for many years. Notwithstanding all of his rejections and criticism of Orthodox values, he used the matza every year and came to look forward to it. He even showed his appreciation by sending me flowers.

This man had a daughter who had rebelled against the family values she had been brought up with, and, as a student of the University of California at Berkeley, became deeply immersed in the unhealthy culture that was popular at the time. She had also rejected even the limited Jewish values she had seen at home.

Her parents were very worried about her, and she had not been home for a number of years, not even for the holidays. Eventually, this girl’s restlessness and searching spirit drew her to Israel where she ended up in a girls seminary for baalei teshuva in Jerusalem.

**Time to Make a Final Decision**

After a few months of study, she felt it was time for her to make a final decision: She could either stay in the seminary adopting a frum lifestyle, or she could leave it behind and return home and continue soul searching. She decided she needed a break to think things over. She was comfortable with what she had been taught but was not sure she had the conviction and personal strength to make such a drastic lifestyle change.

It was now shortly before Pesach. Her madricha in Israel, although unhappy to see her go, asked her to at least take home the basic necessities for Pesach that she might not have at home, primarily matza. She declined and said, “Why should I bother? If G-d wants me to have matza, He will send me matza.”

Apprehensively, she departed and flew home to her parents planning to spend time reflecting on her options at this critical junction of her life. She hoped that somehow she would be guided into making the right choice.



To her utter bewilderment, the first thing she noticed as she walked into her home was a box of shmura matza sitting on the dining room table. She could not believe her eyes. Her own ultimatum had been fulfilled: “If G-d wants me to have matza, He will send me matza,” and lo and behold, there it was!

Having not been home for Pesach in a number of years, she was absolutely astounded that her family had a box of authentic shmura matza waiting for her! The hashgacha protis, the Divine providence, was undeniable, and she strongly felt that Hashem was answering her challenge and showing that He cared about her intimately.

She had no idea how the matza got to her home, and at that point, she really didn’t care; all she could think about was the sign that Hashem had sent her. After Pesach, she immediately returned to Jerusalem to complete her studies and to fully embrace Yiddishkeit with all her heart and soul. Today, this girl is the mother of a beautiful family and works in kiruv with her husband, a rabbi, teaching other Jews about Yiddishkeit.

**Sending Matzah for the Cantor’s**

**Daughter and Future Grandchildren**

Many people had told me that I was wasting my time and money sending these matzos to a Conservative cantor. For my part, I simply felt that a Jew should have matza for the seder, not a chometzdik substitute. What I did not know was that I was not only sending matza for this cantor; I was sending it for his daughter and eventually grandchildren, as well.

The lesson I learned from this is that we just have to do our small part and not give up. Hashem will take care of the rest. You never know the effect of your actions. Our mission is to do, and Hashem will accomplish!!

*Editor’s note: Mayan Yisroel is now launching our annual MitzvahShare program, which enables and encourages the frum Flatbush community to share matza with their not yet- religious coworkers and acquaintances. Create your own miracle story by visiting www. mitzvahshare.org for your own matza kits. The above article by Mr. Yehuda Grossberger of Flatbush appeared in Adar 5772 edition of Thinking Chassidus, a publication of Maayan Yisroel, a Flatbush shul under the guidance of Rabbi Yosef Vigler.*

**Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff Talks About The Essence of Zecher Leyetzias Mitzrayim**

**By Daniel Keren**

Last year (2011) at a special Pre-Pesach lecture at the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin in Flatbush, Brooklyn, the *Mora D’Asra* of the host *shul* – Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff who spoke on the topic of “*Understanding the Essence of Zecher Leyetzias Mitzrayim: Real and Practical Lessons for Pesach and Year Round Use*.”

Rabbi Lieff started off by declaring that the real *chashuvim* are not to be seen in the Main Floor Sanctuary. Rather, they, the *Nashim Tzidkaniyus* (the righteous women) who were downstairs, taking precious time off from their important cleaning of the homes for *Pesach* in order to attend these Hakhel *shiurim (lectures)* and gain valuable *chizuk* (inspiration.)

Leil Seder is a Microcosim

Of Yiddishkeit

The *yesod* of *Leil Seder* is a microcosm of *Yiddishkeit*. This precious night comes to teach each and every Jew the precious foundations of *emunah*, faith. Indeed it is an important teaching that there is an *Abishter* (our Father in Heaven) who is in charge of this world and who looks after *Klal Yisroel* (the Jewish nation.)

Rabbi Lieff recalled the moving story of how a Yid (Jew) trapped in the Kovno Ghetto in Lithuania went before the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* to the Kovner Rov and told him of how he so much wanted to bake *matzahs* for that year’s *Sedorim* and could the *Rov* tell him what *kulos* would be permitted in order to bake kosher *L’Pesach matzos* under the incredible difficult conditions that existed when just walking outside on the ghetto streets was a great risk to one’s very life.

**The Nazis Discover the**

**Secret Matzah Bakery**

The *Rov* instructed the *Yid* on what could be done and on the designated day a group of fellow Jews gathered in a secret room to try and bake *matzos* for that year’s *Pesach Sedorim*. In the midst of their holy efforts, a frightening sound was heard as a squad of German Nazi storm troopers (*yemach shemom*) smashed down the door and immediately began killing as many of the Jewish *matzah* bakers as they could. They used a heavy blunt instrument and smashed it into the face of the *Yid* who had asked the Kovner Rov about how to bake *matzohs*. All of the poor Jew’s teeth were knocked out.

The next morning, this Jew who had been left for dead managed to somehow get up and with what little strength he still possessed, he hobbled over to the Kovner Rov. He didn’t ask the *Rov* how could this terrible attack have occurred when he and his friends were simply trying to perform a precious *mitzvah*. Rather, he asked the *Rov* without missing a beat to please explain to him what *kulos* he could use to fulfill the *mitzvah* of eating *matzos* on the *Seder* night now that he was missing all of his teeth.

**Why Highlight Eating**

**Mazos and Maror?**

Rabbi Lieff noted a question by the Maharil who asks if we want to on the *Seder* night create a sense of the greatness of *Yitzeas Mitzrayim* (the departure from Egypt) - why do we seemingly fall back on such mundane activities like eating *matzos* and *maror*? You would have thought that maybe for this first night of *Pesach*, we should organize an incredible play utilizing the world’s greatest actors to act out the important story of the Exodus from Egyptian bondage.

The truth is that at the end of the day, the Great Wonders of the world remain just that, but without any significant lasting effect on us. It is rather those seemingly simple acts of eating the *matzos* and *maror* which combine to most powerfully communicate to us the significant power of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

**What is the Meaning of**

**“Ha Lachma Anya?”**

In the *Haggadah*, Rabbi Lieff spoke of the words “*Ha lachma anya*.” How are we to understand starting the *avoda* of the *mitzvah* of reading from the *Haggada* by opening with such words? What does “*Ha lachma anya*” mean? It means “the bread of affliction or poverty.”

In the Torah, there is only one mention of *lechem anya*. And *matzah* is mentioned 15 times. So why don’t we start off with talking about *matzah*? Also why do we declare at the *Seder* “If anyone is hungry let them come and eat with us?”

The explanation is that it is only by demonstrating such concern for our less fortunate Jewish brethren can we hope to transform the *lechem anya*, the bread of our affliction ultimately into the *matzah* that symbolizes the unleavened bread representing the *geulah* or redemption that is the true theme of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

**The Hunger of the**

**Bechor at the Seder**

Rabbi Lieff spoke of a *bechor*, first-born who was not able to attend a *siyum* on the morning before the *Seder* night. Therefore he had to fast and when it came time to make the *brocha* and eat a small piece of *carpas*, potato, the young man was unable to control himself and he grabbed a large amount of the *carpas* in an attempt to assuage his incredible and painful hunger.

The true *avodah* of the *Seder* is not to become *meshubad*, enslaved to the *carpas* of life. Rabbi Lieff intimated that this symbolized all of the gadgets that we have come to think of as essential in our daily lives whether it be a blackberry or whatever.

**A Jew Must Learn from**

**The Seder to Never Give Up**

Also the night of the *Seder* is to teach and remind us not to be *miyayish*. Whether we are suffering from the trickle-down economics, we should never despair or give up. We must understand that our forefathers suffered much worse in *Mitzrayim* and they were freed by *Hakodesh Baruch Hu*. And we too must understand that Hashem will also free us from our current oppression.

Rabbi Lieff concluded his address by asking “Do you know what *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is?” It is not about history, but what is happening now and will happen in our future very soon. And we may still merit to celebrate *Pesach* this year in *Yerushalayim* with the coming of *Moshiach* speedily in our days.

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