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The Dr. Seuss version of the 4 questions

(Professor Eliezer Segal, <http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/>)

Why is it on Passover night
we never know how to do anything right?
We don't eat our meals in the regular ways,
the ways that we do on all other days.

'Cause on all other nights we may eat all kinds of wonderful good bready treats,
like big purple pizza that tastes like a pickle,
crumbly crackers and pink pumpernickel,
sassafras sandwich and tiger on rye,
fifty falafels in pita, fresh-fried,
with peanut-butter and tangerine sauce
spread onto each side up-and-down, then across,
and toasted whole-wheat bread with liver and ducks,
and crumpets and dumplings, and bagels and lox,
and doughnuts with one hole and doughnuts with four,
and cake with six layers and windows and doors.
Yes--on all other nights we eat all kinds of bread,
but tonight of all nights, we munch matzah instead.

And on all other nights we devour vegetables, green things, and bushes and flowers,
lettuce that's leafy and candy-striped spinach,
fresh silly celery (have more when you're finished!)
cabbage that's flown from the jungles of Glome
by a polka-dot bird who can't find his way home,
daisies and roses and inside-out grass and artichoke hearts that are simply first class!
Sixty asparagus tips served in glasses with anchovy sauce and some sticky molasses--
But on Passover night you would never consider eating an herb that wasn't bitter.

And on all other nights you would probably flip
if anyone asked you how often you dip.
On some days I only dip one bup-Bup egg in a teaspoon of vinegar mixed with nutmeg,
but sometimes we take more than ten thousand tails of the Yakkity-birds that are hunted
in Wales,
and dip then in vats full of Mumbegum juice.
Then we feed them to Harold, our six-legged moose.
Or we don't dip at all!
We don't ask your advice.
So why on this night do we have to dip twice?

And on all other nights we can sit as we please,
on our heads, on our elbows, our backs or our knees,
or hang by our toes from the tail of a Glump,
or on top of a camel with one or two humps,
with our foot on the table, our nose on the floor,
with one ear in the window and one out the door,
doing somersaults over the greasy knishes
or dancing a jig without breaking the dishes.
Yes--on all other nights you sit nicely when dining--
so why on this night must it all be reclining?

Excerpts from Who Knows One,

by Debra Cash, Hand Over Hand Press 2010

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Matzah

When there was no time for yeast

and we were running away

When there was no time for pillows and blankets

and we slept in the desert with our clothes on

When there was no conversation over the fire

just bowed heads as we looked at our bowls

Then we knew our homes were gone forever

even if we went back to them

Even if we took up our tasks

and submitted to the lash

We had learned to do without.

We had begun our redemption.

Grace After the Meal

With your permission, friends:

The seed corn of our sorrow
was allowed to germinate
bear tassels and kernels in its season;
the long harvest season stole our youth
and ground it into powder.

Let us accept this meal
in every cell strengthening.

Praise the table and praise the host
praise the merchant and praise the farmer

After that work we could not rest
for another meal was coming;
Our choices were death at the hands of familiar oppressors
or death in a wilderness of our own.

It is always too late
and as early as possible;
Build for us a home that is not slavery
even if it is not redemption.

Pour Out Your Anger

Midnight flashes with the full moon
pitching sunlight back to the planet
ricocheting through the atmosphere
like a drunk prophet on a willful mule.

This meal will not end
this night will go on and on
a vortex of history
proclaiming freedom, unimagined.

Pour out your anger
not like blood but like light
pour out the cry on the threshold
and step over the stair

The nations are floodlit
your small house glows
plants rise to moonlight
moist, willing themselves green.

DAYENU - "IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH"

[The following verses were written in 1988 by Rabbi Irving Greenberg and distributed by CLAL to continue the tradition of adding to the story of the Exodus, of making that ancient story a modern extension of our dream for a time when all of God's children will live together in peace and harmony.]

Had God upheld us throughout two thousand year of Dispersion
But not preserved our hope for return Dayenu
Had God preserved our hope for return
But not sent us leaders to make the dream a reality Dayenu
Had God sent us leaders to make the dream a reality,
But not given us success in the U.N. vote Dayenu
Had God given us success in the U.N. vote,
But not defeated our attackers in 1948 Dayenu
Had God defeated our attackers in 1948,
But not unified Jerusalem Dayenu
Had God unified Jerusalem,
But not led us toward peace with Egypt Dayenu
Had God returned us to the Land of our ancestors,
But not filled it with our children Dayenu
Had God willed it with our children,
But not caused the desert to bloom Dayenu
Had God caused the desert to bloom,
But not built for us cities and towns Dayenu
Had God rescued our remnants from the Holocaust's flames,
But not brought our brothers from Arab lands Dayenu
Had God brought our brothers from Arab lands,
But not opened the gates for Russia's Jews Dayenu
Had God opened the gate for Russia's Jews,
But not redeemed our people from Ethiopia Dayenu
Had God redeemed our people from Ethiopia,
But not planted in our hearts a covenant of One People Dayenu
Had God planted in our hearts a covenant of One People,
But not sustained in our souls a vision of a perfected world **Dayenu!**

Why Purim one day and Pesach seven days?

by Rabbi Jacob Chinitz, Jerusalem

On both Purim and Pesach we celebrate salvation from destruction

Both days have heroes, Mordecai and Moses

Both have Masekhtot, Megillah, Pesachim

Both have books: Megilat Esther, Haggadah

Why Purim one day and Pesach seven days?

Because Purim represents Ahah Haam's Avdut Betokh Cheirut

Pesach is Zeman Cherutenu

Purim is Diaspora.

Pesach leads to Eretz Yisrael

Purim has no God and no Torah

Pesach has God and leads to Sinai

Purim, Persia, Babylonia give us Talmud Bavli

Pesach gives us Mishna and Talmud Yerushalmi

Purim has no questions and no answer

Pesach has Ma Nishtano and Avadim Hayinu

Wild and wacky Israeli tales from '09

*By Daniella Ashkenazy , printed with permission from
<http://www.chelm-on-the-med.com/>*

Daniella Ashkenazy collects offbeat snippets of daily life in Israel in 2009. (Avi Katz)

Israel is not just the place of stories about settlement freezes and army operations.

This unique country of 7 million people has its fair share of zany tales; here are a few from 2009.

The prize for weirdest move taken by Israeli politicians in 2009 probably goes to Netanya's city elders, who in August decided to dress up the city center with a fresh coat of bright purple paint on the main thoroughfare. By October the pricy paint job had faded in the Middle Eastern sun, reverting to black asphalt. A close runner-up in the category goes to the Hadera municipality, where a \$5 million facelift for the city's congested central traffic circle added not just entry and exit lanes, but planned to have traffic lights playing Hebrew songs.

The award for the strangest Supreme Court case goes to an Israeli named Shlomo Avni, who petitioned the high court for the right to be eaten by wild animals after his death, saying he was only repaying a debt to nature as a lifetime consumer in the food chain. In their 772-word decision, three Supreme Court judges wished the 80-year-old plaintiff a long life and unanimously rejected Avni's petition. The justices quoted Jeremiah 9:21 and the prophet's warning of dreadful times when "carcasses of men fall as dung upon the open field." Avni said he'd take his case to the international court at The Hague.

The best item related to Israel's water crisis goes to the residents of a north Tel Aviv apartment building who found themselves paying huge water bills that were 10 to 100 times those of similar dwellings. After investigation, it was discovered that an underground connection from the apartment house was watering an adjacent municipal park.

While 2009 demonstrated no shortage of silly two-bit crooks and goofy cops -- including one nearsighted specimen who ticketed a driver because her Saint Bernard wasn't wearing a seatbelt -- the strangest theft occurred at Tel Aviv's Ichilov Hospital. The hospital staff was puzzled when a huge oil painting by a

well-known Israeli artist vanished from the walls of a well-trafficked corridor. Before they could canvas the hospital for the missing canvas, another large painting by another well-known Israeli artist disappeared, and then another canvas 24 hours later. Security cameras revealed that the same middle-aged woman had nonchalantly been taking down the canvases and coolly walking out the front door, no questions asked. She hung the works in her nearby apartment.

One candidate in the Softhearted Sabra category stands out among many. A court re-possessor who knocked on the door of a poor family in the western Galilee took one look around at the impoverished household and made a snap decision: Rather than taking whatever he could find of value, he scribbled "Nothing to repossess" on his form, opened his wallet and handed the head of the household \$25.

The Loose Cannon award is a toss-up among a group of overzealous religious residents in Ashkelon. Several months after the end of the Gaza war in January, they decided to let everyone in their neighborhood know of Shabbat's arrival by sounding private sirens from their balconies minutes before sundown on Fridays -- causing widespread panic by residents who mistook it for an air-raid siren.

One story that really takes the cake involved the trend of turning birthdays into full-scale productions. A Netanya resident decided this would be a lucrative sideline and offered his business premises as a venue for kids' parties. The problem: the venue in question was a pistol range. Fliers promised target shooting with live ammunition -- up to 51 .22 caliber bullets per child -- at \$20 a shot.

The prize for nutty motorists is given to the fellow pulled over for zigzagging down the highway to Petach Tikvah at 5:30 a.m. Not only was the driver three times above the amount of alcohol permitted while operating a motor vehicle, he also was engaged in an activity with his passenger that is usually reserved for the back seat. The driver argued -- to no avail -- that he was zigzagging only because his lady friend had blocked his field of vision.

From the religious world, a prize goes to the competition between the two sons of the former Sephardi chief rabbi, Ovadia Yosef, who argued over what blessing should be recited over the popular kids' peanut snack Bamba.

In the category of Israeli ingenuity, one Israeli created a DNA test for steer that could track a stolen animal even if it already had been reduced to hamburger.

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The most incredible dilemma of 2009 came during the Gaza war last January: How do you feed two frightened and famished lions solely with battle rations? As an army unit hunkered down near an abandoned Palestinian zoo amid the fighting, its brigade commander frantically sought to move the lions out of the war zone or find a way to feed them.

The Israel Defense Forces has some weird posts -- including two stand-up comedians and a full-time magician -- but who thought the army would need a lion keeper? One idea was to mobilize personnel from the Ramat Gan Safari into the IDF, then embed them with the infantry unit on special assignment.

Nobody knows exactly how the IDF did it, but by the time the army pulled out of Gaza the lions were in their cages and doing fine.

(This column was adapted from a submission by Chelm-on-the-Med, which culls the incredible snippets of daily life reported in the Israeli press. <http://www.chelm-on-the-med.com/>)

FROM LIBERATION TO FREEDOM: A Passover Sourceboo

From the American Jewish World Service / Avodah

PDF downloads recommended to you and available at
http://ajws.org/assets/uploaded_documents/fltf_sourcebook.pdf

Foreign workers: Let Them Eat Matzah

by Rabbi Andrew Sacks

Walk into a non-Kosher McDonalds in Israel during Pesach (Passover) and one may order a cheeseburger. But it would be served on a "Kosher for Pesach" roll. Why this anomaly? Well, it seems that Israeli law prohibited the public sale (e.g. by restaurants) of bread on Pesach.

Then, in 2008, the court ruled that "public" meant on the street or in places not privately owned. Suddenly the Orthodox religious parties were thrown into a tizzy. There have been efforts since then to amend the law and thus put a stop, once again, to the retail sale of bread and Hametz.

The latest attempt to find wording acceptable to both the "religious" and "secular" political parties may yet lead to a coalition crisis. But as usual we have a case of the Orthodox parties focusing on the details and missing the greater picture.

Pesach is the Festival of Freedom. The Jewish people were released from their bondage in Egypt. This is the narrative from which we are now reading. Some seven weeks later, when we received the Torah at Sinai, we were commanded to "pursue justice." The prophet Isaiah reminded us that we are to be "a light unto the nations."

We have so very much in which we can take pride here in Israel. But one dark spot is our failure to actualize the message of Pesach.

As observant Jews, we in the Masorti Movement see the ethical commandments as no less important than the ritual Mitzvot.

Israel is now home to an estimated 350,000 foreign workers. Some of them are legal (they have government issued work permits) some are not. Most serve in positions Israelis refuse to fill whatever salary is offered. This phenomenon is certainly not unique to Israel. They serve mainly in those industries that require back-breaking work (e.g. agriculture), dangerous work (e.g. construction), low prestige (e.g. cleaning) and long hours (e.g. care of the infirm).

The foreign workers began to arrive in Israel in the early 1990s in the wake of the government decision to curtail the entry and employment of Palestinians from the territories.

Employers are loathe to give up on this source of cheap labor. Israeli workers would demand much higher wages for these same jobs. But even with higher wages, few Israelis would be attracted to these fields. Better to be unemployed.

Employers, too, prefer foreign workers to Israelis. How many Israelis would be willing to sleep on the premises in dormitory-style rooms? How many Palestinian workers would relinquish the right to return home regularly to spend time with family and friends?

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Certainly, Israelis engaged in caring for the elderly would insist on time off for personal errands, religious holidays, rest and relaxation, and a bit of normalcy in everyday life.

Sadly, many entrepreneurs also discovered the potential for profiting off the foreign workers by price gouging on "apartment" rentals. Sky-high prices are charged for dilapidated flats. Others hold on to the passports of these workers requiring them to remain all but indentured.

Foreign workers are willing to work in the most disgraceful conditions to prevent the loss of their "worker" status. Those that are legal may be subject to sexual abuse, denied minimum wage and social benefits, required to work long hours, or otherwise abused. They will put up with this to avoid becoming illegal aliens and facing the threat of deportation.

In addition to the foreign workers, Israel has several thousand African refugees who have fled from the possibility of death. Some have been sent back where they faced certain danger. Many were held in detention. Upon release, those allowed to stay in Israel encountered a harsh reality. Jobs were demeaning and living conditions were dilapidated, crowded squalor.

Israel may be ill equipped to take in huge numbers of refugees. But we must live up to the agreements we signed. We lack a consistent asylum policy for non-Jews. Israel is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Certainly Israel has acted in a more noble fashion than have Egypt and many other countries in the area. But this is not sufficient for a country that is to be "a light unto the nations."

I am not suggesting that we allow our borders to be porous. We can not accept all who would wish to come. But we are obligated by the Torah to befriend the stranger because we were strangers ourselves in Egypt.

Some in the Masorti Movement have reached out to help. But this is a problem too large for modest Tzedek programs. It requires our government to live up to its ideals. Theodore Herzl, the father of Zionism, stated: "For Zionism as I understand it includes not only the yearning for a plot of promised land legally acquired for our weary people, but also the yearning for ethical and spiritual fulfillment."

I call upon the political parties in the Knesset to address the so-called "Matzah law." I too would like to see Hametz removed from the stores on Pesach. But I want this done not by the enactment of still more legislation forcing observance. I want this to come through education.

Let us act to do right by foreign workers and by refugees. "Rite" must lead to "right" if it is to be meaningful. The prophets tell us that God is not interested in fulfillment of the law if it is not accompanied by ethical behavior.

Let the discussions in the Knesset focus on Matzah - but on its deeper significance. If we are to eat the bread of affliction we must put an end to affliction in our own land.

January 24, 2010

Haiti & the Dominican Republic

by Rabbi Barry Leff, Jerusalem

First of all, it goes without saying, our thoughts and prayers continue to be turned to the people of Haiti. The mind boggles at the scale of devastation. Latest estimates say 111,000 people dead -- out of a total population of less than 10 million. That would be like Israel losing 70,000 people at once -- far more than have been lost in every single war and every act of terrorism since Israel's founding sixty years ago. It would be like America losing 3 million people -- and think of how traumatized the country was when 3,000 people died in 9/11. Please do what you can to support relief efforts. Israeli readers can make donations to Magen David Adom, in America there is the Red Cross or the American Jewish World Service. In addition to making a personal donation through MDA, I got my company to agree to make it possible for a couple of our medical people to volunteer by paying their air fare and continuing to pay their salaries for a few weeks while they volunteer in Haiti--something I'm a little proud of since it will have a lot more impact than the modest donation I could personally make.

All of the recent attention on Haiti, of course, has also drawn attention to the fact that even before the earthquake, Haiti was something of a disaster zone. I flew into Haiti in a small plane back in 1979 (landed at Port au Prince airport), and was struck by the poverty and dismal conditions, and it hasn't improved a lot since. Anytime you read about Haiti it is always accompanied by statements about how Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, etc., etc. And there are frequent comparisons to Haiti's neighbor on the island of Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic, which is prospering while Haiti is languishing.

A few years ago I gave a Rosh Hashanah sermon in which I spoke about the role of culture in societal development in general, as well as the role of culture in the prospects for peace in the Middle East. I made a comparison between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which given the current interest in Haiti is worth revisiting:

...But that only raises a further question. Why is it that some former colonies are developing rapidly, with McDonalds and Starbucks opening on every corner, whereas others are dependent on international handouts for survival? Why have so many countries, especially since the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the Soviet Union, become thriving democracies, whereas others are run by warlords and corrupt plutocrats?

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There are many factors, but one dominates – and that one is culture.

People of my generation may feel uncomfortable with that statement. It seems politically incorrect. We grew up in an age when we were taught to respect all cultures. Some anthropologists said that “progress” was a Western idea we were trying to impose on other cultures. However, as Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington put it in their book “Culture Matters,” the vast majority of the planet’s people would probably agree with the following assertions:

Life is better than death.
Health is better than sickness.
Liberty is better than slavery.
Prosperity is better than poverty.
Education is better than ignorance.
Justice is better than injustice.

And the truth is some cultures do a much better job of creating societies where those values flourish than others.

One of the clearest examples of the influence of culture is to compare the Dominican Republic with Haiti. The two countries share one island, Hispaniola, so they have the same natural resources and climate. Both countries were largely populated by slaves from Africa overseen by a European ruling class. But today one country is democratic and prospering, the other has been suffering for years from violence and poverty.

Two hundred years ago Haiti was wealthier and more powerful than the Dominican Republic; today, it’s the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The two countries have very different cultures. Over half of the Haitians still practice an animist religion, voodoo. As Lawrence Harrison points out in his book “The Central Liberal Truth,” voodoo has a lot of features that resist progress. Voodoo does not concern itself with ethics, and practitioners believe their fates, good or bad, are controlled by capricious spirits. Lawrence says “Voodoo discourages initiative, rationality, achievement, education.”

The people of the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, abandoned paganism and adopted the religion, values, and culture of the Spanish colonialists. Haiti’s economy and government resemble those of the worst-off African countries, while the Dominican Republic resembles the more prosperous Latin American countries.

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Maybe Judaism's rejection of paganism was one of our greatest contributions to the economic development of Mankind.

Culture also explains why Israel is an island of democracy in the Middle East.

If you want to read the rest of the essay, [click here](#).

I pray that as the international community helps Haiti rebuild, we help them deal with some of the underlying problems they have been facing for decades. And, it is worth pointing out, in recent years Haiti has been making some progress--it's just been pretty slow, and sometimes one step forward, two back. May it be God's will that this tragedy eventually bring about some good by furthering the transition of Haiti to democracy and prosperity.

Reb Barry

OUT OF AUSCHWITZ

By Samuel Pisar

Published: January 28, 2010

Paris

SIXTY-FIVE years ago this week, the Soviets liberated Auschwitz, while the Americans were approaching Dachau. For a survivor of these two infernos to still be alive and well, with a new family that has resurrected for me the one I had lost, seems almost unreal. When I entered Adolf Eichmann and Josef Mengele's gruesome universe at the age of 13, I measured my life expectancy in days, weeks at the most.

In the early winter of 1944, World War II was coming to an end. But we in the camps knew nothing. We wondered: What is happening in the world outside? Where is God? Where is the pope? Does anyone out there know what is happening here to us? Does anyone even care?

Russia was devastated. Britain had its back against the wall. And America? It was so far away, so divided. How could it be expected to save civilization from the seemingly invincible forces of darkness?

It took a long time for the news of the American-led invasion of Normandy to slip into Auschwitz. There were also rumors that the Red Army was advancing quickly on the eastern front. With the ground shrinking under their feet, the Nazis were becoming palpably nervous. The gas chambers spewed fire and smoke as never before.

One gray, frosty morning, our guards ordered those of us still capable of slave labor to line up and marched us out of the camp. We were to be shunted westward, from Poland into Germany. I was beside myself with excitement — and dread. Salvation somehow seemed closer — yet we also knew that we could be killed at any moment. The goal was to hang on a little longer. I was almost 16 now, and I wanted to live.

We marched from camp to camp, day and night, until we and our torturers began to hear distant explosions that sounded like artillery fire. One afternoon we were strafed by a squadron of Allied fighter planes that mistook our column for Wehrmacht troops. As the Germans hit the dirt, their machine guns blazing in all directions, someone near me yelled, "Run for it!" I kicked off my wooden clogs

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and sprinted into the forest. There I hid, hungry and cold, for weeks, until I was discovered by a group of American soldiers. The boys who brought me life were not much older than I. They fed me, clothed me, made me a mascot of their regiment and gave me my first real taste of freedom.

Today, the last living survivors of the Holocaust are disappearing one by one. Soon, history will speak about Auschwitz with the impersonal voice of researchers and novelists at best, and at worst in the malevolent register of revisionists and falsifiers who call the Nazi Final Solution a myth. This process has already begun.

And it is why those of us who survived have a duty to transmit to humankind the memory of what we endured in body and soul, to tell our children that the fanaticism and violence that nearly destroyed our universe have the power to enflame theirs, too. The fury of the Haitian earthquake, which has taken more than 200,000 lives, teaches us how cruel nature can be to man. The Holocaust, which destroyed a people, teaches us that nature, even in its cruelest moments, is benign in comparison with man when he loses his moral compass and his reason.

After so much death, a groundswell of compassion and solidarity for victims — all victims, whether from natural disasters, racial hatred, religious intolerance or terrorism — occasionally manifests itself, as it has in recent days.

These actions stand in contrast to those moments when we have failed to act; they remind us, on this dark anniversary, of how often we remain divided and confused, how in the face of horror we hesitate, vacillate, like sleepwalkers at the edge of the abyss. Of course, they remind us, too, that we have managed to stave off the irrevocable; that our chances for living in harmony are, thankfully, still intact.

Samuel Pizar, a lawyer, is the author of “Of Blood and Hope.”

YOUTUBES FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Here are a number of YouTube sites that are meaningful to some and can generate discussion at your Seder table:

1. Hebrew compact version www.youtube.com/watch?v=_htcl7LCuK0&feature=related

2. An English version, even more compact: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oclwjuG3Oso

3. What in the world can we do with all that left-over Matzah?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMSEFCQCKPo&feature=related

4.

A PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE OF HAITI

by Rabbi Naomi Levy

We pray for Haiti.
Our hearts are breaking, God.
The human mind cannot grasp the enormity of the loss.
The cries echo through the universe.
Innocent blood is calling us
To rise up from our heartbreak and act.

We pray for Haiti.
Help us, God,
To understand that destruction can come in a moment
But healing may take a lifetime.
Teach us perseverance, teach us dedication.

We pray for Haiti.
God of the weak, God of the broken-hearted,
God of the living, God of the dead,
Send healing to Haiti.
Send hope to the children who are lost and alone,

Send strength and resilience to the wounded,
And comfort to the grieving.
Fill the leaders of Haiti with the wisdom to raise their country up.
Fill relief workers with resolve.
Bless the doctors and nurses with the power
And the skill to save as many lives as possible.
Open their eyes, steady their hands.

We pray for Haiti.
Bless us, God,
Work through us.
Remind us that every one of us is filled with the power to heal.
Do not let the passage of time lead us to indifference.
Open our hearts, open our hands.

We pray for Haiti.
Let all nations unite as one in a time of reconstruction and repair.
Raise up the people of Haiti, God, out of helplessness and despair.

Teach them to believe
That cities shall be rebuilt on their ruins
That the cries of the children will soon return to laughter.

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Be with them, God, watch over them.
And gather the souls of the dead
Whose homes and schools became their graves
Into Your eternal shelter,
Let them find peace in Your presence, God.

We pray for Haiti.

Amen.

A TRUE STORY FROM 2ND WORLD WAR.

Monopoly helped POWs escape

Starting in 1941, an increasing number of British Airmen found themselves as the involuntary guests of the Third Reich, and the Crown was casting about for ways and means to facilitate their escape. Now obviously, one of the most helpful aids to that end is a useful and accurate map, one showing not only where stuff was, but also showing the locations of safe houses where a POW on-the-run could go for food and shelter.

Paper maps had some real drawbacks -- they make a lot of noise when you open and fold them, they wear out rapidly, and if they get wet, they turn into mush.

Someone in MI-5 (similar to America 's OSS) got the idea of printing escape maps on silk. It's durable, can be scrunched-up into tiny wads, and unfolded as many times as needed, and makes no noise whatsoever.

At that time, there was only one manufacturer in Great Britain that had perfected the technology of printing on silk, and that was the board game producer, John Waddington, Ltd. When approached by the government, the firm was only too happy to do its bit for the war effort.

By pure coincidence, Waddington was also the U.K. Licensee for the popular American board game, Monopoly. As it happened, 'games and pastimes' was a category of item qualified for insertion into CARE packages, dispatched by the International Red Cross to prisoners of war.

Under the strictest of secrecy, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on the grounds of Waddington's, a group of sworn-to-secrecy employees began mass-producing escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were regional system). When processed, these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they would actually fit inside a Monopoly playing piece.

As long as they were at it, the clever workmen at Waddington's also managed to add:

1. A playing token, containing a small magnetic compass
2. A two-part metal file that could easily be screwed together
3. Useful amounts of genuine high-denomination German, Italian, and French currency, hidden within the piles of Monopoly money!

British and American air crews were advised, before taking off on their first mission, how to identify a 'rigged' Monopoly set -- by means of a tiny red dot, one cleverly rigged to look like an ordinary printing glitch, located in the corner of the Free Parking square.

Of the estimated 35,000 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an estimated one-third were aided in their flight by the rigged Monopoly sets.. Everyone who did so was sworn to secrecy indefinitely, since the British Government might want to use this highly successful ruse in still another, future war. The story wasn't declassified until 2007, when the surviving craftsmen from Waddington's, as well as the firm itself, were finally honored in a public ceremony.

It's always nice when you can play that 'Get Out of Jail' Free' card!

YOU SHALL REMOVE THE LEAVEN FROM YOUR HOUSES

Just imagine what would happen if the events of the Exodus had occurred in our century. Moses would be on the cover of every magazine, from Modern Maturity (“Changing Careers at Eighty”) to Business Week (“How to Succeed at Relocation Planning”), from Readers’ Digest (“The Ten Commandments – Condensed Version”) to Popular Mechanics (“Innovations in Marine Engineering”). Barbara Walters, Katie Couric, Diane Sawyer, and Larry King would compete fiercely for the “get,” the first on-camera interview with the man everyone was talking about. Moses artifacts (real and fake) would appear on Ebay, and rumors about Moses’ youthful misadventures would circulate on the internet. ABC might even offer a small fortune for Moses to host a special all-Bible edition of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.”

After all, today, almost everybody wants his or her “15 minutes of fame.” It doesn’t matter how you get it, as long as you can appear on television (think “The Jerry Springer Show” or the antics of some sports fans). You haven’t lived until you have been on videotape. “I don’t care what you say about me as long as you spell my name right.”

But things were different 3600 years ago. So much so, that Moses is absent from the Haggadah. The usual explanation for this is that the Rabbis wanted to emphasize that it was God who redeemed us from Egypt, not any human being. But there is something more. The Torah tells us, “Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses – whom the Lord singled out, face to face” (D’varim 34:10). The Torah also tells us, “Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth” (B’midbar 12:3). So it seems that Moses had every reason to claim celebrity status -- but he didn’t. And this is a reason for praise.

And why should Moses’ name be missing from the Pesach Haggadah in particular? In preparation for Pesach, we remove hametz from our homes, offices, and cars. In fact, we don’t just remove it – we search it out, we burn it, we nullify it, we obliterate it. Why? The simple reason is that the Torah prohibits the consumption or possession of hametz during Pesach. But there is also a symbolic reason. The Rabbis interpreted the removal of hametz as a metaphor for the removal of the yetzer ha-ra, the evil inclination. Philo of Alexandria, the Greek-Jewish philosopher, narrowed the focus to pride. “Just as leaven is banned because it is puffed up, so too must we guard against the self-righteousness that puffs us up with false pride.” The Kli Yakar, Rabbi Ephraim Solomon of Luntshitz, noted, “Leaven is a symbol of arrogance, pride, boasting, and pursuit of recognition.”

Pesach, Hag HaAviv, the Spring festival, is a time of rebirth and renewal. And this process of renewal requires the removal of spiritual hametz, false pride, unwarranted ego. Each of us should look to the example of Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses our Teacher, and remember that – just maybe – I am not the center of the world. It’s hard to be humble when you are surrounded by messages telling you that you could be the next “American Idol” – but you know what the Torah says about idolatry!

Hag Kasher v’Sameah,

Rabbi Joyce Newmark

