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Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner
Editor, Collector, Author

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PESAH POTPOURRI:

On the Origin and Development of Some Lesser-Known Pesah Customs

Prof. David Golinkin is the President of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

The holiday of Pesah has been blessed with hundreds of laws. Indeed, almost one-sixth of Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim is devoted to the laws of Pesah. It has also been blessed with many well-known customs which have been discussed and debated by various scholars. 2

In this article, we shall discuss some of the lesser-known Pesah customs – or at least lesser-known to Ashkenazic Jews. Some started in Sefarad and migrated to Ashkenaz and some migrated in the opposite direction. Most are still practiced by one group of Jews or another. Many rabbis and educators will find these customs welcome additions to their repertoire of minhagim.

1. Using the Lulav to Burn the Hametz or to Bake Matzah

In two places in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 39b and Shabbat 117b), we are told that when Rav Ami and Rav Assi happened to come upon a loaf of bread which had been used for an Eruv 3 they would recite hamotzi over the loaf. They said: “Since one mitzvah was done with this loaf, let us do another”. These passages became the basis for reusing items which had been used to fulfill one mitzvah in order to perform another mitzvah. 4

R. Yehudah ben Kalonymus (Ashkenaz, twelfth century) used to save the aravot (willows) from the lulav in order to burn the hametz, basing himself on the above passage, and this custom was recorded in all of the classic custom books of Ashkenaz.⁵ In modern times, Iraqi Jews used the aravot from Hoshana Rabbah. 6

In Yemen, on the other hand, it was the custom to use the lulav, hadassim and aravot as fuel for the oven when baking matzah shemurah.⁷ Finally, the Jews of Syria, Morocco and Baghdad used the lulav both for burning the hametz and for baking matzah.⁸

2. Wearing White at the Seder

This custom is common among hassidim, who wear a kittel, as well as among the Jews of Morocco.⁹ Many interesting and convoluted explanations have been given for this and similar customs throughout Jewish history. 10 But the simple explanation seems to be that white is a symbol of joy on Rosh Hashanah, Yom

Kippur, Hoshanah Rabbah, Pesah and other pilgrim festivals and at weddings.¹¹

3. “Silver and Gold Vessels”

The Jews of Nadishurani and Rakoshpaluta in Hungary used to decorate the seder table with all of their gold and silver jewels. They explained that this was to remember all the gold and silver which the Israelites received from the Egyptians.^{11a}

4. Open Doors or Closed Doors?

We have learned in the tractate of Ta’anit (20b): “Rav Huna (Babylon, third century) - whenever he ate bread would open his door and say: “kol man dizrikh latay v’laykhol” (whoever needs, let him come and eat)”. This custom, which Rav Huna observed all year long, is echoed in Hah Lahma: “kol dikhfin yaytay v’yaykhol, kol dizrikh yaytay v’yifsah” (whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is needy, let him come and make Pesah).

Rav Matityahu Gaon (Babylon, ninth century) says that the custom of our forefathers was to leave the doors open during the seder so that poor Jews would join them, but already in his day this was no longer the custom since they would give food to the poor before Pesah so that they would not have to beg.¹²

In Yemen, many Jews left their doors open during the seder, but for a different reason. They said that the redemption would come on Pesah eve, so they left their doors open in order to allow a swift exit to greet the Messiah!¹³

On the other hand, the Jews of Libya and Djerba had the opposite custom. On the first two days of Pesah and on both days of Rosh Hashanah “a stranger could not set foot in their borders nor benefit from their possessions”.¹⁴

In 1938, Nachum Slouschz explained that this was a remnant left over from the Almohad persecutions in the twelfth century when the Jews observed Pesah and Rosh Hashanah in secret and were afraid lest informers enter the house and spy on them.¹⁵

Goldberg, on the other hand, said that the custom is based on the fact that the paschal lamb may only be eaten by those who joined a specific paschal group (Pesahim 61a),¹⁶ while Frija Zuartz said the purpose was to prevent non-Jewish

neighbors from inundating their Jewish friends for unlimited free food!.¹⁷ Whatever the reason, this custom led the Jews of Meslatah in Libya to translate the verse “kol dikhfin” into Arabic as ”whoever is hungry, let him come and taste nothing”!¹⁸

5. “The Wandering Jew”

There is a widespread custom among Sefardic and Oriental Jews, according to which, various members of the family at various points in the Seder dress up as if they had just left Egypt. Other family members ask formal questions and “the wandering Jew” explains that he has left Egypt and is on his way to Jerusalem. These ceremonies differ in various details; what follows is a representative selection:^{18a}

a) Benjamin II (Yisrael ben Yosef Benjamin) described such a ceremony “in Asia” ca. 1853. They dress up a young man in “kley golah” (Ezekiel 12:3 - “gear for exile”) and before the recitation of the Haggadah, he appears before the participants with his staff in hand and his satchel on his shoulder. The father asks him:

From where do you come, O pilgrim?

From the land of Egypt, says the lad.

Did you go out to freedom from the bondage of Egypt?

Yes indeed, replies the lad, and now I am a free man.

Where are you going?

I am going to Jerusalem, he replies.

With great joy the participants begin to tell the story of the Exodus...¹⁹

b) R. Ya‘akov Sapir described the custom in San‘a, Yemen in 1858:

The seder is observed as is the custom among all Jews. One of the members of the family takes a matzah and ties it in a scarf on his shoulder and walks around the house. The others ask him: “Why are you doing this?” And he replies: “So did our ancestors when they left Egypt in haste”.²⁰

c) The Jews of Morroco had the following custom:

After reading the Haggadah, all of the men put a stick with a bundle on their shoulders and they leave the house in haste, running and shouting: “So did our ancestors leave Egypt, ‘their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders’ ” (Exodus 12:34).²¹

d) Nahum Slouschz describes a similar custom in Libya before the seder

and concludes: “This custom is widespread in almost all oriental lands, and in every country there is a different nusah”.²² Indeed, this custom was observed in the Caucasus, Iraq, Kurdistan, Djerba, Syria, and among the Sefardic Jews of Seattle.²³

However, surprisingly enough, this custom is first mentioned in Germany 650 years before Benjamin II described it in Asia, and it is documented in Poland in the sixteenth century and in Germany and Hungary in the twentieth!

a) Rabbi Asher of Lunel states in his *Sefer Minhagot*, written ca. 1210 in Provence: I heard that in Allemagne (Germany), after eating karpas, they uproot the table and take the matzot and wrap them in coverings and bear them on their shoulders and walk to the corners of the house, and then they return to their places and recite the Haggadah.²⁴

b) R. Shlomo Luria (Lublin, 1510-1573) devoted one of his responsa (no. 88) to the laws of the seder: After the meal, he [= the person leading the seder] takes out the hidden treasure, i.e. The afikoman as is, wrapped in a cover, and he drapes it behind him and he walks approximately four cubits in the house and says: “So did our ancestors go with ‘their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks’” (Exodus 12:34). This responsum is quoted in the standard commentaries to the *Shulhan Arukh*²⁵ and this custom may even be illustrated in the Prague Haggadah of 1526, which pictures a man with a walking staff and satchel on his shoulder next to Exodus 12:34 quoted above.²⁶

c) In 1951, Prof. Alexander Scheiber documented similar customs among his students at the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest, who came from the Hungarian towns of Szatmar, Zemplen, Vatz, Tisfolgar and Puntok. In the latter town, when they reached Yahatz, the father would wrap the afikoman in a scarf, put it on his shoulder, stand up, and say to his family in Yiddish: “geimir, geimir!” (Let us go! Let us go!).²⁷

d) This custom has survived among German Jews until today.²⁸ When I lectured on this topic in Jerusalem before Pesah in 1991, a woman told me that in Karlsruhe, in southern Germany, her father would put the matzah wrapped in the sedertuch (white matzah cover) on his shoulder and say: “So sind die Kinder Jisroel aus Mizraim gegangen, so war es” (Thus did the Children of Israel leave Egypt, so it was).

6. Passing the Matzah

When Persian Jews reach the ha lahma paragraph the mula takes the three matzot shemurot wrapped in a white cloth in his fingers, chants ha lahma... kadesh u'r'hatz... The three matzot go down the line from hand to hand. Young and old, men and women – each person is required to recite ha lahma and kadesh u'r'hatz until each participant has done so. 29

What is the source of this custom? Rabbi Elazar says in the Tosefta: “One grabs the matzah for the children so that they should not sleep”.³⁰ The rishonim gave five different explanations for this passage. Maimonides’ explanation was codified in his code (Hametz Umatzah 7:3): ”... so that the children will ask questions. And one grabs the matzah from one hand to another and the like”. This interpretation was subsequently supported by Rabbeinu Manoah (ca. 1264) and quoted by the Meiri (ca. 1300).³¹

So it seems that the Persian custom reflects a literal understanding of Maimonides’ interpretation of Rabbi Elazar.

7. A Seder Plate on the Head

In 1985, Shemuel ben Hallal, an Israeli who stems from Morocco via Venezuela, told me that in his family they recite the sentence “bivhilu yatzanu mimitzrayim” - “In haste we left Egypt” three times before ha lahma. Then the person leading the seder walks around the table three times tapping the seder plate on the head of each participant, each time tapping harder. The children like to jump up in order to hit the seder plate with their heads.

As it turns out, this custom did not begin in Morocco in the twentieth century, but rather in Spain in the fourteenth century.³² The first evidence for this custom is in an illustration found in the Barcelona Haggadah (ca. 1350) in which a father is shown balancing the seder plate or basket of matzot on the head of one of his children.³³

The Guadalajara Haggadah, which was printed in Spain ca. 1480, is the first known printed Haggadah. The instructions before ha lahma read: “v'nosin hake'arah al rashey hatinikot” - “and one lifts/carries the seder plate on/over the heads of the children”.³⁴ The Hida, R. Hayyim Yosef David Azulay, visited Tunis in 1774. Rahamim, the servant of his host, took the seder plate and passed it three times over the head of each male participant. When he started to do the same to the women, the Hida told him not to, using a play on words based on Judges 5:30.³⁵

Benjamin II mentioned above, described this custom among North African Jews, especially in Tunis, ca. 1853 and related that if a person did not have the seder plate passed over his head, “he believed that he would be unlucky for the rest of his life”.³⁶

R. Alexander Levinson, an Ashkenazic Jew, visited the Jews of Omzav in the Sahara desert. When the eldest person touched his head with the seder plate, Levinson did not know what was happening. He jumped up and flipped the entire plate. When he saw that everyone was angry at him, he told them he had done so in order to remember the parting of the Reed Sea!³⁷

R. Ya‘akov Moshe Toledano describes the Moroccan custom in his *Ner Hama‘arav* published in 1911,³⁸ while Ida Cowen describes the same custom among the Jews of Izmir, Turkey in 1971.³⁹ Indeed, it is common until today among the Jews of Libya, Morocco, Tunis and Djerba.⁴⁰

What is the reason for this interesting custom? R. Shemtob Gaguine asked some Moroccan rabbis in 1932. They replied that they believe that if they circle the seder plate around the heads of the participants, it can protect them from all harm and a long list of blessings will come upon them. R. Gaguine himself wrote that in his opinion the custom was meant to encourage the children to ask questions.⁴¹ Tuvia Preschel explains that R. Gaguine guessed correctly – in an indirect fashion.

The Talmud says (Pesachim 115b): “Why do we uproot the table? The house of R. Yannai said: so that children should notice and ask questions”. R. Moshe Pisanti supplies the missing link between the talmudic custom and the Spanish-North African custom in his *Hukkat Hapesah*, a Haggadah commentary published in Salonika in 1569. He says that he found a source which says that we must “lift the seder plate for the recitation of Mah Nishtanah...⁴² Furthermore, when they lift the seder plate, they pass it over the heads of the participants in order that they should wonder about it and ask questions...”⁴³ In other words, “uprooting the table” in the Talmud so that the children should notice and ask questions became “lifting the seder plate”. In the course of lifting the plate and putting it on the side, it passed over the heads of the participants. One thing led to another and by the fourteenth century, the father was placing the seder plate on the heads of the children so that they should ask questions.

8. Haroset with an Earthy Flavor

R. Zidkiyahu ben Avraham writes in his *Shiboley Haleket* (Italy, ca. 1250): “Some put a little clay or grated brick [in the haroset] in memory of the clay”.⁴⁴ R. Menahem di Lonzano (Italy, d.1608) reacted to this custom: I was aghast to see such madness. Maybe on Purim they will draw blood, in memory of the decree of death! But they need to change anguish to joy and bad to good! And this mistake stems from a scribal error in the Rashbam and Rashi to Pesachim (fol. 116a) where it says “and heres (clay) which they pound in memory of the clay”. And I checked in an old manuscript of the commentary which says: “And haroset which they pound in memory of the clay”. And this is undoubtedly correct, for this is a commentary on the words “haroset zekher latit” in the Talmud.⁴⁵

The *Bet David* by R. Yosef Philosof (Salonika, 1740) reports that “in Salonika the elders testified that they used to put chopped calermini stone in the haroset”.⁴⁶ The *Hida*, who quotes all of the above, concludes: “But it seems that this custom is not practiced in most towns”.⁴⁷

During the American Civil War (1860-1865), a group of Jewish Union soldiers made a seder for themselves in the wilderness of West Virginia. They had none of the ingredients for traditional haroset available, so they put a real brick in its place on the seder plate!⁴⁸

Finally, Shemuel ben Hallal informs me that his Moroccan uncle, who is a rabbi in Brooklyn, is accustomed to grating rocks into the haroset. Indeed, he adds so much rock that the haroset tastes terrible! I do not believe that these customs are based on a scribal error in Rashi or Rashbam. Rather, this is an attempt to illustrate the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt in a very “concrete” fashion!

9. Parched Grain and Nuts

In the talmudic period, parched grain and nuts were the equivalent of candy and chocolate today. Thus the Mishnah in *Bava Metziah* (4:12), which lists unfair business practices, says that “a storekeeper should not distribute parched grain and nuts to children because he accustoms them to come to his store”.

This is the background for Rabbi Yehudah who says in a beraita (*Pesachim* 109a) that one distributes parched grain and nuts to children on Erev Pesah so that they should ask questions and not fall asleep. The Talmud *Yerushalmi* (*Pesachim* 10:1, fol. 37b) adds that Rabbi Tarfon used to do so. This halakhah was codified by Maimonides (*Hametz Umatzah* 7:3 and *Yom Tov* 6:17-18). The Soncino

Haggadah published in 1486 says that the seder plate must include parched grain and nuts “for the children so that they should ask questions and not fall asleep”.⁴⁹ A modern equivalent would be to distribute candy or chocolate to the children so that they should not fall asleep.

10. Hibuv Mitzvah (Affection for Mitzvot)

The concept of hibuv mitzvah, which is found in a number of Talmudic passages and medieval halakhic works,⁵⁰ is the source for two Pesah customs. R. Isaiah Horowitz, the Shelah, (Frankfurt am Main, Prague, Israel 1565-1630) says that it is customary to kiss the matzot and maror at the seder because of hibuv mitzvah.⁵¹

His contemporary R. Yosef Yuzpah Hahn (Frankfurt am Main, 1570-1637) says that “when eating [the afikoman] he should put his hand under his chin, so that if crumbs fall from his mouth, they will fall into his hand and he will eat them because of hibbat hamitzvah”.⁵²

11. The Power of the Afikoman

The afikoman was believed to have protective powers.⁵³ In seventeenth century Poland they would “break a piece off of the afikoman, pierce it and hang it on the wall”.⁵⁴ Indeed, Hebrew author David Frischmann (1859-1922) published a story “Akhan Asher B‘varsha” which describes a Jewish boy in Warsaw who was so hungry that he ate the afikoman hanging on the wall!⁵⁵

In Lybia and Tunisia, the afikoman was carried by sea travelers as an antidote for a raging sea.⁵⁶ In Persia, it was kept in the pocket as a charm for plenty and blessing.⁵⁷ It was also used as a charm for pregnant women to ensure male children, to cure someone who is mute, to ensure silos full of grain, to protect against bullets, and to prevent a river from overflowing its banks.^{57a}

12. “Shefokh Hamatkha” - “Pour Out Thy Wrath”

Quite a few scholars have already detailed the history of these verses, which are recited after Birkat Hamazon and before Hallel.⁵⁸ We shall describe here three customs related to these verses, which they do not mention:

- a) The apostate Antonius Margaritha (born ca. 1490) relates in his book Der

Gantz *Judisch Glaub* published in Augsburg in 1530 that when Jews open the door for shefokh, someone in costume enters the room quickly, as if he is Elijah himself coming to announce the coming of the Messiah.⁵⁹ R. Yosef Yuzpah Hahn (1570-1637) mentioned above says “how good is the custom that they do something in memory of the Messiah. One falls into the entranceway at the beginning of shefokh to show during the night of our first redemption our strong belief in our final redemption”.⁶⁰

Apparently, someone would pretend to be Elijah coming through the door, and Rabbi Hahn thought that this was a wonderful custom. But R. Yair Hayyim Bachrach (1638-1701) was opposed to this custom: “But what the servants and maids are accustomed to make the figure of a man and the like, something frightening when the door is opened – this is only licentiousness and derision”.⁶¹

This custom clearly fits in with the Cup of Elijah and other Elijah customs at the seder.⁶² It may have been another tactic to keep the children awake. On the other hand, this may be a misunderstanding of the “wandering Jew” skit which took place, as we have seen, at many different points in the seder.

b) In the Haggadah *Shel Pesah* with the commentary of the Maharal of Prague (1525-1609) first published in Warsaw in 1905, we find another custom related to Elijah. In the instructions, the author says that after drinking the third cup of wine, we fill the fourth cup, and we fill another cup in honor of Elijah the Prophet.

Afterwards, it is customary to open the door in honor of Elijah the Prophet, and it is fitting to say this while the door is open: “May the All-merciful send us speedily Elijah the Prophet of blessed memory, and may he tell us good tidings, and salvation. As it is written (Malakhi 3:23-24): “Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the Lord. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction.” And it is written (*ibid.*, v. 1): “Behold, I am sending My messenger to clear the way before Me, and the Lord whom you seek shall come to His Temple suddenly. As for the angel of covenant that you desire, he is already coming.” ⁶³

This is indeed a beautiful custom, but we now know that this haggadah, first published by Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg (1859-1935), was also written by R. Yudel Rosenberg! This prolific author, who happens to have been Mordecai Richler’s grandfather, was also the author of *Nifl’ot Maharal*, first published in 1909. That

work is the main source for the idea that the Maharal created a Golem. Both works are based on

manuscripts supposedly found in the “Royal Library of Metz”. The only problem is, that such a library never existed! These works and others were the products of R. Yudl’s fertile imagination.^{63a}

c) Some modern Haggadot include an alternative version of Shefokh Hamatkha instead of, or in addition to, the traditional verses.^{63b} Rabbi Leopold Stein (1810-1882) was a German Reform rabbi who published numerous Reform prayers and prayerbooks over the course of forty years.⁶⁴ In his Seder Ha’avodah, published in Mannheim in 1882, he printed the following instead of Shefokh Hamatkha:

Shefokh ruhakha al kol bassar
 V’yavo’u kol ha’amim l’ovdekha
 Shekhem ehad v’safah ahat
 V’hayta lashem hamelukhah.
 Pour out Your spirit on all flesh
 May all nations come to serve You
 Together in one language
 Because the Lord is the Sovereign of Nations.⁶⁵

In Hatza’ah L’seder, a new Israeli Haggadah published by the staff of the Midrasha at Oranim Teachers’ College in 2000, the following addition appears after the three traditional Shefokh verses:

A piyyut which exhibits a different attitude to non-Jews:

Shefokh ahavatekha al hagoyim asher yeda’ukha
 V’al mamlakhot asher b’shimkha kor’im
 Biglal hassadim shehem ossim im zera ya’akov
 U’meginim al amekha Yisrael mipi okhleihem
 Yizku lirot b’tovat b’hirekha
 V’lismoah b’simhat hagekha.

(found in a Haggadah manuscript from the early sixteenth century).⁶⁶

This prayer was first published by the bibliographer Naftali Ben-Menahem in 1963. It was supposedly discovered by Rabbi Hayyim Bloch (1881-ca. 1970) in a beautiful manuscript on parchment from the estate of Rabbi Shimshon Wertheimer (1658-1724). The Haggadah was supposed to have been edited in Worms in 1521 by “Yehudah b”r Yekutiel, the grandson of Rashi”, but the manuscript was lost during the Holocaust.⁶⁷

However, a number of scholars have pointed out that this prayer was probably invented by Hayyim Bloch himself,⁶⁸ who was born in Galicia and later moved to Vienna (ca. 1917) and New York (1939).⁶⁹ He was one of the rabbis who published the Kherson letters attributed to the Besht and his disciples, which later turned out to be forgeries.⁷⁰ He also published a letter from the Maharal of Prague, whose authenticity was already disproved by Gershom Scholem.^{70a} Finally, from 1959-1965 he published three volumes containing over 300 letters of great rabbis opposed to Zionism,⁷¹ but Rabbi Shemuel Hacoheh Weingarten has proved that these “letters” were invented by Rabbi Bloch himself!⁷² Therefore, we may assume that “Shefokh Ahavatkha” was not composed in Worms in 1521, but rather by Rabbi Hayyim Bloch ca. 1963!

13. The Parting of the Reed Sea

The last customs we shall discuss take place not at the seder, but on the seventh night of Pesah. According to the Sages, our ancestors crossed Yam Suf, the Reed Sea, on the seventh night of Pesah. Various groups of Jews have developed ways of reenacting the splitting of the Reed Sea.

a) The Gerer Hassidim gather in the shtibl on the seventh night of Pesah; they drink wine and they dance. They then pour a barrel of water on the floor, lift up their long cloaks, and “cross the sea” while declaring the towns which are located on the way to Gur. At each “town” they drink l’hayyim and then continue to Gur. When they “reach” Gur after “crossing the sea”, they once again drink l’hayyim and thank God for reaching their destination.⁷³

A similar custom from Reische, Galicia, in the 1890s is described by my great uncle Herman Leder (1890-1973) in his Yiddish memoir *Reisher Yidn*:

There were several other Jews who were devoted to certain mitzvot more than to others. One of them, was Reb Ephraim Tzibele. Until today I don’t know why he was called Tzibele (onion). As a child, I frequently asked, but no one knew the answer. He lived on Melandim Street. He was an extremely frum (pious) Jew who sat day and night studying and praying. His special distinction lay in the fact that he demonstrated with his children how the Jews crossed the Reed Sea after they were redeemed from Egypt.

He lived in a little wooden house which consisted of one room for himself and his family. One heard little about him all year long and one took little interest in him. But when the seventh day of Pesah arrived, everyone talked about Reb Ephraim Tzibele, because on that night he used to lead his wife and children

through the Sea of Reeds. Since there was no sea in his house, he created a miniature “sea”. He turned over the keg of water which stood by the door and flooded the room with water. He then took his family and crossed the “sea” with them, from one side of the room to the other. Many people used to gather there that night to witness the demonstration.⁷⁴

Similar customs were observed in at least six Hungarian towns until the Holocaust.⁷⁵

b) In Jerusalem, on the other hand, the hassidim of Reb Arele (1894-1947) in Meah Shearim recreate the splitting of the Reed Sea in a different fashion. The disciples act as the sea and the rebbe represents the Children of Israel. The rebbe passes through them and the students slowly part, allowing him to pass through.⁷⁶

c) Finally, R. Ya‘akov Moshe Harlap (1883-1951) developed a custom which was continued by his disciple, R. Shaul Yisraeli (d. 1995). Hundreds of Jews – young and old, hassidim and mitnagdim, halutzim, Yeshiva students and soldiers – would congregate at his house in the Sha‘are Hessed neighborhood of Jerusalem. Rabbi Harlap would deliver divrey torah interspersed with singing. At twelve midnight, Rabbi Harlap would stand up, put on a white kittel and begin to chant Shirat Hayam (Exodus 15). He would sing a special niggun (tune) with the assembled, followed by responsive singing of Shirat Hayam, one verse at a time. After Shirat Hayam, they would sing the Melekh Rahaman paragraph from the Musaf service and dance with great fervor. Indeed, those who were there said that Hayam was an abbreviation of Harav Ya‘akov Moshe.⁷⁷

The above is just a small sample of Pesah potpourri. We hope that these customs will enrich the sederim of those who decide to adopt them, as they have enriched the sederim of millions of Jews throughout the generations.

Abbreviations

Ben Ezra = Akiva Ben Ezra, Minhagey Hagim, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1962

Dobrinsky = Herbert Dobrinsky, A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs, New York, 1986

EJ = Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem, 1971

Goldschmidt = Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., Haggadah Shel Pesah, Jerusalem, 1960

Kasher = Rabbi Menahem Mendel Kasher, Haggadah Sheleimah, Jerusalem, 1955

Lewinsky = Yom Tov Lewinsky, ed., Sefer Hamoadim: Pesah, Tel Aviv, 1948

Scheiber = Alexander Scheiber, Yeda Am, 1/7-8 (Nissan 5711), p. 6

Sperber = Daniel Sperber, Minhagey Yisrael, 6 Volumes, Jerusalem, 1989-1998

Wassertil = Asher Wassertil, ed., Yalkut Minhagim, third edition, Jerusalem, 1996

Notes

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1. This article is the second in a series. For the first article, regarding Hanukkah customs, see Conservative Judaism 53/2 (Winter 2001), pp. 41-50, which was reprinted in Insight Israel , Vol. 4, No. 4 (December 2003).

2. For example, Shabbat Hagadol has been discussed thoroughly by Kasher, pp. 50-54 and Ben Ezra, pp. 204-209. The Cup of Elijah has been discussed by Israel Levi, REJ 67 (1914), pp. 125-128; Kasher, pp. 94-95, and 161-178 (Hebrew pagination); Rabbi Yehudah Avida, Koso Shel Eliyahu Hanavi , Jerusalem, 1958; Rabbi N. Wahrman, Hagey Yisrael Umoadav , Jerusalem, 1959, pp. 148 ff; Dov Noy, Mahanayim 44 (1960), pp. 110-116; Yehudah Rosenthal; Mehkarim Umekorot , Vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1966, pp. 645-651; Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Torat Hashabbat V’hamoed , Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 145-154; Shmuel and Ze’ev Safrai, Haggadat Hazal, Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 177-178. The spilling of the wine during the recitation of the ten plagues has been discussed by Kasher, pp. 126-127 and Ben Ezra, pp. 241-243. The songs Ehad Mi Yodea and Had Gadya have been discussed by Kasher, pp. 190-191; Goldschmidt, pp. 97-98; Shimon Sharvit, Bar Ilan 9 (1972), pp. 475-482; M. Z. Fuchs, Assufot 2 (1988), pp. 201-226; and cf. the list of articles in Yosef Tabori, Reshimat Ma’amarim B’inyaney Tefilah Umoadim, Jerusalem, 1992-1993, pp. 198-199.

3. Either Eruv Hatzerot (Rashi to Berakhot and Shabbat ibid). or Eruv Tavshilin (Meiri to Berakhot ibid).. For an explanation of these terms, see EJ, Vol. 6, cols. 849-850.

4. For other examples not related to Pesah, see R. Hayyim Wiener, The Responsa of the Va’ad Halakhah of the Rabbinical Assembly of Israel , Vol. 4 (5750-5752), p. 70 and note 33 (also available at).

5. Horev 10 (1948), p. 159; Sefer Minhagim d’vev Maharam Mirotenberg , ed. Elfenbein, New York, 1938, p. 68; Sefer Minhagim L’rabeinu Avraham Kloizner , ed. Dissin, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 55, par. 13; Hagahot Maimoniot to Hilkhoh Sukkah 7:26, par. 1; Darkhey Moshe Ha’arokh L’orah Hayyim 664 (end) and the Rema in Orach Hayyim 664:9; Minhagey Maharil, ed. Spitzer, Jerusalem, 1989, p. 377, par. 9.

6. Wassertil, p. 176.

7. R. Yosef Kafah, Halikhoh Teiman, Jerusalem , 1960, p. 34 and Yehuda Ratzhabi, B’ma’agalot Teiman , Tel Aviv, 1988, p. 218.

8. Dobrinsky, pp. 352, 358, and Kaf Hahayyim to Orach Hayyim 664:60.

9. Wassertil, pp. 276, 445; Dobrinsky, p. 263.
10. The most thorough discussion of the kittel is that of Yitzhak Dov Markon, *Melilah 1* (1944), pp. 121-128.
11. See Mishnah Sotah 1:6; Mishnah Ta'anit 4:8; a Beraita in Menahot 109b = Yoma 39b; Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1:3, 57b; Shabbat 114a (end); Shemot Rabbah, Parashah 31, ed. Vilna, 59d.
- 11a. Scheiber p. 6. The custom is based on Exodus 3:22; 11:2; 12:35 .
12. B.M. Lewin, *Otzar Hageonim to Pesahim* , Jerusalem , 1931, p. 112, par. 304. For other sources related to this custom, see Kasher, p. 194 and Safrai (above, note 2), pp. 176-177.
13. Lewinsky, p. 389. It could be that the Jews of Yemen preserved the original custom of Rav Huna but gave it a different explanation. For the tendency of Yemenite Jews to preserve ancient customs, see Shaul Lieberman in: *Yahadut Teiman* , Jerusalem , 1976, p. 350 = idem., *Mehkarim B'Torat Eretz Yisrael* , Jerusalem , 1991, p. 602.
14. *Sefer Korot Luv V'yahadutah – Higid Mordechai* , ed. Goldberg, Jerusalem , 1982, pp. 300 and 303.
15. Nahum Slouschz, *Sefer Hamassaot: Massa'ee B'erezt Luv* , Vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1938, p. 90.
16. Goldberg (above, note 14), p. 378, note 16.
17. Frijia Zuartz in: *Yahadut Luv* , Tel Aviv, 1960, p. 377.
18. Notes 14-17 above are based on Sperber, Vol. 1, pp. 57-59.
- 18a. For discussions of this custom, see Ben Ezra, pp. 236-238; Sperber, Vol. 3, pp. 113-114 and Vol. 4, pp. 185-187. Ben Ezra p. 237, note 9 says that the custom is based on Pesahim 65b, but this seems unlikely.
19. I have translated this passage from Israel ben Joseph Binyamin, *Sefer Massey Yisrael* , translated into Hebrew by David Gordon, Lyck, 1859, p. 126. Cf. J. J. Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa from 1846-1855* , Hanover , 1863, p. 328. The Hebrew and English are not identical; the Hebrew seems to be based on the German edition, while the English seems to be based on the French.
20. R. Ya'akov Sapir, *Even Sapir* , Vol. 1, Lyck, 1866, p. 89a.
21. Lewinsky, p. 397 and cf. Dobrinsky, p. 262.
22. Quoted by Lewinsky, p. 401. It is odd that this paragraph is missing in Slouschz's book (above, note 15), Vol. 2, p. 90 which seems to be Lewinsky's source.

23. Lewinsky, pp. 395-396, 398; Wassertil, pp. 177, 354, 526; Dobrinsky, pp. 256, 276-277.
24. Simha Assaf, ed., *Sifran Shel Rishonim*, Jerusalem, 1935, p. 157. This passage is later quoted in *Orhot Hayyim*, Florence, 1750, fol 79b; *Kol Bo*, Lvov, 1860, fol. 12a; and R. Moshe Pisanti, *Hukkat Hapesah*, Salonika, 1569, fol. 8a.
25. Ba'ér Heiteiv to *Orah Hayyim* 473, subpar. 19 and in a briefer fashion in *Magen Avraham* *ibid.*, subpar. 22 and *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid.*, subpar. 59.
26. See now the new facsimile edition of the Prague Haggadah, Jerusalem, ca. 2004, near "Matzah Zo" (the pages are unnumbered).
27. Scheiber, p. 6.
28. Wassertil, pp. 84-85.
29. Lewinsky, p. 390, and cf. Wassertil, p. 463.
30. *Tosefta Pisha* 10:9, ed. Lieberman, p. 197 and cf. the parallel *beraita* in *Bavli Pesahim* 109a. See *Tosefta Kifshuta ad loc.*, p. 653 for three of the medieval explanations of this passage.
31. *Bet Habehira to Pesahim*, ed. Klein, Jerusalem, 1966, pp. 231-232, and note 300 *ibid.*; *Rabbeinu Manoah to Maimonides ad loc.*, ed. Frankel, Jerusalem, 1975, p. 338.
32. Most of the sources quoted below were collected by Tuvia Preschel in: Victor Sanua, ed. *Fields of Offerings: Studies in Honor of Raphael Patai*, Cranbury, New Jersey, 1983, Hebrew Section, pp. xvii-xx.
33. Therese and Mendel Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, Fribourg, Switzerland, 1983, plate 378. The child appears to be a girl. This illustration is not mentioned by Preschel.
34. Quoted by Preschel, pp. xviii-xix. Regarding this Haggadah, see Yitzhak Yudelov, *Otzar Hahaggadot*, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 1.
35. *The Hida*, *Ma'agal Tov Hashalem*, Berlin-Jerusalem, 1934, p. 62 = Preschel, p. xvii.
36. Benjamin II, (above, note 19), Hebrew edition p. 126 = Preschel, *ibid.* = English edition, p. 328.
37. Lewinsky, p. 398 = Preschel, pp. xvii-xviii.
38. R. Ya'akov Moshe Toledano, *Ner Hama'arav*, Jerusalem, 1911, p. 215 (= Jerusalem, 1973, p. 303) = Preschel, *ibid.*
39. Ida Cowen, *Jews in Remote Corners of the World*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971, pp.

301, 309 = Preschel, *ibid.*

40. Wassertil, pp. 381, 441, 513, 516-527; Dobrinsky, p. 261.

41. R. Shemtob Gaguine, *Keter Shem Tob*, Vol. 3, London, 1948, p. 129 = Preschel, *ibid.*

42. For an illustration of that custom from northern Italy ca. 1450, see Rafael Weiser and Rivka Plessner, eds., *Treasures Revealed*, Jerusalem, 2000, p. 64.

43. R. Moshe Pisanti, *Hukkat Hapesah*, Salonika, 1569, fol. 8a = Preschel, p. xix.

44. *Shiboley Haleket Hashalem*, ed. Shelomo Buber, Vilna, 1887, p. 184.

45. This passage is quoted from a manuscript by the Hida, Birkey Yosef to Orah Hayyim 473, subpar. 12, Vienna, 1860, fol. 96a.

46. Quoted by the Hida, *ibid.*

47. The Hida *ibid.* The Hida is quoted in an abbreviated fashion by Kasher, p. 64 and by Avraham Berliner, *Ketavim Nivharim*, Vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1949, p. 216.

48. Noam Zion and David Dishon, *A Different Night*, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 113.

49. Quoted by Kasher, p. 61. Regarding this early Haggadah, see Yudelov (above, note 34), p. 1.

50. *Sukkah* 41b; *Shabbat* 33b; *Shabbat* 130a; *Sotah* 13a; *Hullin* 133a. For medieval halakhic literature, see H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, London, 1958, pp. 259-262.

51. *Sheney Luhot Haberit*, Part II, p. 45, quoted by Zimmels, p. 261. I was not able to locate this passage in the *Shelah*.

52. Yosef Ometz, Frankfurt am Main, 1928, p. 170, par. 774.

53. See Ben Ezra, pp. 239-241; *EJ*, Vol. 2, col. 329; Philip Goodman, *The Passover Anthology*, Philadelphia, 1973, pp. 378-379 for many different customs.

54. Ba'er Hetev to Orah Hayyim 477, subpar. 4 and Magen Avraham to Orah Hayyim 500, subpar. 7.

55. *Kol Kitvey David Frischmann*, Vol. 2, Part 2, Warsaw - New York, 1929, pp. 21-30. Rabbi Shmuel Avidor Hacoheh referred me to this story; it is also referred to by Ben Ezra, p. 240, note 25.

56. Wassertil, pp. 381, 514.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 464.

57a. Ben Ezra, p. 240.

58. Kasher, pp. 177-180; Goldschmidt, pp. 62-64; H. D. Chavel, *Sinai* 63 (1968), pp. 91-92; Zekhariah Goren, *Mehkerey Hag* 6 (1995), pp. 95-96; Safrai (above, note 2), pp. 174-176.

59. These and the next two sources are taken from Sperber, Vol. 4, pp. 169-170, and Joseph Guttman, "The Messiah at the Seder," in: Sh. Yeivin, ed., *Studies in Jewish History* Presented to Raphael Mahler, Merhaviva, 1974, pp. 29-38. Regarding Margaritha, see *EJ*, Vol. 11, cols. 958-959.

60. Yosef Ometz, (above, note 52), p. 172, parag. 788.

61. *Mekor Hayyim*, ed. Pinness, Vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 464.

62. See the literature listed above in note 2.

63. *Haggadah shel Pesah Lamaharal*, London, 1960 = Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 154-155. The author explains in his commentary *Divrey Negidim* (*ibid.*) that he himself invented this custom.

63a. For a good survey of R. Yudl Rosenberg's literary activity, see Shnayer Z. Leiman, *Tradition* 36/1 (Spring 2002), pp. 26-58. Regarding the haggadah which he attributed to the Maharal, see *ibid.*, note 27 and R. Abraham Benedict, *Moriah* 14/3-4 (Sivan 1985), pp. 102-113.

63b. For a survey of Shefokh Hamatkha in Reform and Conservative haggadot, see Debra Reed Blank, *Conservative Judaism* 40/2 (Winter 1987-88), pp. 73-86.

64. Regarding Leopold Stein, see *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, New York, 1905, p. 540; Harry Ettelson, *CCAR Yearbook* 21 (1911), pp. 306-327; Jakob Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*, New York, 1968, pp. 155-159, 178-179, 235, 244ff. 257, 270ff., 281, 338-340; Robert Liberles, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 27 (1982), pp. 261-279.

65. Leopold Stein, *Seder Ha'avodah: Gebetbuch für Israelitische Gemeinden*, Vol. I, Manheim, 1882, p. 184. I copied this prayer from a secondary source many years ago. The HUC Library in Cincinnati seems to possess the only extant copy of this prayer book (see Petuchowski, above, note 64, p. 10), but it is now stored at an off-site storage facility so I was unable to obtain a xerox of the page in question.

However, this type of emendation was typical of Stein's liturgical reforms.

66. *Hatza'ah L'seder*, Tel Aviv, 2000, p. 105. Here is a translation: "Pour out your love on the nations who know You, and on kingdoms who call Your name. For the good which they do for the seed of Jacob, and they shield Your people Israel from their enemies. May they merit to see the good of Your chosen, and to rejoice in the joy of Your nation." It was reprinted this year in *Mishael and Noam Zion, Halayla Hazah*, Jerusalem, 2004, p. 120.

67. Naftali Ben-Menahem, *Mahanayyim* 80 (1963), p. 95.
68. Shlomo Rozner and Avraham Rosenthal, *Daf L'tarbut Yehudit* 164 (Iyar Tamuz 5747-1987), p. 8; Zekharia Goren (above, note 58), pp. 97-98.
69. For his biography, see Rabbi Meir Wunder, *Me'orei Galicia*, Vol. 1, Jerusalem, 1978, cols. 502-506. My thanks to Rabbi Wunder and Prof. Ze'ev Gries for references to literature about Bloch.
70. Regarding the Kherson genizah, see Yizhak Refael, *Sinai* 81 (1977), pp. 129-150 (and especially p. 137 for Rabbi Bloch's publications); Ze'ev Gries, *Sefer Sofer V'sippur B'reishit Hahassidut*, Tel Aviv, 1992, p. 110, note 1; Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996, pp. 123-125.
- 70a. Gershom Scholem, *Kiryat Sefer* 1 (1924), pp. 105-106.
71. R. Hayyim Bloch, *Dovev Siftei Yesheanim*, New York, 1959-1965. For previous articles by Bloch on the same topic, see Alkoshi in the following note.
72. R. Shemuel Hachohen Weingarten, *Sinai* 32 (1953), pp. 122-127; *idem.*, *Hasefer* 3 (1955-1956), pp. 35-48; *idem.*, *Mikhtavim Mezuyafim Neced Haziyonut*, Jerusalem, 1981: Gedalia Alkoshi, *Moznayim* 42 (1975-1976), pp. 212-215.
73. Ben Ezra, p. 245.
74. Herman Leder, *Reisher Yidn*, Washington, D.C., 1953, p. 73.
75. Scheiber, p. 6.
76. Regarding Reb Arele, see *EJ*, Vol. 14, cols. 325-326. I was told about this custom at one of the lectures I delivered about Pesah customs. I have been unable to find any written evidence of this custom.
77. D. Yehudah, *Mahanayyim* 25 (1955), pp. 90-91; A. Malkiel, *Duchan* 8 (1966), pp. 55-59; Leah Abramowitz, *In Jerusalem*, April 1, 1994, p. 7.

FOUR CUPS OF WINE

Rabbi Jacob Chinitz

Yakhol Merosh Chodesh, the Hagada actually entertains the idea that the Seder begins on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. That is one reason my subject is proper for today. The other reason is that of all the special days, Rosh Chodesh has no special foods associated with it, except maybe the lox that we serve here in our special Rosh Chodesh breakfast.

Pesach has Matzo, but also Wine. Believe it or not, the big Siddur Otzar Hatefilot has a passage which begins: The law for one who does not have wine. A Seder without wine? Why the Gemara tells that on the night of Pesach every Jew must have four cups of wine, even if he has to ask for charity. Four cups, for four expressions of Redemption. Four cups, accompanying the four acts in the Drama of the Seder: Kiddush, Hagadah, Birkat Hamazon, Hallel Hagadol. What could a Seder without wine possible be? Here are the instructions:

"He who has no wine on the night of Pesach, should take three matzot, break the middle one into two parts, hide one part for the Afikomen, wash his hands, recite Kiddush over the Matzot, and give the order of KNEHZ, Kiddush, Ner, (as this year on Motzoei Shabbat), Havdalah, Zeman, Shehechyanu. Then he takes the broken Matzo and blesses Al Achilat Matzo, he eats the Karpas, recites from Ma Nishtano till Goal Yisrael, blesses for the Maror, eats the Korekh sandwich of Hillel."

Our colleague Rabbi Adler one year gave us a Dvar Torah on Erev Yom Kippur about the paradox that even YK, a fast day, surrounds us with culinary preparations involving the supermarket, the kitchen, while the spiritual aspect of the day gets lost or is minimized. Rosh Hashana has its honey, Shavuot its blintzes, Shabbat its Challah, and Pesach has Matzo, Wine, and a lot of food. The prices for fish and meat go up for Kosher Lepasach labels. Families gather, tourists come, hotels and ship cruises abound. Certainly Wine is the centerpiece of Pesach indulgence, not, God forbid, by our addiction, but by fiat of Torah which commands no less than four cups for the Seder.

The wine is a problem. In the Talmud we are told that one Rabbi was so drunk after the Seder, he had a hangover till Shavuot. Another Rabbi had a headache till Sukkot. Of course, homiletically this is interpreted as the connection between Freedom and Torah, between potential and fulfillment. But hangovers the morning after the Seder are not unusual. The poor Jew in the Otzar Hatefilot who has no

wine, has no such problem.

And the amazing thing is that he could fulfill the basics of the Seder without any cups. In fact, when we are told that three words must be recited in the Hagadah, Pesach, Matzo, Maror, Yayin is not one of them.

There could not be any more contrasting days than YK and Pesach. One is a fast, the other a feast. And yet it is interesting to note that the element of deprivation exists in both. Even when we do have wine, we eat Matzo which is labelled as Lechem Oni,

Ha Lachma Anya. YK demands Veinitem Et Nafshoteikhem, You shall afflict yourselves on this day. I am not so sure that the greeting of Have An Easy Fast is proper.

On YK there is a democracy of affliction. Even those who have wine, recite Kiddush Hayom without wine. The Shehechyanu after Kol Nidre might be that Kiddush. In fact, I have seen reference to a custom to recite an actual Kiddush over a cup of wine, and give it to a minor who is not fasting, to taste. But the prevalent practice is to have Kiddush without wine.

On Pesach we use wine, but, as we have seen, when there is no wine, Kiddush and Seder can still be fulfilled, with the eating of the bread of affliction, the telling of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, tasting of the bitterness of slavery. Who knows if but we can reach the essence of the day better without the distraction and intoxication of the wine, as on YK we reach the heights of repentance without food and wine, even without water.

We could decouple our Shabbat from the Challah, our weddings and Bar Mitzva celebrations from the sumptuous Kiddushim and Seudot, I have seen a Teshuva of R. Moshe Feinstein in which he says that if he had the power, he would abolish Bar Mitzva, not Bar Mitzva but the celebrations, altogether because of the overindulgence and misplaced emphasis.

Unless we learn how to brave a Seder without wine, symbolically speaking, we shall never penetrate to the core of Oneg Shabbat, Derekh Cheirut, and Inui Nefesh of atonement. We have to be able to be God intoxicated without alcohol, with the love of God and Freedom burning in our guts. Chodesh Tov Vechag Someiach.

CAFE STANDARDS (Purim? Torah For Passover)

(Andrew Silow-Carroll, ,The following op-ed piece is reprinted from the March 8, 2007 issue of the New Jersey Jewish News)

As you prepare for the upcoming Passover holidays, I want to share some of my thoughts with you.

As some of you know, I have long looked to the Starbucks coffee empire as a source for ideas about reinvigorating the synagogue experience. As I once wrote in an essay (reprinted in Heavenly Coffee: The Journal of Religion and Caffeine), your typical Starbucks serves as a model and metaphor for community-building. “The physical setting is often exquisite, the seating is conducive to lingering and conversation, the music is current and tasteful, the price of admission is low, and the entire place commands you to slow down, albeit in a highly caffeinated way.”

Over the past 10 years, however, I’ve noted an erosion in the Starbucks model. And it’s not just me. Last month, Howard Schultz, the chairman of Starbucks, sent a memo to employees. In it, he complains that the chain has made a series of business decisions that have led to the “watering down of the Starbucks experience.” Automatic espresso machines have replaced hands-on “baristas.” “Flavor-locked packaging” fills in for aromatic roasted beans. Too-tall machines prevent customers from seeing their mochas and cappuccinos being concocted. Automation even removes the aroma — the “most powerful nonverbal signal” in the Starbucks experience.

In short, customers are being robbed of the “romance and theater that was in play.” By “stripping the store of tradition and our heritage,” Schultz wrote, too many stores “no longer have the soul of the past.”

Schultz is talking about coffee, but it doesn’t take more than few shots of espresso to see that he is also talking about religion. Judaism may not be on the same growth curve as Starbucks (which went from 1,000 stores to 13,000 in a decade), but aren’t we all struggling with how to hold onto our “tradition and heritage”? Can’t we also say that too many Jewish institutions “no longer have the soul of the past”?

That’s why I think Schultz’s memo should be added to the reading list as we think about the Jewish future. We all should ask his question: “We achieved fresh roasted bagged coffee, but at what cost?” Okay, maybe that’s not exactly the

question for American Jewry, but you get the idea. In what ways do our own synagogues represent a watered-down version of Jewish tradition? In what ways have we shortchanged congregants who are in search of “romance and theater”?

Schultz’s memo is really a five-point plan for synagogue renewal. Consider:

One: Bring back the baristas.

When new people show up at your synagogues, are temple regulars and employees closed and automatic, or are they open and intimate? A people-to-people approach is the single biggest factor in attracting new members, and keeping them.

Two: Reflect the passion.

Schultz complains that “some people even call our stores sterile, cookie cutter, no longer reflecting the passion our partners feel about our coffee.” Does your synagogue and its decor reflect the personality of your congregation? Do decorations and signage display the soul of the membership or the mere craftsmanship of the architect?

Three: Let them see the drink being made.

People want to see the process. Rabbis and boards who make decisions behind closed doors miss an opportunity to educate and engage their congregants. Lower the barriers.

Four: Bring back the aroma.

What are your “most powerful nonverbal signals”? Is it an inviting kiddush? Is it the array of information for new congregants right by the entrance to the sanctuary? Is it the sight of young children who obviously appear comfortable in shul?

Five: Get back to the core.

Schultz urges Starbucks employees to “push for innovation and do the things necessary to once again differentiate Starbucks from all others.” That seems to contradict his message of tradition and heritage, but it doesn’t. It means always finding fresh ways to remember who you are, and to remind others of the differences that make you you.

Okay, I’ll admit it: Growing a coffee chain and running a synagogue do not make for perfect analogies. While a synagogue should offer a variety of ways to engage Jews, a menu that’s too big would certainly lead to a “dilution of the experience.” Successful synagogues also demand more from their “customers” than that they merely show up, pay for a service, and walk back out the door. In successful

synagogues, “customers” are found on both sides of the counter.

But Schultz could well be the keynote speaker at a synagogue renewal conference when he says, “We desperately need to look into the mirror and realize it’s time to get back to the core and make the changes necessary to evoke the heritage, the tradition, and the passion that we all have for the true Starbucks experience.”

Substitute “synagogue” for “Starbucks” in that sentence, and you have what sounds like — you’ll pardon the cliché — a wake-up call.

MAJADELE REFUSES TO SING NATIONAL ANTHEM: Israel's first Arab minister refuses to sing national anthem

Amnon Meranda YNET Published: 03.17.07, 23:37 / Israel News

Rightist MKs slam Israel's first Arab minister, who said in newspaper interview he would not sing anthem, because song was written 'only for Jews'

Rightist Knesset members strongly criticized Minister Raleb Majadele Saturday, after he said in an interview to Yedioth Ahronoth this weekend that he refuses to sing Israel's national anthem, Hatikva.

In the interview, Majadele said, "Of course I would not sing the anthem in its current form. But before we talk about symbols, I want to talk about equal education for my children. It's more important that my son would be able to buy a house, live with dignity. the Arabs are not in a mood to sing right now."

Majadele told Ynet following interview that, "As a government minister, I swore allegiance to the laws of the State of Israel, and I intend to honor them." Majadele noted that he expresses his respect to the national anthem by standing up whenever the song is being sung.

"To the best of my knowledge, the law does not require me to sing the anthem, but to honor it. I fail to understand how an enlightened, sane Jew allows himself to ask a Muslim person with a different language and culture, to sing an anthem that was written for Jews only," he added.

Majadele's statements prompted harsh responses among right-wing MKs. MK Ariele Eldad (National Union-National Religious Party) said that a man who refuses to sing the national anthem should not be a minister.

"I don't want to force Minister Majadele to sing the anthem, but I don't want to see as a minister a man who does not identify with Israel's character, and who declares he does not identify with the national anthem," he stated.

MK Zevulun Orlev (National Union-NRP) was also furious with Majadele's words and said that the prime minister should order the minister to apologize. "Majadele's statements should raise deep concern. They represent a clear violation of his ministerial oath to be loyal to the State of Israel and its laws. I call on the prime minister to demand that he make it clear he is loyal to the State of Israel as a Jewish state," he declared.

Meanwhile, MK Ahmed Tibi voiced his support for Majadele, and said that he too never sings the anthem. "The attacks on him from the Right are hypocritical, self-righteous and ridiculous. Hatikva's words cannot be sung by any Arab citizen," Tibi said, adding that any reasonable Jew should sympathize with this sentiment, "Including honest rightists who have already accepted the fact that the words are aimed at the Jewish, not the Arab, soul."

"Lately we have witnessed a torrent of anti-Arab statements, and this should be understood in this context," he concluded.

Hatikvah, another opinion

Rabbi Kenneth Cohen

The anthem speaks of Jewish longing. It is hard to imagine how any Arab, even one who is a loyal citizen of the state, can sing with conviction an anthem saying that for two thousand years the Arabs have been waiting for the Jews to return.

"Od lo avdah tikvateunu....." -- "For two thousand years we have not lost our hope." Who is the "we" who have not lost hope?

I don't think Jews need apologize for the anthem or the Jewish symbols used by what is, after all, a Jewish state. There are many ethnic states in the world and they all have minorities.

Further, however problematic Hatikvah might be for Israeli Arabs, it is infinitely more gentle than the Palestinian national anthem which speaks of "our vengeance" (against whom, I wonder). Of course a Jewish citizen of Palestine would not be able to sing such an anthem, not only because of the theme, but because a Palestinian state would most likely be Judenrein (which makes the whole point moot).

No. I don't see how one could expect an Arab minister to sing Hatikva. Further, I would have no problem with Israeli Arabs having their own anthem. Nevertheless, all government officials should pledge loyalty to the state as presently constituted (i.e. a Jewish state) as a condition of appointment. Further, I would certainly want any minister fired who did not rise respectfully when the anthem is sung.

Further, I would require a loyalty oath to the State of Israel (as presently constituted--a Jewish state) as a condition for sitting in the Knesset. If this has the effect of excluding fifth column parties like Balad from having members of Knesset, so be it.

I am a strong civil libertarian, but what other country would have enemy sympathizers in its parliament? The Knesset barred right wing Zionist like Kahane on grounds of racism. Similarly, anti-Zionist terrorist sympathizers ought to be barred. They should count themselves lucky that they aren't jailed.

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YIDDISH “FOUR QUESTIONS

(Hershel Bershatsky, e-mail list Mendele: Yiddish literature and language , vol2.160)

Tateh (or zayde), ikh vill dir fregen die vier kashes.

Der Ershte kashe ikh vill dir fregen:

Far vus is der nakht von Pesakh andisht von alle nakht von a ganze yahr? Far vus alle nakht von a ganze yahr as mir villen, essen mir khometz, und as mir villen, essen mir matzoh, aber der nakht von Pesakh essen mir nur matzoh? Aber kein khometz turen mir nisht essen. Hab ikh dir gefregt ein kashe.

Der zweite kashe ikh vill dir fregen:

Far vus alle nakht von a ganze yahr as mir villen essen mir bissere grinsen, und as mir villen essen mir zisser grinsen? Aber der nakht von Pesakh essen mir nur bissere grinsen. Hab ikh dir gefregt zwei kashes.

Der dritte kashe ikh vill dir fregen:

Far vus alle nakht von a ganze yahr tinken mir ein mul ekhnit eyn? Aber der nakht von Pesakh tinken mir eyn zwei mul? Ein mul tsibele in zalz vasser, und der zweite mul khrain and kharoset. Hab ikh dir gefregt drei kashes.

Der vierte kashe ikh vill dir fregen:

Far vus alle nakht von a ganze yahr as mir willen essen mir zitzendik, und as mir willen essen mir ungespart? Aber der nakht von Pesakh essen mir alle ungespart?

Yetzt hab ikh dir gefregt alle vier kashes. Heint entfir mir ein tirez von alle vier kashes.

YIDDISH DAYENU

The Workmen's Circle seder Hagode is rich with Yiddish songs about Peysakh happenings. In Yiddish translation, from the traditional Hagode was Dayenu:

Voltn mir nor fun Mitsrayim
Gliklekh oisgeleyzt gevorn
Nor der yam zikh nit geshpoltn - Dayenu.

Volt der yam zikh shoyn geshpoltn
Nor im durkhgeyn in der trukn
VOLT undz demolt nit gegoltn - Dayenu.

Voltn mir im shoyn ariber
Nit gekent nor iberkumen
Fertsik yor in groysn midber - Dayenu.

Voltn mir di fertsik yor shoyn
In dem midber durkgekumen
Un keyn man dort nit gefunen - Dayenu.

Voltn mir dort man gefunen
Nor dem shabes nit bakumen
Un tsum Sinay nit gekumen - Dayenu.

Voltn mir tsum Sinay kumen
Nor di toyre nit bakumen
S'folk fun toyre nit gevorn - Dayenu.

YIDDISH VERSION: ECHAD ME YODEAH

(Reprinted from the e-mail list Mendele: Yiddish literature and language , vol4.388:)

I leave the preliminary "yum ta da dim dum" to you. In my version, the central part of each of the 13 stanzas is as follow:

ver s'kon reydn un ver dertseyln

1. vos der eyns batayt x2

eyner iz dokh got

un got iz eyner

un vayter keyner.

2. vos der tsvey batayt x2

tsvey zenen di lukhes

un eyner iz dokh got

un got iz eyner, etc.

3. vos der dray batayt x2

dray zenen di oves

un tsvey zenen di lukhes

un etc.

4. . . . fir . . .

fir zenen di noshim

dray zenen di oves

etc.

5. . . . finf . . .

finf zenen di khumoshim

etc.

6. . . . zeks . . .

zeks zenen di mishnayes

etc.

7. . . . zibn . . .

der zibeter tog iz shabes

etc.

8. . . . akht . . .

der akhter tog iz mile

9. . . . nayn . . .

nayn kahdoshim trogt men

10. . . . tsen . . .

tsen zenen di aseres hadibres

11. . . . elf . . .

elf zenen di mides

12. . . . tsvelf . . .

tsvelf zenen di shvotim

13. vos der draytsn batayt x2

draytsn is bar mitsve

un tsvelf zenen di shvotim

un elf zenen di mides

un tsen di aseres hadibres

nayn khadoshim trogt men

der akhter tog iz mile

der zibeter tog is shabes

zeks zenen di mishnayes

finif zenen di khumoshim

fir zenen di noshim

dray zenen di oves

tsvey zenen di lukhes

un eyner iz dokh got

un got iz eyner

un vayter keyner

BEYOND THE FOUR QUESTIONS:

Rabbi Jacob Chinitz

1. Why is Yachatz performed before Magid, and not after Motzi, when the Matza is first handled?
2. Why is the Hagadah in Hebrew, except for the opening Ha Lachma Anya?
3. Why do we open the door for Shefokh Chamotkho, and not when we say Kol Dikhfin Yete?
4. Why do we distribute nuts and do other different things to stimulate the children to ask questions,

but the four questions asked do not refer to those things, but to things done after Ma Nishtano?
5. Why do we shun the Egyptians but imitate the Romans in the Seder banquet and the Karpas and the Haseba, Derech Cherut?
6. What is the real reason for the Arba Kosot, Daled Leshonot Shel Geula, or the fact that we honor the four steps: Kadesh, Magid, Birkat Hamazon, Hallel -- with a cup of wine?
7. Why do we make the Charoset sweet, if it is meant to remind us of the Tit, clay, used in Egypt?
8. If the Afikomon is meant to remind us of the Korban Pesach, why does it consist of Matza, and not meat?
9. Is Sipur Yetziat Mitzrayim, like Tefila, which can be fulfilled by the Sheliach Tzibur for us, and like Keriat Hatorah, which is fulfilled by the Baal Koreh for us, or is it like Keriat Shema which must be recited by us ourselves?
10. Why are the four questions of Ma Nishtano not really answered in the Hagadah?

FOUR CUPS OF WINE

Rabbi Jacob Chinitz

Yakhol Merosh Chodesh, the Hagada actually entertains the idea that the Seder begins on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. That is one reason my subject is proper for today. The other reason is that of all the special days, Rosh Chodesh has no special foods associated with it, except maybe the lox that we serve here in our special Rosh Chodesh breakfast.

Pesach has Matzo, but also Wine. Believe it or not, the big Siddur Otzar Hatefilot has a passage which begins: The law for one who does not have wine. A Seder without wine? Why the Gemara tells that on the night of Pesach every Jew must have four cups of wine, even if he has to ask for charity. Four cups, for four expressions of Redemption. Four cups, accompanying the four acts in the Drama of the Seder: Kiddush, Hagadah, Birkat Hamazon, Hallel Hagadol. What could a Seder without wine possible be? Here are the instructions:

"He who has no wine on the night of Pesach, should take three matzot, break the middle one into two parts, hide one part for the Afikomen, wash his hands, recite Kiddush over the Matzot, and give the order of KNEHZ, Kiddush, Ner, (as this year on Motzoei Shabbat), Havdalah, Zeman, Shehechyanu. Then he takes the broken Matzo and blesses Al Achilat Matzo, he eats the Karpas, recites from Ma Nishtano till Goal Yisrael, blesses for the Maror, eats the Korekh sandwich of Hillel."

Our colleague Rabbi Adler one year gave us a Dvar Torah on Erev Yom Kippur about the paradox that even YK, a fast day, surrounds us with culinary preparations involving the supermarket, the kitchen, while the spiritual aspect of the day gets lost or is minimized. Rosh Hashana has its honey, Shavuot its blintzes, Shabbat its Challah, and Pesach has Matzo, Wine, and a lot of food. The prices for fish and meat go up for Kosher Lepesach labels. Families gather, tourists come, hotels and ship cruises abound. Certainly Wine is the centerpiece of Pesach indulgence, not, God forbid, by our addiction, but by fiat of Torah which commands no less than four cups for the Seder.

The wine is a problem. In the Talmud we are told that one Rabbi was so drunk after the Seder, he had a hangover till Shavuot. Another Rabbi had a headache till Sukkot. Of course, homiletically this is interpreted as the connection between Freedom and Torah, between potential and fulfillment. But hangovers the morning

after the Seder are not unusual. The poor Jew in the Otzar Hatefilot who has no wine, has no such problem.

And the amazing thing is that he could fulfill the basics of the Seder without any cups. In fact, when we are told that three words must be recited in the Hagadah, Pesach, Matzo, Maror, Yayin is not one of them.

There could not be any more contrasting days than YK and Pesach. One is a fast, the other a feast. And yet it is interesting to note that the element of deprivation exists in both. Even when we do have wine, we eat Matzo which is labelled as Lechem Oni,

Ha Lachma Anya. YK demands Veinitem Et Nafshoteikhem, You shall afflict yourselves on this day. I am not so sure that the greeting of Have An Easy Fast is proper.

On YK there is a democracy of affliction. Even those who have wine, recite Kiddush Hayom without wine. The Shehechyanu after Kol Nidre might be that Kiddush. In fact, I have seen reference to a custom to recite an actual Kiddush over a cup of wine, and give it to a minor who is not fasting, to taste. But the prevalent practice is to have Kiddush without wine.

On Pesach we use wine, but, as we have seen, when there is no wine, Kiddush and Seder can still be fulfilled, with the eating of the bread of affliction, the telling of the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, tasting of the bitterness of slavery. Who knows if but we can reach the essence of the day better without the distraction and intoxication of the wine, as on YK we reach the heights of repentance without food and wine, even without water.

We could decouple our Shabbat from the Challah, our weddings and Bar Mitzva celebrations from the sumptuous Kiddushim and Seudot, I have seen a Teshuva of R. Moshe Feinstein in which he says that if he had the power, he would abolish Bar Mitzva, not Bar Mitzva but the celebrations, altogether because of the overindulgence and misplaced emphasis.

Unless we learn how to brave a Seder without wine, symbolically speaking, we shall never penetrate to the core of Oneg Shabbat, Derekh Cheirut, and Inui Nefesh of atonement. We have to be able to be God intoxicated without alcohol, with the love of God and Freedom burning in our guts. Chodesh Tov Vechag Someiach.

NEW CUSTOM FOR THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen

Using “A Different Night” published by the Hartman Institute, we pause after the four questions and have different people read it in their own language. So far we have had German, French, Spanish, Russian, Italian and await Chinese and Japanese. It adds to the diversity of the evening and reminds us that Jews have lived in many different places.

PASSOVER SEDER GAME

Match the Jewish personalities and their stage names:

George Burns

Nathan Birnbaum –

Jerry Lewis

Israel Iskovitz

Danny Kaye

Emanuel Goldenberg Romania

Gene Wilder

Jerome Silberman

Edward G. Robinson

David Daniel Kaminsky

Eddie Cantor

Joseph Levitch

AVADIM HAYINU

Diane Cohen

Hevre:

As you may know, I've been teaching 5th graders this year in an afternoon religious school, and I wanted to share some of the insights my kids came up with as we studied the hagaddah.

I assigned them the text of Avadim hayinu and we talked about what it means to be enslaved. How can we in 21st century America say we're slaves today? (Let's set aside slavery issues around the world - I wanted them to think about their own situations. They're 10). Then we looked at Rabban Gamliel haya omer and the requirement to eat matzah. What's the connection, I asked. "Why do we eat matzah? Because the Holy One redeemed our ancestors before their dough had time to ferment." We eat matzah because God redeemed our ancestors? They knew two weeks in advance that redemption was coming. They had instructions on how to eat their final meal as slaves. Why didn't they have dough ready to be baked into bread?

The kids had a good time with it and finally got to where most of us get to - that the Israelites simply didn't have enough faith to believe that it would really happen. Moses says, "Get ready" they say "Yeah, right" and then redemption is at hand and the Israelites say, "Oops, gotta pack." But then I asked them what would happen when we truly are no longer slaves to our addictions and our materialism and all the rest. Would we still need to eat matzah? After all we're no longer slaves. They were quick to reply: We would still need to eat matzah because we would need to remember when we didn't have faith.

Wow. So matzah becomes a memory jog. Passover isn't just to remember when we were slaves. It's to remind us of a time when we didn't have faith that God would redeem us. With each bite of that cardboard (unless you have soft matzah - yum), consider that we might have been eating something quite different if our ancestors had only believed.

You may want to chew on this (pun intended) in preparation your own sederim.

"And the people carried the dough before it became leavened...on their shoulders"

Murray Stadtmauer

Now that I am retired from the rabbinate, I sometimes amuse myself by composing novel midrashim while listening to the Torah readings in shul. On the first day of Pesach, I came up with this one:

The Torah reading describes how the matzah came into vogue. Va-yisa ho-am et b'tzayko terem yechmatz..al shichman, "And the people carried the dough before it became leavened...on their shoulders" (Ex. 12:34). An obvious question may be raised. Since the matzah is now the chief symbol of Passover, why didn't the rabbis ritualize this event by requiring us to get up from the Seder and walk around the house carrying matzah on our shoulders?

Careful research in ancient documents reveals that the rabbis at one time indeed decreed such a practice. But the women of Israel protested, "You will not walk around the house like that dropping crumbs all over!" So the rabbis thought better of it and abolished the custom.

When I recounted this story at the second Seder, my eight-year-old grandson, Jakey, a third-grader at the Solomon Schechter School (West Orange, NJ), interjected, "Zayde, I like your midrash. Please write it out. I want to show it to my morah at school." I wonder if my newly minted midrash will now become part of the holiday curriculum of the Solomon Schechter Schools.

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Murray Stadtmauer

At a Sunday evening dinner, just before our Jewish Festival of Freedom, our grandson, Jakey, age nine and a fourth grader at his Solomon Schechter School, regaled us with a "critical analysis" of the US Declaration of Independence. He also quoted the famous passage guaranteeing all people the inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." I assume this was being studied at his school in conjunction with Passover.

At this point, I challenged him. "Jakey, I have a talmudic question for you. If the Declaration reads, 'the _pursuit_ of happiness,' why doesn't it also say, 'the _pursuit_ of life' and 'the _pursuit_ of liberty'?"

I never thought he would get the answer. But he surprised me. He immediately responded, "Because nobody can give you happiness. That's something you must get yourself. The other two things the country gives you by protecting you."

I complimented our grandson, "Very good, Jakey. But tell me, how did you know it? I know you're not studying Talmud yet." Very casually, Jakey responded, "Oh, Zayde, it was easy. It's logical. And I know about Talmud. When we learn Torah, our morah also teaches us Talmud."

Silently, I marveled at all this. There's nothing like talmudic training to enhance logical thinking. And there's nothing like a Day School education in America to integrate our Judaism and our Americanism.

Many Modern Questions for Many Modern Children

By Peter H. Schweitzer

1. Modern Questions

The age-old questions are devices that prompt us to tell our story.
Our modern questions are catalysts for deeper discussion.

What sustains Jewish people in times of crisis?
How do we live our lives to affirm and preserve our human dignity?
What is our moral obligation to each other - and to the stranger?
Why and how do we want to maintain our Jewish identity?

Why has a solution to the Middle East conflict been so difficult to achieve?
How can safety and security be fostered for all parties?
What can be our voice from America?
What can give us renewed hope in a future of peace?

Why can we get people to the moon but we can not get the homeless
adequate shelters?
How can people close their eyes and ears and hearts to the suffering of
others?
What makes it possible for a parent to abuse a child?
What makes it possible for one people to oppress another?

What can we do on behalf of the downtrodden and the enslaved?
How can we free ourselves from our own anxieties and fears?
How can we work to bring about peace for the world?
How long will we have to keep asking these questions?

2. Four Types of Children

There are four types of children. We will answer each according to his
or her ability to listen and comprehend.

The wise child asks: What does all this mean? This child is philosophical - and also
practical. This child wants to know more than just the details of the Seder. She
wants to know how the messages of the holiday can shape her identity. She wants
to know how to take these lessons and put them into action.

Say to this child: We welcome your thoughtfulness and commitment. We will guide you to make your mark on the world.

The rebellious child asks: What does this mean to all of you? This child is oppositional - and also skeptical. This child likes to protest for protest's sake, but he still comes to the table. He wants to appear not to be listening, but he takes in all the lessons. He wants to still belong and his challenges need to be taken seriously.

Say to this child: We welcome your defiance and independence. We will guide you to find your place among us.

The innocent child asks: What is this? This child is unschooled - and also open-minded. This child is eager to learn and is hungry for information. She wants knowledge and will direct her own learning by the questions she asks. She wants to deepen her identification and bring new meaning into her life.

Say to this child: We welcome your enthusiasm and curiosity. We will guide you to find your way.

Then there is the young child who does not know how to ask. This child is making sounds - and also turns them into words. This child is engaged every moment in the experiences that surround him. He wants to grab hold of everything, make connections, and master skills. He wants to be held and embraced with all the protection and love we can give him.

Say to this child: We welcome your very presence. We will guide you with our love, care, and devotion.

Some say there is also a fifth child who no longer sits at the table. This child has fallen away by attrition and disaffection. This child has been turned away by rejection and disapproval. She is feeling sad and lonely. He is feeling angry and bitter.

Say to this child: There is always a seat at this table. Please come back to us, we cherish you forever.

Excerpted from "The Liberated Haggadah: A Passover Celebration for Cultural, Secular and Humanistic Jews," by Rabbi Peter H. Schweitzer. Published by the Center for Cultural Judaism and reprinted with permission of the author.

Another Seder

Marc Rosenstein

We were four families, three of them former Americans who have served as extended family for each other on seder night for many years (a significant price of making aliyah, for many of us, is the separation from real family; when we first came to Shorashim, we were struck by the irony of the fact that the native-born Israelis resented the immigrants' annual summer pilgrimage to the US - just as the immigrants resented the Israelis' disappearance to their parents' homes in Tel Aviv for Rosh Hashana and Pesach. . . .). And a new family to our seder - Russian/Iraqi in origin - prospective in-laws (the closest any of us have gotten so far).

Note, by the way, that the Diaspora tradition of two seders is a great boon to in-law relations; here, with only one seder, the negotiations over "whose seder we attend this year" can be very painful. So: eight parents, three grandparents, and 11 twenty-somethings, of whom two are soldiers, six are students, and three are in-between. The host had just returned from trekking in Nepal, with a sore throat. He asked me to lead the seder - but I had just returned from the US, with sinusitis. It was looking to be a difficult evening in a number of respects. But then, one of the "kids" said he would be willing to lead the seder if no one else could.

Lo and behold, it was a classic seder, from the introduction inviting people to interrupt with questions and comments, to the negotiations for the afikomon. Nothing was skipped, everything for which anyone knew a melody was sung, four questions were led by the youngest, an IDF officer, and many more questions were asked along the way. There was a discussion of the four children and the obligation to explain even to the one who does not ask. Later, an attempt to discuss the tension between the excitement of the redemption and the tradition that God had foretold the whole process (Genesis 15:13-16) ran aground on a general unwillingness, by that point, to slow down the momentum toward the meal. There were six different ethnic versions of //charoset//. No orange on the seder plate, but a banana - a custom attributed to a rabbi who wanted to remind his students that the blessing for a banana is "//borei pri ha'adama//" ("who creates the fruit of the earth" - banana plants are not trees) - so bananas qualify for //karpas// (if you like bananas in salt water). The seder was read in Hebrew, though since everyone had a different version of the Haggadah (a time-honored tradition at our seder), we occasionally stopped to compare translations, or to translate sections into English or Russian for the //kvelling// grandparents. At midnight, after concluding the Haggadah, modern Israeli songsheets somehow appeared, and we were able to prolong the experience a little more.

I wondered whether the hysterical laughter that punctuated the singing of “Who knows one?” was a result of too much wine - or of the realization that we had made it for one more generation. Not only did a member of the next generation pinch-hit, but his cohort had taken over the seder, and it was more than a joke at the end when we wondered how we could ever go back...

And this very Haggadah whispers,
“Join us. . . you’re welcome here. . . you belong,
Among my pages full of smoke and blood,
Among the great and ancient tales I tell.”

So I know the sea was not split in vain,
Deserts not crossed in vain;
If at the end of the story stand Daddy and the Kid
Looking forward and knowing their turn will come.

from Nathan Alterman, “The Kid of the Haggadah,” translated by Arthur J. Waskow and Judy Spelman, found on p. 85 of the CCAR Haggadah edited by Herbert Bronstein, 1975

A HOLY CALL: to be read after the passage of "AvadimHayinu"

Shlomo Moshe Amar

Rishon LeZion- Chief Rabbi of Israel

As the festival of Passover "our time of redemption" approaches and we all gather to celebrate this holy occasion, drinking the four cups of wine that represent the four verses of deliverance and tasting the Matzah and Maror, we shall remember our sons who are being held in captivity by evil oppressors.

Together with the whole House of Israel, we shall be united tonight, as one, around the Seder table. We shall raise a holy prayer from the depths of our hearts, for their immediate rescue and return to their homes and families, In good health and peace.

We recite the following blessing after the passage of "Avadim Hayinu" (we were slaves to Pharaoh):

“May He who hears all prayers, favourably hear our prayer at this time Leading to good tidings soon and in our day. Amen.”

Moses or Pharaoh? Fidelity Investments & the Genocide in Darfur

Or N. Rose

In October 2006, at a meeting of the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, Eric Cohen, a retired businessman and an active member of the volunteer organization, shared with the group some disturbing news. He had recently learned that the Boston-based mutual fund giant, Fidelity Investments, had nearly a billion dollars invested in two of the most unscrupulous companies operating in Sudan, PetroChina and Sinopec.

The Sudan Divestment Task Force, a national research and advocacy group, has identified these Chinese oil companies (principally owned by the Chinese government) as among the dozen or so “worst-offending” businesses in the war-torn region. To appear on this shameful list, companies must have a financial relationship with the genocidal government of Sudan, provide minimal benefit to or actually harm the country’s citizens, and express no significant governance policy regarding the crisis in Darfur. These companies must have also proven unresponsive to attempts at shareholder engagement.

After further investigation, several members of the MA Coalition attempted to speak with Fidelity representatives about the matter. Through letters and phone calls to executives, trustees, board members and fund managers, we alerted Fidelity to the atrocities being committed by the Sudanese government in Darfur, including the murder of over four hundred thousand people, and the displacement of two and a half million more since February 2003. We also shared with Fidelity the fact that seventy to eighty percent of Sudan’s oil revenues go to military spending, including the training and arming of the Janjaweed, Khartoum’s barbaric proxy militia. In these communications, we urged Fidelity to divest its sizeable holdings from PetroChina and Sinopec, arguing that while the Sudanese leadership has been largely unresponsive to diplomatic pressure, it has been responsive to financial pressure. A successful divestment campaign against Talisman Energy of Canada several years ago helped compel President Bashir and his administration to halt its genocidal activities in southern Sudan (largely unreported in the media), and to sign a comprehensive peace agreement with dissident leaders in 2005.

Unfortunately, Fidelity has thus far expressed no interest in discussing the issue with us or taking any positive action. Its only response has been to indicate that it remains steadfast in its mission to make as much money as possible for its clients, regardless of ethical concerns. "Fidelity portfolio managers make their investment decisions based on business and financial considerations, and take into account

other issues only if they materially impact these considerations or conflict with applicable legal standards” (Fidelity letter to Mr. Cohen, October 5, 2006).

Reinforcing this position, a Fidelity representative made the following statement in a January 29 interview in CNN Money: “We believe the resolution of complex social and political issues must be left to the appropriate authorities of the world that have the responsibility, and capability, to address important matters of this type. And we would sincerely hope that they would do so wisely on behalf of all of the citizens of the globe.”

Reading these words would be infuriating at any time, but especially so during Passover, and with Yom Hashoah just days away. Pesach is, after all, the celebration of the liberation of our ancestors from Egyptian bondage. The narrative includes a chilling description of Pharaoh’s genocidal plot against the Israelites: “Pharaoh charged all of his people, saying, ‘every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile. . . (Exodus 1:22).’ ” The elaborate rituals of the Passover seder are designed to elicit in us feelings of gratitude for our freedom and to sensitize us to the oppression of others - “. . . for you were strangers in the land of Egypt ”(Exodus 22:20). What would have Fidelity done in ancient Egypt? Would it have invested in shackles and whips? And what about the Holocaust? Would it have poured money into companies producing Zyklon-B? Does Fidelity really have no moral standards? Does it not understand that its strategy of “amoral ” investment is contributing to the deaths of innocent people in Darfur? We urge Fidelity to join other responsible institutions - including over thirty colleges and universities, and six states - in divesting from PetroChina, Sinopec, and other unprincipled companies associated with the ruthless Sudanese regime. We also urge concerned citizens to join the FidelityOutofSudan.com campaign, and to remove their savings - personal and institutional - from financial organizations refusing to take a stand against the genocide in Darfur.

With enough public pressure, Fidelity just might rethink its policy regarding Sudan. Given Fidelity’s financial power, it could have a significant impact on PetroChina and Sinopec, and in turn, on the Chinese and Sudanese governments. It could also set an example for investors throughout the world.

During this Passover holiday, we plead with Fidelity to part company with the Pharaoh-like forces in Sudan and take up the mantle of Moses by leading an economic rebellion against the genocidaires and their allies.

Lilith, then Miriam

Vanessa L. Ochs

To understand why Miriam has become a role model for many Jewish women since the 1980s, we must explore her predecessor, Lilith, in effect the “poster girl” of Jewish feminists of the 1970s. In the rabbinic legends, Lilith is Adam’s first wife, who assertively claims equality with her partner (specifically, she desires also to be “on top”). Lilith is dispatched from the garden and a more compliant wife, Eve, takes her place. Thereafter Lilith is marginalized and silenced; vilified, she becomes known as the threat to new mothers, the demonic snatcher of newborn babies. Jody Myers, in her essay “The Myth of Matriarchy in Recent Writings on Jewish Women’s Spirituality,” articulately describes the role Lilith played for Jewish feminists in the early 1970s.

The tale of Lilith functioned to justify and explain male dominance and to frighten and coerce women into socially acceptable behavior. Judith Plaskow may have been the first to use Lilith as a rallying cry for Jewish feminism in 1972, but wider dissemination came in 1976 with Aviva Cantor’s article in the opening issue of the first Jewish feminist journal, *Lilith Magazine*.... Cantor points out that the explicit misogyny in the original Lilith story is useful for making Jewish women both angry and brave.... Cantor did not revise the Lilith myth, but she did argue that there was an essence to it that was free of male bias and closer to the Genesis story: the ideals of women’s struggle for independence, courage in taking risks, and "commitment to the equality of woman and man based on their creation as equals by God." [1]

When Lilith emerges in the work of Jewish feminist poets and writers, she tells her own story of the creation of woman and man, restating her platform for sexual and gender equality. She offers an enticing role model, an alternative to the compliant Eve. Lilith, empowered by an anger she embraces, speaks her peace and makes demands rather than waiting for concessions. Neither nice nor accommodating, she will be called “shrill and strident.” Should her actions lead her to a place outside the camp, there is no risk: already an outsider, she is alienated, marginal, and has nothing to lose.

However effective a standard-bearer Lilith may have been for dissidents, her disenfranchisement is problematic for insiders: those Jewish women wishing to transform Jewish practice and culture more slowly, without risk to personal status and without bringing undue attention to themselves. There are also other limitations to Lilith’s myth, as Myers describes:

It is difficult to integrate Lilith into the Torah when she is simply not there. Second, the Lilith legend reinforces the view of woman as victim and implies that her essential morality arises from her victimized status.... The problems this raises for individual and communal consciousness are manifold. In its favor, though, one could argue that ritualized storytelling of victimization may be an effective therapeutic tool in a world in which people do abuse one another. This myth would have only transitional value; I would think that it is too negative to be the narrative foundation of one's individual or communal identity.

Finally, generating attractive qualities for Lilith poses a challenge. She can be refashioned as an independent woman who seeks equality, but the tale cannot exist without her disdain for men.... Most women who are creating new liturgy, ritual, and exegesis seek a more positive tone and aspire to live within a harmonious mixed community. They are loathe to be labeled as man-haters, and they tend to avoid Lilith altogether. [2]

Enter Miriam. If Lilith kills babies, Miriam - as midwife and guardian of Moses-in-the-basket - saves them. If Lilith stands at the shores of the Sea of Reeds threatening pregnant women, Miriam - standing in the very same place - celebrates the successful birth of a people through a dangerous, narrow, wet passageway. Miriam leads the women who emerge out of slavery and into freedom and works alongside powerful men, her brothers Aaron and Moses. She has the women's respect and, by leading a song of deliverance, gives voice to their memories and hopes. Miriam works gracefully, yet critically, within the system. Powerful, but not egoistic, Miriam stands for a set of positive virtues that include healing, inspiration, foresight, courage, cooperation, nurturance, and the capacity to celebrate all victories along the journey. She mentors younger women and girls who have a dim memory of Judaism in which women count less, or not at all.

This version of Miriam who emerges after Lilith is the latter-stage Jewish feminist: her consciousness has already been raised and awakened. She speaks to "Miriams" in a Jewish world being realigned daily by incremental small gestures made by women rabbis, cantors, federation executives, seminary professors, synagogue presidents, professors of Jewish studies - and, just as important, Jewish women in their communities and homes. Miriam's anger is not debilitating: well channeled and well supported by many sisters who echo her voice, it affirms women's different ways of knowing and acting in the world. Confident, the new Miriam feels empowered to "integrate the personal with traditional rituals" and make them her own.³ She stands for any Jewish woman who is a ritual expert, amateur or

professional, who widens tradition, transforming it just as she transforms sacred texts and ritual objects, moving toward active repair of the community.

In the current social climate, a woman can claim this Miriam - cooperative, patient, and ready to negotiate - as her role model and still remain within the mainstream. Unsurprisingly, Hadassah, in its 2000 publication *Moonbeams: A Hadassah Rosh Hodesh Guide*, includes Miriam among the four Jewish women to be studied by Hadassah chapters - even by those who resist identifying themselves as feminists - "because of the many negative associations." [4] Hadassah members studying Miriam are encouraged to portray Miriam's character, "complex and beautiful," through artistic media [5] and to share their creative representations. Miriam's traits highlighted in the Hadassah guide include her intelligence, courage, and leadership among women (not surprisingly, traits valued within the Hadassah organization). She is praised for her human capacity to err, her goodness, her defiance of Pharaoh, and her lifetime of merits that preserved her people. [6] She has power, stature, loveliness, and a place at the table.

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NOTES

1 Jody Myers, "The Myth of Matriarchy in Recent Writings on Jewish Women's Spirituality," *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 1 (1997): 3, available at <http://iupjournals.org/jss/jss4-1.html>

2 Ibid., 5.

3 Lily Rivlin, *Miriam's Daughters Celebrate*, VHS (New York: Filmmaker's Library, 1986).

4 Carol Diamant, ed., *Moonbeams: A Hadassah Rosh Hodesh Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2000), 103.

5 Ibid., 156.

6 Ibid., 104.

What Does It Have to Do With Me?

Mitchell Silver

You are modern, secular, and thoroughly liberal - a child of the Enlightenment. So why be a Jew? And how can you be a Jew, and make your children Jews, without betraying your Enlightenment heritage?

I come to this subject out of personal and professional need. I cannot remember not knowing I was Jewish. I always felt that this was a very important fact about me. But it was not clear why it was important. My parents were not religious, but their irreligion was not a matter of high, or even low, principle. They just did not take it seriously. I was sent to Hebrew school, where I learned very little Hebrew and not much of anything else, either - perhaps only a superficial acquaintance with some customs that still maintained a hold on American Jewry of the 1950s and 1960s. It was plain that my parents were not very clear about why they were sending me to Hebrew school and that they were not terribly concerned with what I was taught there.

My maternal grandparents were Yiddish-speaking immigrants, but whatever significance was laid on that had to do with their newness to America. There was no conscious desire to preserve the old ways they had brought with them. Although there was a strong sense of ethnic identity, there was scarcely a concept of Jewish culture in the house. Jewish consciousness was manifested through barely articulated nostalgia, chauvinism, and paranoia. By the time I was ten, actual Jewish practice struck me as "square." Three years later I was bar mitzvahed, and I would not have been shocked if that had been the last Jewish thing I ever did. In college most of my friends were Jewish, and none of them ever did anything explicitly Jewish in the four years I was there. But, however alienated I felt from Jewish practice, I never felt estranged from my Jewish identity. Doing anything Jewish seemed archaic, provincial, and unreasonable, but my identity as a Jew, although it may have waned a bit at times, was never in question. Still, under those conditions, it was puzzling what that identity amounted to.

With the birth of my children, the puzzle became a practical problem. I found that I wanted my Jewish identity transmitted to my children, but without understanding what my identity amounted to, I saw no likely means of transmission. I could not reproduce the Jewish milieu of my upbringing, and I would not have wanted to even if I could. The old country grandparents were gone, along with the nostalgia and prejudices that were natural to their children's homes. Bad Hebrew schools still existed, but I had lost the innocence that allowed my parents to send me to one

of them.

For the religious, or those who can act in good conscience though they are religious, however difficult it may be, the means of passing on a Jewish identity are not obscure. Judaism abounds with practices, and a modicum of religious observance provides enough family activities to make a strong impression on a childhood. But we of little (or no) faith, who are also fussy about acting in ways not in accordance with our basic convictions, have a problem. How do we make our children feel Jewish when we reject, or are indifferent to, Jewish practice?

Excerpted from “Respecting the Wicked Child: A Philosophy of Jewish Identity and Education,” by Mitchell Silver, and reprinted by permission of the University of Massachusetts Press.

Why Bother?

Mitchell Silver

Most Jews are familiar with the parable of the four sons in the Passover Haggadah. Three are characterized in terms of the wisdom of their questions: There is a wise son, a simple son, and a son too ignorant to formulate a question. These labels emphasize the intellectual properties of the questioners. But the fourth son is given a moral description. He is the wicked son. His sin is the expression of alienation from the tradition. The other sons ask how to celebrate the seder properly or what it is all about. The wicked son asks, “What has it to do with me?”

Among contemporary Jews there are many wicked children, and they merit answers that amount to more than the traditional scornful dismissal. This is an attempt to address one large group of alienated Jews from a perspective they already have: secularist. It is unlikely that any arguments can create a Jewish identity or community where none exists. But a confused identity and weak commitment might be clarified, strengthened, and rationalized by certain considerations.

Why bother getting a secular Jewish education or, more to the point, giving your children one? The reasons I will provide are neither general nor conclusive. They are not general because they do not apply to those who are “religious,”¹ or those who feel absolutely no connection to the Jewish people. They are not conclusive because there may be weighty, unrefuted, counterbalancing reasons to drop one’s Jewish identity. But they are reasons that support and add substance to an already existing inclination seeking justifications.

Excerpted from “Respecting the Wicked Child: A Philosophy of Jewish Identity and Education,” by Mitchell Silver, and reprinted by permission of the University of Massachusetts Press.

Portrait of a Wicked Child:
Mitchell Silver

I begin with a portrait of a typical contemporary “wicked“ child, now in fact an adult with some children of her own. Her grandparents or great-grandparents immigrated to America from Eastern Europe, and she heard some Yiddish during childhood. She was sent to a few years of Hebrew school, where she learned some Bible stories, a few holiday traditions, and some Hebrew. She hated it and remembers almost nothing. She speaks no Hebrew and knows only a couple of Yiddish expressions, and these are pretty much the same ones that the average television-watching Gentile American is coming to know.

Similarly, while she believes she has a special attachment to Jewish foods, her daily diet is standard, urban, middle-class American. She eats more tuna than herring, more yogurt than sour cream, more tofu than cabbage. If she eats a lot of bagels, well, so do her non-Jewish neighbors. There was little synagogue attendance in her youth and for years only a friend’s or relative’s wedding or bar/bat mitzvah gets her to shul. Agnostic or atheist, she believes that the Bible is a wholly human document. Its laws and recommendations are without any supernatural authority, its metaphysical explanations, myths of more or less charm, its narrative accounts, legends of varying historical accuracy. She is too dimly aware of other traditional Jewish texts to have any opinion about them beyond the belief that they are of no relevance to her life. What she knows of Jewish laws and customs - Sabbath observance, kosher laws, mikvah ritual - strike her as burdensome and silly and perhaps even morally objectionable. Still she is a Jew. She would not deny it or its importance.

Furthermore, it is important to her that her children feel that they are Jews. While she might bristle and would dispense with the ritual, in the end she would certainly have her sons circumcised. And although she is not sure how or why it happened, most of her friends are Jewish.

Such a person finds in herself a gut desire to instill a Jewish identity in her children but has difficulty finding reasons for doing so. Without reasons, the will to enact her desire is weakened, and the way to enact her desire seems a muddle. [2] This muddled way further undermines her will. When there is no way, it is hard to maintain a will.

Why maintain and attempt to pass on a Jewish identity? Because human cultures are valuable; because Jewish culture is valuable; because only Jews will maintain

Jewish culture; because people have suffered to maintain Jewish culture; because Jew-haters want to see the death of Jewish culture; because you cannot help living in some culture, and a Jewish American one will feel most natural (unless American consumerism does, but that will leave you isolated and alienated); because Jewish culture can provide you with a place in a community and history, and it can give substance to many of your ingrained attitudes and habits; because Jewish culture can ground your progressive politics and moral commitments; because it gives you something that you like to give your children, making them less likely to seek what you do not like; because it does not prevent you from appropriating anything that is of value or appealing to you from all of human culture; finally, because it in no way prevents you from being a tolerant, rational, good citizen of the world who treats all humans as equals and with respect.

Excerpted from “Respecting the Wicked Child: A Philosophy of Jewish Identity and Education,” by Mitchell Silver, and reprinted by permission of the University of Massachusetts Press.

Parting a sea of influences

Meir Ronnen, Mar. 29, 2007

“Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday,” Katrin Kogman-Appel, Pennsylvania State University Press 295 pages, \$99

Ever since the early Middle Ages, Christian silversmiths and illuminators have been helping supply Jews with ritual objects and manuscripts. Even Jewish prayer books written by Jewish scribes contain images that reflect Christian traditions.

But Katrin Kogman-Appel of Ben-Gurion University, in her splendid new book examining the sources of five rare early 14th-century Haggadot from Aragon and Catalonia, revives the distinct possibility that the Jews were originally the pioneers of the images of the biblical narrative (we were, after all, the divinely guided author-publishers of the Book itself). The murals in the third-century synagogue of Dura Europas in Syria are the earliest extant images of biblical narrative art. The clearly Christian influence in the depictions in the five Sephardi Haggadot examined in this wide-ranging book are chiefly those of style.

Look for instance, at the reproduction on this page from the Sarajevo Haggada, so called because of its location in the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dated circa 1320-35 it is from Aragon and the detail here depicts the plague of locusts. Pharaoh is crowned and seated on a wooden throne in the manner of a European monarch (though early bronze crowns, it must be said, have been found in Beersheba), and the handmaiden beating the insects with a rod is dressed like a nun, though her head cloth would also serve a Muslim woman. The stylized figures might have stepped out of a monastic illumination.

The five Haggadot selected for this study are part of a Jewish revival that began after 1250 and which was brought to an end by catastrophes, the pogroms that accompanied the Black Death and the eventual late 15th-century expulsion from Spain.

What these Haggadot (one of them unfinished) have in common is that they depict scenes from biblical history from the creation to the climax: the Exodus from Egypt.

Kogman-Appel lists a string of possibilities, among them that these illustrations were works by Jews taught by workshops of Christian illuminators, or were

commissions executed by Christians in return for large sums of money.

In the days when writing and writing materials were far from readily available, scribes, both Christian and Jewish, committed entire works to memory. Traveling Jewish merchants could have described to illuminators in Aragon and Catalonia images in Haggadot they saw in Italy. Many carried their personal travel sets of Judaica with them.

And, not incidentally, there are Jewish manuscripts from southern France that are written in the square Hebrew letters of Iberia.

The naked figure of Pharaoh's daughter in a Dura mural, standing in the water as she discovers the infant Moses, is an image that turns up in various ways over a millennium, seemingly reaching Catalonia and eventually 16th-century Venice. But these suggestions are suspect.

Kogman-Appel attempts to find connections, not via images, but through links with midrashic interpolations. The images are likely original.

The extensive depiction of the Creation in several of the Iberian Haggadot is pretty much unique. Most Haggadot do not deal chronologically with biblical events. Their aim is to foster historical consciousness and the choice of events depicted is different in almost all illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday every Haggada.

What they do have in common is a focus on biblical heroes, with the notable exception of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel; nudity and murder were out. However in the best known of these Iberian Haggadot, the creation of Adam and Eve is boldly but also discreetly handled, thanks to intervening foliage or the resort, after the fall, to the fig leaf. Amusingly, Eve appears to be chucking the snake beneath its chin.

By the way, the more sophisticated the images in these Haggadot, the more entirely Christian they appear. The naive depictions of the ark and the dove in the Sarajevo Haggada are, however, full of charm and relate directly to our most famous contemporary folk illustrator, the late Shalom Moscovitz of Safed.

When the expensive handmade Haggada was handed around the Seder table, the readers and small children saw only the pages being read. But the biblical images of the Iberian haggadot were likely used throughout the year to educate the rich

man's family in the tales of the unillustrated bible.

These Iberian Haggadot cost a fortune and were likely commissioned by wealthy and influential Jewish courtiers, a talented upper class known as francos whose mastery of Arabic was an asset to the crown of Aragon during the Reconquest. While King Pedro III wanted the francos to run his court, the growing objections of Christian grandees was to result in ever more anti-Jewish measures.

The francos were also the leaders of their community. They named their own successors; money, not scholarship or even brains, was the prime requirement. A 13th-century revolt by the Jews of Saragossa against the francos led to the eventual change of the communal election system. But from then on, the Christian insistence on the disenfranchising of the Jews and a curtailing of their influence culminated in the appearance of Torquemada.

The latest exodus was about to begin.

A Place At the Table

Bradley Burston

It was late, maybe midnight
When we opened the door for Elijah
Fully expecting
Aunt Ida, in sable.
But it was Pharaoh that walked in to the wine and the whining
and asked for a seat at the little kids table
saying he had a few questions for us.

He said his son would have asked them
Had he been able to attend, that is,
had we not killed him.
But that was then, and they,
not we,
we hastened to mention,
and even they, one supposes, were decent of intention.

Our mother later insisted he'd been a perfect gentleman.
But for his beard,
and the bandages
he could have been one of us.
Oh, and except for the dust in the shake
of his hand
It isn't on all other nights, he began
that you toast the anniversary of a slaughter of lambs,
the painting of blood on the side of a door.
My son died Erev Pesach. What for?
To teach me my place? You didn't see the look on his face
when the embalmers came to powder and pump and wrap him
into immortality.
They drained him like a crankcase.
You didn't see the look on his face.

But what of the faces whose traces you bear,
As a mirror bears ancestors
As if you were there
sandcrazy, sunblind, crowdcrazy, chainblind,
scared of the dark and the blood in the street

tired of freedom and nothing to eat
but half-baked masonry that tasted like sweat
aching to remember and afraid to forget
what slavery was like.

Admit it.

By the waters that parted you sat down and wept
when you remembered Goshen.

Once you were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt
and once, for a while, you were free.
But now you are masters with burdens more pressing
than dressing a desert in perfect triangles of mud.
You failed your God
when he sent a second flood
to make of a people, a Noah and more. What for?
Some thanks he got. A pawnshop in the wilderness.

"Let's see something in a god we can pen up and milk."
You needed that calf in its 14 carat clothes.
But just who were you fooling with the ring in its nose?

Tonight the celebration of the killing of lambs,
their blood dried to doorposts,
horseradish jam on the table it took you a week to set.
At least a week more, 'fore you get your digestion back right.
You couldn't leave Egypt if you wanted to tonight.

When they came to tell me about my son
in that dialect that doctors affect
the big words snaking past you like bad handwriting,
"In cases such as yours," they began, "let's speak frankly,
in cases of ... amputation,
it is not uncommon to encounter
the selfsame itches, burns, ticklishness
shooting as before from the direction of the ... amputee."
As if nothing had occurred.
As if I hadn't heard correctly.
As if he were still a part of me.

In cases such as mine, the good news is the area to which

the damage has been confined:
To my son, and another in every family in the land.
An extra place-setting at every household tonight,
except for the ones with the blood on the door.
What for? A lesson to mothers, drowning slowly in loss?
To fathers, who went quicker, strapped to chariots?
To horses, perhaps, their eyes bulging back against life, against sea.
And all so that you could be free.

Mine is the son unable to ask questions.
His is the blood in the libel of generations.
His, the wineglass untouched at the table.
His, the line that descends from Abel.
He will quietly crash your celebrations.
he will spike your festival punch with a vague taste of cracked glass.
Why on this night do you so carefully spill his blood
onto your best china?

Next year in Jerusalem,
or Hebron, or Shechem, don't say I didn't warn you
when playing the master has shaken and torn your dreams
to small sandy pieces.
Your God never did sell his property.
He only lets leases.
So shackle that promised land of yours.
Take, as your deed, your birth.
But know how much a promise is worth.
For once
you were promised
to me.

[Gezer, Erev Pesach, 1979]

Udi, My Child

Below is a letter written by Miki Goldwasser, mother of kidnapped soldier Ehud Goldwasser who was brutally taken in an unprovoked attack by Hizbullah terrorists, who refuse to allow the Red Cross access, despite Israel's having allowed the Red Cross to visit three Hizbullah terrorists captured during the war. As we celebrate the holiday of freedom, let us remember the Goldwasser family, and the family of Eldad Regev and Gilad Shalit. God bless them and bring them home safely.

Udi my child,

Today is Passover Eve, the holiday of liberty. The family will celebrate Passover separately this year. Dad, Yair and I will be at Aunt Nurit and Uncle Eitan's home. Karnit, Daniella, Omri, Yahel and Rotem will be at Grandma Miriam's. Gadi is still in India.

We have never celebrated any holiday in this way. We were always together - laughing, chattering, fooling around, and mainly, feeling immensely happy.

But we are here with you each and every moment, day and night. And we are not letting go. We are not waning. No one will defeat us.

Tonight, we will try to smile as a show of gratitude to our host. We will try.

Udi, I must tell you, I have been approached by several families who suggested that they not celebrate Passover this year in solidarity with the three families whose sons remain in captivity [Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, held by Hizbullah, and Gilad Shalit, held by Hamas in Gaza - ed.]. We do not know these wonderful families, but I asked them not to give up on the holiday, but rather celebrate it to spite those who want to weaken and defeat us.

We will celebrate with an empty chair - yours, Gilad's and Eldad's chair. I promise you that no one will defeat us, neither Hizbullah nor Hamas. We will not be undermined from within either; we will secure your release. Our war today for your release guarantees the safety of all of our children tomorrow.

Udi, I suppose you don't know what day it is today, that the sky is blue and spring is just around the corner; perhaps the scents of the new blossoms are reaching you; maybe you can hear the singing of the migrating birds, and maybe it is your thoughts that are wandering.

But we are here with you each and every moment, day and night. And we are not letting go. We are not waning. No one will defeat us.

Happy Passover to you, my child.

Happy Passover to all of Israel.

Your mother, Miki

Holy Cups Of Wine

Yossi Ginzberg , [Special To The Jewish Week, 04/02/2007]

When the Jewish emigration from the Former Soviet Union started in the early 1980s, Jewish organizations here tried to introduce the emigres to Judaism by inviting them, with limited success, as Sabbath guests to Orthodox homes.

We also tried, with the same lack of success.

This changed when we were asked to host a family of four from Ukraine: Yaakov, his wife Svetlana and their two daughters.

Our Shabbat meal turned out so pleasant that I called Yaakov a few weeks later to invite them for the upcoming Purim meal. His family came, and was pleased with the holiday atmosphere. I offered Yaakov a drink of scotch, but he said he was a teetotaler. I was surprised, but didn't make an issue of it.

This meal too went well.

Having successfully introduced Purim, I tackled Passover. Fortunately, it was easy; the family's elderly grandmother was excited at seeing a seder again, after so many years without.

At our seder, I tried to fill Yaakov's goblet with grape juice. He protested, saying that grape juice was only for children, and since it was a mitzvah, he'd happily drink wine.

The seder went beautifully. It was thus surprising to me when they didn't show up for the second seder.

Not wanting to jeopardize our relationship with the family, I waited two days before calling to inquire. A daughter answered the phone, and told me "Your wine put him in the hospital." She grudgingly informed me that her father had been in severe pain after the seder, he had been operated on, and was in Mount Sinai Hospital.

Afraid to confront him but feeling the obligation to atone, I went to the hospital with trepidation. At his room, I found the extended family there, adding to my tension.

To my shock, when Yaakov saw me he insisted on standing, which he did with

visible pain, clutching the bandaging over his abdomen. A stunning surprise came with his warm embrace.

It turns out that the reason he didn't normally drink was that several years earlier, just after applying for a Soviet exit visa, he had started to see blood on urination after drinking alcohol. A doctor ordered a full battery of tests, but because the family was in line to leave the country, rather than deal with the problem the doctor told Yaakov that if he had symptoms only after drinking alcohol, he should just stop drinking. Busy here trying to earn a living, Yaakov accepted this suggestion. The blood did indeed stop as long as he stayed away from alcohol.

Late that Passover night after returning from the seder, Yaakov felt the old pain return for the first time since his arrival in the United States, more severe than ever before. He walked to the small community hospital, where after basic testing, a sympathetic Orthodox doctor appeared in his room and quietly told him that he must immediately request a transfer to Mount Sinai. Yaakov and his wife made arrangements for the transfer.

At Mount Sinai, he was scheduled for emergency surgery, where a tumor was discovered. When Yaakov returned to consciousness, the surgeon informed him that one kidney had been totally removed as well as much of the other. He was left with the absolute minimum possible to live normally on. According to the surgeon, had the surgery been delayed even a little longer, Yaakov would have been required to live the rest of his life tethered to a dialysis machine.

Hence Yaakov's words as he hugged me: "Your cups of holy Passover wine saved my life!"

Yossi Ginzberg, a resident of Manhattan, works in the insurance business for a living, but writes for pleasure.

A Seder Visitor

Yvette H. Gordon - [Special To The Jewish Week, 04/02/2007]

It was the first night of Pesach 1973 when Ambrose came to our seder.

The family had gathered at our home in New Rochelle. Our three sons were there: Steve, the oldest, with his wife Judy; Arnie, the middle, with his fiance, Lynne, and her parents, sister, aunt, and two cousins; and David, the youngest, still in high school. Also with us were my husband's sister Pearl, her husband, Stanley, their daughter Helene, her husband Chuck, their little red-headed twin girls, my two teenage nephews (their parents were visiting Israel) and of course my husband Herman and I - a total of 21.

The table extended from the dining area into an L-shape through the length of the living room. Herman sat at the living room end and I sat at the kitchen end. The night was warm, so we left the doors open.

Our home is set back from the street, over a hundred feet away, up a long curved driveway and hidden from view by large evergreen trees.

We had just finished the part of the seder where we say, "Let all who are hungry come and eat," when my husband saw a young man standing behind me with hands clasped behind his back. Thinking it was a friend of one of our sons, Herman said, "Shalom! Eliyahu [Elijah the prophet] is here!"

I turned around and jumped up. I did not know this man. He was young, perhaps 25 or so, and slim, with a neatly trimmed black beard. He wore a black turtleneck shirt, tight jeans and sneakers.

My first thoughts were that we were going to be robbed. Steve and Arnie closed the doors and checked the rest of the house to make sure that no one else had come in. I slowly moved around to see what was in his hands a gun? One of the carving knives left on the kitchen counter?

There was nothing in his hands. He was not carrying a weapon. Not wanting to upset him, I quietly asked, "What can I do for you?"

He said, "Nothing."

"What do you want?"

“I want to watch.”

He did not smell of liquor; he did not appear to be on drugs.

I told him, “It is our holiday, you cannot watch, but you can join us at the table if you wish.” He said he would join us. I added a chair next to me, and Steve switched places with someone to sit on the other side of him. Facing him was Chuck, a gym teacher. As I went to get him a place setting, I hesitated to give him a knife and wine, but decided to treat him like everyone else.

“What is your name?” I asked.

“Ambrose.”

“Ambrose what?”

“Does it matter?”

I said, “No. Where are you from?”

He said, “Does it matter?” He seemed to have a slight accent.

I gave up trying to make conversation. We gave him a Haggadah and went on with the seder. Steve explained the rituals as we went along. The only time he showed any reaction was when we read a prayer for the Russian “refuseniks” - Sharansky and the others - which was a popular thing at the time.

We finished eating. He ate very well. As we began to clear the table for dessert, he stood up and said, “I think it is time for me to go.” I got up with him as he walked around the table to the twins, who were about 6 years old.

He cupped his hands together over their heads, then opened his palms upwards, turned to me and said, “I left them a blessing, which they will need. Would you please show me the way to the main road?” He left, and I gave a huge sigh of relief.

My brother-in-law Stanley said, “That was some show you put on!”

I said, “That was no show.”

Stanley cried out, “Are you crazy? He could have killed us all!”

We joked that he was Eliyahu and that the photos David had taken of him would not come out. But they did!

Within the year, Stanley had died, Chuck had left Helene and abandoned the twins to their disturbed mother. Pearl, who had never worked before, got a job, moved into Helene’s home and took care of the three of them.

Ambrose’s blessing must have worked. Someone must have been watching over those girls, because they grew up to be beautiful women, went to fine colleges and got good jobs, and one is now married and has two beautiful children of her own.

Only recently, 34 years later, someone told me the meaning of the name Ambrose. It comes from the Greek “ambrotos,” which means immortal.

Yvette Gordon lives in New Rochelle.

My Very Special (Last) Pesach

Viktoria Dolburd - Special To The Jewish Week

On Pesach of 2004 the Jewish Student Union of Berlin decided that it would for the first time make the seders independently for its members and young adults. We would lead both nights, instead of relying on the services of the kosher restaurant in the Jewish Community Center for all the cleaning, koshering and special cooking.

No one realized how much work two kosher seders would include.

After the event was advertised and the first subscriptions flew in, there was no way to back out. We had to begin with the work.

But where to start?

Although I was no longer a member of the Student Union's board, I was asked to help out; I quickly realized that someone had to take command. And here I was, at 23, a kosher supervisor, an event planner, a kosher-for-Pesach chef, manager of an international cooking team consisting of Israelis, Germans, Russians, Americans and Canadians - and a religious coordinator. After all, we had to find someone to lead the seder!

Fortunately the program director of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation's Berlin yeshiva, who was a student himself, agreed to lead the Haggadah reading. His knowledge of German, English and Russian prepared him for this challenging role.

But soul food is not enough if you want to organize a complete seder. So pictures of kashering until deep in the night and giving orders such as "We need 50 more eggs!" or "How are we supposed to cook the soup on the second seder?" still come into my mind. I was lucky that my team, consisting of about seven not particularly experienced people, gave its best. Communication was not always easy; I had to learn how to translate recipes for chicken soup or matzah balls into several languages.

Nonetheless, by the evening of the first seder, in the kiddush room of a Jewish community center, we could see the fruits of our efforts.

About a hundred students showed up. The atmosphere was great. Everyone, on both nights, was patient enough to go through the whole Haggadah. They went late

into the night. No one left early. They were rewarded with a rich meal, including wine and desserts. For some of the young people, it could have been their first time at a proper, kosher seder.

People came up and said they had a great time.

I left Berlin, for Israel, before the High Holy Days. Every year I think about the seders in Berlin. Two years ago I was in Canada on Pesach, at a Hillel. All the infrastructure was in place. I realized they were so lucky - they didn't know how it is to do everything from scratch. n

Viktoria Dolburd, a native of Moscow who moved to Berlin with her family in 1990 and served for five years as a leader in the city's Jewish Student Union, made aliyah in 2004 and works in Jerusalem as a public relations consultant.

From Joseph's Bloody Coat To Dayenu At Sinai

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Everyone around the seder table enjoys a spirited singing of "Dayenu," the quintessential thanksgiving to God for every step that He guided us on the road to Redemption. "Had He taken us out of Egypt and not wrought so many judgments against the Egyptians, it would have been sufficient (dayenu)... Had he not split the sea for us, dayenu."

However there is one line that has always been difficult for me to understand: "Had He brought us to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah, dayenu." How would that have been enough? What value could there have been for God to take us to the mountain without revealing His Torah?

The second question which perplexes me during the seder - but I usually forget to delve into it after having drunk my last cup of wine - is with regard to the "Four Questions," particularly why "on every other night we do not dip even once but on this night of Passover we dip twice." This is never really answered within the Maggid portion of the seder.

The fact that we do have "dips" as a kind of forshpeis to our seder meal is certainly in keeping with the Passover feast, but why specifically dip karpas (the green vegetable) in charoset, and then dip the bitter herbs in charoset?

In fact, the entire drama of Egypt began with an act of dipping and concluded with an act of dipping. The Israelites came to Egypt after Joseph was sold into servitude by his brothers. Since the brothers had to explain Joseph's mysterious disappearance, they dipped Joseph's special coat of striped colors that his father had given him in the blood of a slain goat. (The very word "karpas" is used in the Scroll of Esther 1:6 to describe such a fancy cloth, and is probably the initial derivation of the Biblical Hebrew word passim). When Father Jacob saw the bloodied garment of his beloved son, he assumed that Joseph had been torn apart by a wild beast. Our Sages teach us that it was the sin of the brotherly hatred that was responsible for the slavery in Egypt [B.T. Shabbat 10a]. Hence, our dipping of the karpas in the red charoset, which according to the Jerusalem Talmud symbolizes blood, expresses the tragedy of Jewish internal hatred that is the root cause of our exiles and prosecutions.

The second dipping took place at the end of the Egyptian enslavement, at the beginning of the emancipation, when each Hebrew family slaughtered a lamb in

preparation for their Exodus: "You will then take a bunch of hyssop and dip it into the blood [of the lamb] which will be placed in a basin. Place some blood on the beam over the door and the two doorposts, after you have dipped your finger in the blood in the basin. Not a single Israelite may go out of the door of his house until morning" [Exodus 12:22].

The blood of the lamb represented the willingness of the Israelites to sacrifice an Egyptian god (for such was the lamb) to their higher belief in the Lord of Redemption and freedom. They effectuated this paschal sacrifice during the time of the killing of the first-born of the Egyptians - a plague from which the Hebrews were saved by the blood on their doorposts. The Israelites were all united in their commitment to the Almighty, and to the fulfillment of this command, including their remaining in their homes despite the fact that the Egyptian streets were ripe for looting in the hysteria that most certainly accompanied the deaths of the Egyptian first-born.

This second act of dipping served as a tikkun, or repair, of the first: the sin of brotherly strife found its repentance in the Israelite unity in whose merit we were redeemed from Egypt.

This explains both dippings at the seder, and intensifies the fact that if only we, as a nation, could be united together, no force on earth would be able to harm us.

When the Bible describes the momentous Revelation at Sinai, we are told, "They had departed from Rephidim and had arrived at the Sinai desert, where they [the Israelites, in the plural] encamped in the desert; and Israel [in the singular] encamped there opposite the mountain [Exodus 19:2].

The change from plural to singular within one phrase is quite remarkable. Rashi comments, it was "as if they were all one individual with one heart." It was their very unity of purpose and commitment, their togetherness as a nation, which enabled them to merit the Revelation. This, I believe, is the meaning of the "Dayenu" song: Had the Almighty merely brought us in front of Mount Sinai with a singular goal and united in spirit, even without His having given us the Torah, that unity would have been sufficient.

A Holy Day At The Races: At Monticello's ninth annual 'Passover Pace,' Jewish harness drivers compete for \$4,000 - and a box of matzah.

Randi Sherman - Editorial Assistant

Three-time Passover Pace winner Alan Schwartz has 20 years of harness racing experience. He says,

Monticello, N.Y. - Sitting at the Winner's Circle Buffet at Monticello Raceway, slot machines ringing behind him and the lunch crowd bustling in front, Alan Schwartz reflects on the most memorable race in the Passover Pace: one that never happened.

Out on the track, other drivers are warming up their horses for another day at the races, running the half-mile course clockwise so as not to confuse the animals into thinking it's start time. Schwartz, a three-time winner who will be racing this year, on Tuesday afternoon, to defend his champion status, enjoys his salad and reflects back to 2001.

That year, the third annual Passover Pace at Monticello Raceway was accidentally scheduled for the same night as the first seder. It was a big year for the race, with a total of 16 drivers competing in two division races. Schwartz, 61, an amateur harness driver who identifies as a Conservative Jew, went against his Orthodox son's wishes and decided to participate anyway.

Waiting for the race to begin, seconds before he was to steer his horse to the starter car, a thunderstorm bellowed out of nowhere, striking the board in the center of the track and knocking out the power to the entire raceway. Returning home to his family, his son replied, "See Dad, God got you."

Divine intervention or not, Schwartz has participated in the Passover Pace since it began in 1999. Now in its ninth year, the Pace brings together Jewish harness drivers from New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania to flaunt their heritage while racing horses. The track holds similar races, part of the Heritage Drivers Series, for Italians on Columbus Day, Irish on St. Patrick's Day and African Americans on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. They have even been known to race elephants and camels.

"I try to do [more specialized races] to attract attention, niche things," said John Manzi, public relations manager for Monticello Raceway, who came up with the event. "Being in Monticello, the former Borscht Belt resort area, has its

advantages. In other places, an event like this might not work as well."

In the heyday of Monticello and harness racing, celebrities like Regis Philbin, Henny Youngman and Jane Mansfield would come out to watch the horses race around Monticello's half-mile track. They'd watch as the horses, carrying their driver in a sulky behind them, would approach the starter car, their hooves forming a common cadence as the drivers leaned back and the gates on the starter car eased back to the sides, letting the horses get on their way. They'd listen to the drivers whistling and barking at their horses, aiming for a spot in the winner's circle. Ever since the track switched from night to day races, the crowds have dwindled, so it is races like the Passover Pace that get people returning to the seats in the grandstand. Additional money is brought in from the slot machines, giving the inside of the old grandstand more of a Las Vegas casino feel than that of a racetrack.

Schwartz, who has represented the United States in the harness racing amateur World Cup in the Australia 1996, Moscow 2000 and Belgium 2004 competitions, is a three-time winner of the Passover Pace. Formerly the owner of a national trucking company, he now owns a farm upstate in Liberty. He appreciates the chance to race against other Jewish drivers. "Everyone takes pride in a race of their own," Schwartz said. "It's nice to win any race, but when it's all your own, it's something special." Schwartz should know. In his more than 20 years of harness driving, he's won over 300 races.

Dr. Douglas King, the first-ever winner of the Passover Pace, began training on his father's horse at the Roosevelt Raceway on Long Island when he was 16.

"As soon as I got on the race bike, I felt it was where I belong," said King, now 57 and a forensic dentist in Manhattan. King comes from a family of harness drivers, including his grandfather and great-grandfather.

To win the first race was a great accomplishment for King, bringing up a feeling he remembered from many years before.

"It felt like I graduated medical school again," he said. "To see the chasidic kids from the area out cheering, with their payes flying in the wind, was a great feeling." King's mother travels to Israel every year, bragging about her son, "the world-class horse racer."

While very few people see much of a correlation between racing and Passover, King has an idea.

"If you look at it philosophically, we [as Jews] were always on the run," he said. A chariot would speed the process. He also thinks that Passover is a good choice for the race because it's "a Jewish-friendly holiday when you don't have to be in shul."

Mark Liebowitz, the dean of Francis Lewis High School in Queens, won the 2005 Passover Pace. He echoes the other participants when asked about a link between Jewishness and horse racing.

"It's Ben-Hur," he said. "Maybe I saw it when I was younger and was inspired to do it."

King watches the 1959 movie starring Charlton Heston before every race to give him encouragement.

"It all goes back to Egyptian days," King said. "I'm sure there were Jewish racers then, although they might not have admitted it." He also cited other Jews famous in the racing world, including Arthur Unger, Robby Seigelman and Sandy Goldfarb.

"We [as Jews] don't usually get involved in sports," King said. "We go into law, go to medical school and into business. We spend more time on education and less time on fun," which is why the idea of a Passover harness race may sound peculiar to some.

On Tuesday, as Schwartz is defending his title, thousands of spectators watching the races simulcast in off-track betting sites around the country will join the hundreds in the stands in cheering on their pick for favorite horse and Jewish driver. As the race begins around 2 p.m. and the dust goes flying, Schwartz will aim for the finish line and his prize, a moment in the winner's circle, a purse estimated at around \$4,000 and a box of matzah.

"I'm looking forward to that matzah," he said, recalling the taste of victory.

A Psalm at the Wall

Naomi Ragen

When I lived in New York City, I never went to the top of the Empire State

Building because that was just for tourists. And now, living in Jerusalem, I find that hardly get to the Western Wall. But this year, I decided to take the words of the prayers literally, and visit the Wall, where once pilgrims gathered to offer Passover sacrifices at the Temple.

We joined a mass of people making their way to the Wall, and for a moment -- the crowds, the heat, the noise and all the construction going on near the Wall-- made me wonder why I'd come. What was so holy about these stones, so special about this crowded, undistinguished space?

And then I stopped looking at the stones, and started looking at the people. I saw two Ethiopian girls in their pretty holiday dresses, and a woman and her elderly mother in a sari. I saw a family of Yemenite Jews, all in their holiday best; and Hasidim resplendent in their sable-trimmed streimels and shiny satin kapotas. There was a man and his adult son wearing identical gold robes with wide,stripped belts- denoting their membership in a special Hasidic sect found only in Jerusalem. There was the tourist in his black Calvin Klein shirt and the girl soldiers with their long ponytails and even longer guns. There were, most of all, children: babies with curly blonde hair and blue eyes, little black haired, dark eyed toddlers, their mothers' wearing wigs or jeans or summer dresses. I wanted to hug them, the little girls with their crumbling matzo sandwiches, the toddler in his payot and little holiday vest being told by his mother to "pick up his feet" as he inched his way forward.

Suddenly, for the first time perhaps, I saw those around me not as separate individuals, but as a living tapestry of unique, incomparable beauty that is the Jewish people. I saw them, perhaps as God might see them -- a precious remnant woven through the ages, outlasting pogroms and inquisitions and holocausts, vitally alive and well and gathered now to visit this holy place, as God requested.

What made this place holy, I realized, wasn't the stones; it was the people gathered here, united in their longing to touch them. It was the visible, tangible indisputable proof of the ingathering of the exiles from all over the globe that has taken place since the founding of the State; a living miracle that we see clearly every day here in Israel, but seldom let register.

And then, as is my custom, I opened up a book of Psalms and let the pages fall where they would, allowing God to direct me to just the right words. The Psalm I was sent to was 69. And this is what it says: "They that hate me without reason are more than the hairs of my head; mighty are they that would make me numb, that

unjustly come forward as my foes so that I might restore that which I have never taken away."

Writing in the year 1882, the great commentator Samson Raphael Hirsch explains this verse: "Those who harbored hostile feelings against Israel were in the overwhelming majority. Even worse, the reins of power were in the hands of those who actively desired to paralyze Israel, to hinder it in its every movement, to render it powerless while it was yet alive. They come forward against Israel with trumped-up charges, intent on forcing Israel to restore all that which it had actually acquired by honest and legal means, as if Israel had obtained such possessions by "robbery." In general, the Jews were denied the right to existence. Everything that a Jew possessed, even if he had acquired it by unimpeachably honest means, was viewed, or at least treated, as loot which had been amassed by robbing other nations."

But in the end, the Psalmist comforts, "they will obtain the home and the peace which was denied them throughout the rest of the world because of their unswerving loyalty to the One God."

Happy Passover from the Holy City of Jerusalem, where those who love God now gather to celebrate their freedom to do His will. And next year, may all of you come and join us at the Wall, to sing your own Psalm, to add your own thread.

Jerusalem Institute Questions Post-Diaspora Kitniyot Abstinence

by Ezra HaLevi (IsraelNN.com)

‘Give peas a chance, on Pesach.’

The religious court of a Jerusalem Talmudic research center has taken aim at the Ashkenazi practice of abstaining from legumes on Passover in Israel.

The Beit Din (religious court) of Machon Shilo, headed by Rabbi David Bar-Hayim, issued the ruling, which permits the consumption of Kitniyot (legumes) by all Jews in Israel during the Pesach holiday. Co-signing the ruling were Jerusalem Rabbis Yehoshua Buch and Chaim Wasserman.

The Beit Din explains in its ruling that the custom of refraining from consumption of Kitniyot on Pesach began due to purely logistical issues such as phenomenon of wheat grains being found in sacks of rice. The ruling and customs affect mostly Jews from Ashkenazi descent, as Sephardic Jewry never adopted the customs.

Rabbi Bar-Hayim heads Machon Shilo, a Talmudic research institute seeking to reestablish the religious customs and practices of the pre-exile Jewish communities in Israel in place of those adopted in Babylon and Europe.

"[Refraining from eating Kitniyot] was a localized custom in parts of Germany, which later moved eastwards to Poland and Russia with the waves of Jewish emigration," explains Rabbi Bar-Hayim. "The explanations offered for the custom are unconvincing. You don't find wheat in rice today. It was never accepted by Jews worldwide. Whatever the origin of the custom, Ashkenazi Jewish commentators have struggled to find good reasons for the ban. Some authorities, such as Rabbeinu Yeruham (Provence, 14 c.) called it a 'foolish custom'."

The Machon Shilo ruling goes to far as to insinuate that financial incentives contributed at certain times to the addition of other foods to the category of Kitniyot. "Over time, more and more items were arbitrarily added to the list," Rabbi Bar Hayim writes. "Beans, peas, and more recently soya beans and even peanuts. Few Ashkenazi Jews today would eat peanuts or use peanut oil on Pesach, but as recently as 40 years ago peanuts were permitted by all Rabbinical authorities. Often there were economic interests at work behind the scenes, pushing for ever more stringent definitions of Kitniyot, in order to create a market for a particular product. Products that were previously kosher were banned. Very

expensive oils such as walnut oil replaced other oils that were previously acceptable and the focus of the holiday shifted from avoiding Chametz to avoiding Kitniyot."

Rabbi Bar-Hayim says he understands the importance of preserving customs, but that the Talmud itself explicitly instructs Jews how to relate to the customs passed down to them. "We learn from the Mishnah and the Talmud that customs are connected to a particular place. When one moves permanently to another locality, one is to adopt the local custom," Rabbi Bar-Hayim says. "The custom of abstaining from eating Kitniyot during Pesach has never been the prevailing practice among all Jews in the Land of Israel, and therefore is not binding upon Jews living in Israel. A person may choose to continue adhering to his custom, but no one has the right to enforce his custom on others."

Rabbi Bar-Hayim says that Kitniyot is just a symptom of the fractured nature of Judaism in Israel since the forced exile two millennia ago. He laments the status quo whereby Ashkenazi and Sephardi neighbors do not eat at one another's home on the Pesach holiday, meant to be a time of unity for the Jewish people, who would ascend as a nation to Jerusalem in Temple times. "We hope that this ruling will serve as the beginning of a process that will unite the Jewish People."

Even more critical, says Rabbi Bar-Hayim, are the results of retaining the customs picked up during an exile during which many now-relevant mitzvot (commandments) were superfluous. "When a Jew lives in accordance to the Judaism of Minsk or Dvinsk, there is no place in his worldview for bringing the Korban Pesach (the Pesach sacrifice of a lamb, as was done each year starting with the Exodus)," laments Rabbi Bar-Hayim. "Today, as always, we are commanded to bring a Korban Pesach, but most people are under the mistaken impression that we cannot since we are ritually impure from contact with the dead."

Citing the Mishna and the Rambam, which state that if a majority of the people is ritually unclean the Passover sacrifice is not postponed and is brought in a state of impurity, Rabbi Bar-Hayim says the only reason not to reinstate the Biblical commandment is the political climate preventing Jewish religious access to the Temple Mount. "We hope that this psak halacha (Jewish legal ruling) will cause a paradigm shift from 'small talk' about Kitniyot to confronting the big issues such as the Pesach sacrifice. I am aware that some people, even some religious Jews, are uncomfortable with the subject of animal sacrifice; this is something that we need to discuss and internalize. The Pesach sacrifice was one of the annual highlights of Jewish life in the Land of Israel during the First and Second Commonwealths. The

Jewish People has come home; we need to start acting like it."

The Machon Shilo ruling remains a minority opinion. Arutz-7 contacted a few of Israel's leading Religious Zionist rabbis to comment on the issue.

Rabbi Zalman Melamed, Chief Rabbi of Beit El, said that Ashkenazi Jews are forbidden from consuming Kitniyot on Pesach. "We act in accordance with our tradition, which is that Ashkenazim are forbidden to eat Kitniyot on Pesach," he said.

Asked whether that applied to more recent additions to the Kitniyot classification, such as peanuts. Rabbi Melamed said, "One whose family has the tradition that they eat peanuts can eat peanuts."

Rabbi Melamed stressed that while it is a desirable aim for the nation to move toward unity in their Jewish observance, such a shift must be done by a decision of a larger plurality of Torah sages, and not by individuals.

Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem's Old City, also said that it is forbidden for Ashkenazi Jews to eat Kitniyot. He took issue with the assertion that the minhag hamakom (local custom) in Israel is to eat Kitniyot. "The Land of Israel belongs to all of the Jewish people and not just Sephardi Jews," he said. "There are many customs and there is no minhag hamakom that prevails in Israel."

Rabbi Nebenzahl conceded that an Ashkenazi Jew could conceivably take on Sephardi customs if he lives in a community that is wholly Sephardi.

Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch, Rosh Yeshiva of the Birkat Moshe Hesder Yeshiva in Maaleh Adumim, disagreed with the assertion that there was no local custom א in theory. "There was in fact a minhag hamakom in the Land of Israel. But when other communities arrived, they did not respect it and chose to continue their own customs. . . I presume the local custom was to eat Kitniyot."

But Rabbi Rabinovitch says he does not understand why anybody should be bothered by the customs of others. "Who does it hurt that Ashkanazim today refrain from Kitniyot? They can in fact eat at their Sephardi neighbors and just not eat from the Kitniyot foods."

"There are many congregations today," he added. "There is no longer a single

community without two rabbis. . . and just as you wouldn't want to make everyone dress the same way, we should not force everyone to give up their customs. . . many of which offer a connection to their previous generations."

Rabbi Rabinovitch concluded that the matter of consumption of Kitniyot is a personal matter of observance and should be discussed individually with one's rabbi.

Quiz: More Than 'Four Questions' About Passover

Passover is one of the most beloved--and most widely celebrated--Jewish holidays of the year. Take this quiz and find out how much you really know about what makes these nights different from all others.

Q1. The traditional Passover meal is called the:

1. Shabbat
2. Seder
3. Siddur
4. Sivan

Q2. What is the Hebrew term for foods that are not permitted on Passover?

1. Chametz
2. Matzah
3. Kreplach
4. Challah

Q3. What is the Haggadah?

1. The traditional wine drunk during the seder
2. The group of children born since the last Passover
3. The book that contains the seder liturgy and order of rituals
4. Another name for the Torah

Q4. Why do we open a door during the seder?

1. To let the prophet Elijah in
2. To let the evil spirits out
3. To open the house to the new year
4. To let any neighbors come in and share the food

Q5. In what book of the Torah is the Passover story found?

1. Genesis
2. Leviticus
3. Deuteronomy
4. Exodus

Q6. In what Hebrew month is Passover celebrated?

1. Sivan
2. Nisan
3. Adar
4. Kislev

Q7. Which of the following plagues is not included in the 10 God bestowed on the Egyptians?

1. Locusts
2. Darkness
3. Blood
4. Spiders

Q8. Who traditionally asks the Four Questions during the seder?

1. The house-owner
2. The youngest person present
3. The oldest man present
4. The most learned person present

Q9. During the seder we dip bitter herbs in salt water. What does this symbolize?

1. The tears of the Jews
2. The water of the Red Sea
3. The impurity of the Pharaoh
4. The presence of God

Q10. What sentence marks end of the seder?

1. We will never forget
2. Why is this night different from all other nights?
3. Let us all be blessed
4. Next year in Jerusalem

Q11. Whose name does not appear in the Passover liturgy?

1. Pharaoh
2. Moses
3. God
4. Jacob

Q12. Which of the following is not a traditional Passover song?

1. Dayenu
2. Chad Gadya
3. Hatikvah
4. Ma Nishtanah

Free The Soldiers Prayer

Freethsoldiers.org has released a prayer for Israel's missing soldiers to be read at the Passover seder.

"As we gather to celebrate this Festival of Freedom, let us recall those who have their freedom denied to them. As we sit with our families at our seder table, let us have in mind those families whose table will not be complete. As we tell the story of our ancestor's exodus from slavery, let us remember the Israeli soldiers who were kidnapped while protecting Eretz Yisrael and are now sitting in captivity.

Our God and God of our ancestors, before we begin our Passover seder, we pray to you to have mercy and protect: Gilad ben Aviva (Shalit), Ehud ben Malka (Goldwasser), Eldad ben Tova (Regev), Zecharia Shlomo ben Miriam (Baumel), Tzvi ben Penina (Feldman), Yekutiel Yehuda Nachman ben Sara (Katz), Ron ben Batya (Arad), Guy ben Rina (Hever). Just as our seder does not conclude until the afikoman is found and returned to our table, we hope and pray that these eight soldiers will soon be returned safely to their families so that they may taste the next Passover meal in freedom and with dignity. Amen."

Who are some of the IDF soldiers awaiting the compassionate outcry of humanity?

Gilad Shalit (Age 20) was born in Nahariya but was raised in Mitzpe Hilla in the Western Galilee. He is the son of Aviva and Noam and brother of Yoel (23) and Hadas (16). He follows sports teams and tournaments all over the world, from tennis to basketball and cycling. Gilad is a well-mannered, quiet and soft-spoken young man, with a smile that lights up his face. Gilad began his military service a little over a year ago in July 2005. He followed his older brother Yoel into the armed forces and despite being able to avoid combat due to medical reasons, he preferred to serve in a combat unit. Prior to his abduction, he had been on duty guarding the settlements around Gaza.

Ehud (Udi) Goldwasser (Age 31) was born in Nahariya, and is the son of Miki and Shlomo and older brother of Yair (26) and Gadi (23). After dating for nine years, he and his wife Karnit were married less than a year ago. Udi completed his undergraduate studies at the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology) and is currently a graduate student in environmental engineering. Udi is a kind, loving and caring person, always ready to offer a helping hand in any situation. He is a man of principles and values, is knowledgeable about many subjects and is an avid photographer.

Eldad Regev (Age 26)

Eldad was born and raised in Kiryat Motzkin. He is the son of Tova (of blessed memory) and Zvi, and brother of Benny, Ofer and Eyal. After completing three years of military service in the elite Givati infantry brigade, he became a law student at Bar Ilan University with the hopes of becoming a law professor. Eldad is loved by and immensely popular among all who know him. He readily offers aid to anyone in need. Eldad was called up for military reserve duty after completing his exams at Bar Ilan University. Three days before his abduction, he visited his family and participated in the annual memorial for his mother. The following day, he returned to complete the remainder of his reserve duty.

ISRAEL SCENE

Andrea Simantov

Among the more miraculous things I discovered while ridding my house of not-to-be-eaten leavened-food items were seventeen tubes of body cream. We are not talking about samples that are sometimes given as prizes with the purchase of an expensive cheek-blusher or face cleanser called Zits-Be-Gone. No. I'm speaking about full size containers of heavily-perfumed moisturizer that I'm seduced into purchasing every time I arrive at the supermarket checkout counter. Stifling a yawn, the (usually) Russian cashier explains to me that, because I bought enough aluminum foil to rebuild the Hindenburg,

I'm entitled to a kilo of MSG laden chicken-soup powder, two discount coupons for a spa on the Lebanese border or - surprise! - body cream. I always reach for the body cream.

(Once I came out with six free pints of Ben & Jerry's ice cream but this is a chapter I'd rather not revisit. I'll only say that I lied to my children, swearing that we were only entitled to four pints. The two I ate with a spoon in the car at traffic lights were still repeating on me later that night as I remorsefully downloaded three articles about stomach-stapling, finally falling into bed fully clothed and nauseous.)

Cleaning for Pesach wasn't as interesting last month because, unlike previous years, I've managed to keep clutter down to a manageable size over the past twelve months. My linen closet actually housed sheets and towels instead of the decades long complements of stained and outgrown baby clothes and ice skates from the old country. Pillows that were flat or ripped were actually tossed and replaced, and hiking boots that hadn't seen their mate for a season or three were chucked with nary a backward glance.

Believe-you-me, this was clearly novel behavior because, previously, I've saved items I wore in college, hoping-against-hope that the erstwhile "dickey" would top Donna Karan's upcoming fall collection. Cured of the curse of "hoardism," I didn't shed a single tear last year when I shoved a pair of leather-trimmed hot pants into a plastic charity bag. (I'll sob if I actually see someone wearing them.)

Point being that cleaning for Pesach was actually that. Just leaning. Absent from the experience was the romance, the adventure, the sheer thrill of accidentally happening upon a clue to one's past life or psychological insights to the damage

inflicted by my mother. Because the Purim baskets were immediately divided, doled, and discarded, we were unable to participate in the historic, annual ritual of carb-cramming and conversing with the slurred speech of the sugar-stupored.

I miss my addiction. There. I said it. I liked being a junk-junkie, a collector of gourmet condiments and rainy-day twist-ties. Hope reigned supreme in my bulging closet with size ten dresses duking-it-out with the 12s, both groups laughing smugly as they watched me squeeze into the fourteens and, later, the 16s. Those Barbie duds could afford to laugh because they felt safe, secure in the knowledge that I'd NEVER toss them out as long as I remained both eating-disordered and delusional. Well, who's laughing now??? Gone are the model-size threads that only reflected narcissism and slave mentality. Now I'm fat and free. Free to be fat.

Whatever. I got rid of the dresses.

With the responsibilities of a full-time job and overseas guests about to descend, anxiety and fear were the natural old patterns I comfortably fell into. But it was wrong, all wrong. A few hours of paid cleaning help, along with the concerted effort of a couple of hours a day upon returning home from the office for several weeks, the little signs announcing that a room was "Kosher For Passover" went up in no time. I think I had gotten so used to the pre-holiday angst that I considered it as much a part of the festivities at the matzot, charoset, and afikoman! And that left me with real chametz. The yeasty, puffy residue of an enlarged ego which, essentially, is what all those breadstuffs represent.

Chametz: The conviction that if you do homework with your children, send them to summer camp, teach them to manage their money by giving them early allowances, ask them about their feelings, validate those same feelings, set firm guidelines, and live a principled life, those children will grow up to be pillars of society and sources of personal nachas 24/7.

Chametz: The belief that if you are lively, attractive, free-spirited, and single, someone wonderful will emerge - either via introduction through righteous friends or an electronic dating site - and heal you of self-doubt, loneliness, and diminished status. Codicil to this chametzdikah belief is that you are a more valuable entity when coupled and, with a little more effort on your part, you can also be living happily-ever-after.

Chametz: Bad things happen to bad people and if you are a good person, you will be rewarded in this world, big time. Everyone's misfortune is a result of bad

behavior, bad planning, or bad genes. God is vengeful, angry, and takes no prisoners.

Not too long ago, while living another (someone else's?) life, I believed in the above three tenets as part of Orthodox Chamatzism. There are many commandments for adherents to observe, like "No Wool Hats May Be Worn by Women Between the First Night of Pesach Until the Sabbath Before Rosh HaShanah." But the central principle, applicable to both men and women, is, "Judge Others as You Would Never Wish to Be Judged." I wasn't only a believer, I was a High Priestess.

Suddenly finding myself on "the other side" of fortune was an enlightening experience, although, I can honestly say, not entirely appreciated at the time of my social, marital, and financial demise. Having been born with a finely-tuned sense of the ironic, over time I was able to view my changed circumstances with both humor and gratitude. This understanding did not come overnight, however.

Growing up should mean growing better but doesn't always. Some people just grow older and stay in the same place, and, for me that would be too sad. I can't say that the speed in which I "get it" is always commensurate with my children's hopes for me, but, ultimately, I enjoy the challenge of earning new things, making new friends, and knowing much less. Yep, I'd have to say that knowing less is the ultimate reward of responsible aging and Ponce De Leon's secret nectar. Sitting back and letting all those stodgy opinions evaporate while they get replaced with people and laughter is a far cry better than Botox.

Chametz is NOT synonymous with evil. Far from it. But when juxtaposed with no-frills matzoh, we have a clue to our essence, which is what recalling the Exodus from Egypt is all about. Ridding our homes of the stuff is the way that we tune into our history, our godliness, and our ability to locate the annually used Hammacher Schlemmer turbo corkscrew.

You might even be lucky enough to find an extra tube of discounted body cream.

5768 Supplementary Readings

Arthur Waskow

A. One moment actually begins before Pesach, on Shabbat HaGadol.

As the Haftarah (Prophetic passage), traditionally we read the last verses from the Prophet Malachi (last of the Prophets), who says (speaking for God):

"Here! -- I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of YHWH --- And he will turn the hearts of parents to children and the hearts of children to parents, lest I come and strike the earth with utter destruction."

You might consider -- after reading this passage -- having someone speak VERY briefly of the climate-crisis dangers now facing the earth.

Then call all the under-13 children forth to the front of the congregation, turning to face and be faced by the older generation of congregants, and ask everyone to think about one act they could do to reduce this danger - whether in their own daily practice or actively and publicly advocating changes in public policy.

Then ask each person to turn to one person sitting nearby and each covenant with the other to do that one act. Then invite everyone who wishes, to recite the following while the two generations face each other:

"And I myself will take on the task of Elijah the Prophet, to turn the hearts of children and parents toward each other so as to turn aside from our lives the danger that the earth be struck with utter destruction."

This could also be done upon lifting up the Cup of Elijah at the Seder, after reading the passage from Elijah.

B. The Freedom Plate

Several years ago, Martha Hausman proposed that a special plate be set aside next to the traditional Seder plate, on which could be placed physical objects brought by every participant in the Seder as a symbol of her/ his liberation THIS YEAR from Mitzraim (the Tight & Narrow Place).

Phyllis and I have done this each year since, and find it very powerful. Mature

people and children, learned Jews and people who have never before attended a Seder, can all relate to this, and the stories about the objects on the Freedom Plate become a very powerful part of the Seder.

Our custom is that soon after we begin, we ask those present to begin lifting and explaining their freedom-object. One year, one person brought a just-completed 500-page book MS whose completion had "freed" him; , another brought a single gold coin that his father had brought out of Nazi Germany as a last-ditch economic prop in case destitution were descending; another brought a watch (about liberation from rigid time-rules); another, nothing -- as a symbol of freedom from the rule that something should be brought.

Alternatively , one might use either the passage "In every generation one rises up against us to destroy us" or "In every generation every human being must look upon her/himself as if we ourselves, not our ancestors only, come forth from slavery" as times to raise up the Freedom Plate and hear its stories.

C. For many of us, one of the worst Pyramidal/ Pharaonic oppressions in our lives is being driven into overwork, and the spiritual and emotional exhaustion that follows.

(The NYTimes has reported that schools are increasingly abolishing recess time in order to get the children to do more work. This is a form of slavery. As the article noted, the possibility of "wonder" is being squashed. the opposite of Heschel's teaching that the root of all spirituality is "radical amazement.")

Therefore, we could add the following to the Seder, perhaps after the passage, "In every generation, there is one who rises up against us, to destroy us." (Some of the imagery is a paraphrase of a passage from *The Sabbath* by Abraham Joshua Heschel.)

Today we face a new kind of Mitzraim,
the Tight and Narrow Place.

Freedom without jobs is a bitter joke --

yet many of us find our jobs dissolved, downsized, disemployed.

Jobs without freedom are slavery --

yet many of us are forced to overwork.

Our jobs exhaust us.

When Moshe faced the Burning Bush,

He learned that like an eternal burning bush,

Time itself is not consumed
Though each instant vanishes to open the way to the next.
Things of space seem permanent --
but as we seek to make them into our servants,
They may enslave us.
When the Israelites went forth from slavery,
they sought time for rest and self-reflection:
They found Shabbat.
Rather than live under the tyranny of space and overwork,
We will in our lives set apart a time for freedom."

D. The Orange on the Seder Plate.

It seems that some Jewish lesbians during the 1980s set bread on the Seder plate as a symbol of affirming lesbianism, though understanding it as transgressive of Jewish tradition. But others responded by saying that the full inclusion of lesbians and gay men in all of Jewish life was a fulfillment of Torah, not a transgression. So something new should be brought to the Seder plate, but not something that violates it.

The Orange has come to stand for the freedom and equality of women and people of all sexual minorities in Jewish life, and implicitly of how the achievement of that freedom is already changing Jewish practice.

The Orange also is the only whole fruit on the Plate, and so carries within itself the seeds of its own future, just as Torah carries within itself the seeds of change.

Further, the Orange can symbolize Malkhut, the (feminine) Sefhira of Majestic Inclusion. Till now the other objects on the Seder Plate have symbolized the other six sphirot and Malkut has been symbolized by the Plate itself -- very important but present as Ground, not Figure. With the Orange, Malkhut becomes visible as Figure while remaining Ground as well.

The traditional practice is, either in response to someone's independently raising the question, "Why is there an Orange on the Seder plate?" or by raising the question deliberately (as a fifth question, or in pointing to the items on the plate just before the meal) to answer with any or all the answers above.

E. THREE MORE QUESTIONS

(1) Why do we break the matzah in two?

Because the bread of affliction becomes the bread of freedom --when we share it. Because the Land that gives bread to two peoples must be divided in two, so that both peoples may eat of it. So long as one people grasps the whole land, it is a land of affliction. When each people can eat from part of the Land, it will become a land of freedom.

(2) Why is there an egg upon the Pesach plate?

It is the egg of birthing. When we went forth from Mitzrayim, the Narrow Place, it was the birth-time of our people, the People of Israel.

When the midwives Shifrah and Puah
Saved the children that Pharaoh ordered them to kill,
That was the beginning of the birth-time;
When Pharaoh's daughter joined with Miriam
To give a second birth to Moses from the waters,
She birthed herself anew into God's daughter, Bat-yah,
And our people turned to draw ourself toward life.
When God became our Midwife
And named us Her firstborn,
Though we were the smallest and youngest of the peoples,
The birthing began;
When the waters of the Red Sea broke,
We were delivered.

So today we must struggle to bring to birth a world in which no Pharaoh, no leader, can order the murder of children; a world in which not only midwives but all people respond to such orders by refusing. By feeling not fear of a Pharaoh but reverence toward the God who breathes all life.

3. Why is there charoset on the Seder plate?

(a) To remind us that though charoset is sweet, it mimics the mortar we were forced to use to build the Pharaoh's cities. To remind us that even if slavery tastes sweet, it is still slavery.

OR

(b) To bring us the tastes of the Song of Songs, that joyful celebration of the fruitfulness of spring and of the love of human beings for each other and the earth: "Feed me with apples and with raisin-cakes; your kisses are sweeter than wine; the scent of your breath is like apricots; your cheeks are a bed of spices; the fig tree has ripened; then I went down to the walnut grove."

F. Lev and Gayle Koszegi write that they were putting together their haggadah, and realized that the traditional Maggid doesn't actually include a simple narration of the Exodus story, so they wrote this little song.

The Children of Israel!
[by the Koszegi Hillbillies, (c) 5760]

Come an' listen to a story / 'bout a man named Mo,
A Hebrew child raised / by the daughter of Pharaoh,
An' then one day / an Egyptian beat a slave,
An' Moses stepped in, / the Hebrew for to save...
(Struck the guard, killed him dead!)

Well, the next thing you know, / ol' Mo is all a-feared.
The Hebrews said, / "Mo, run away from here!"
Mo decided Midian / was the place he oughtta be,
And there he stayed, / till he saw a burnin' tree...
(God, that is... boomin' voice, majesty.)

God told Moses / to go an' tell Pharaoh,
"Time has come / to let my people go!"
Pharaoh just laughed, said, / "You tryin' to pull my leg?"
So Mo raised his staff, / and God brought down the plagues...
(Blood, that is... frogs an' lice, hailstones.)

Ten plagues in all, / and the last was really bad:
Slayin' of the first-born, and Pharaoh was a dad.
He said to the Hebrews, / "Go on! Get away from me!"
So they loaded up their matzah / and they headed toward the sea...
(Red, that is... mighty wide, no way across.)

Pharaoh got all crazy / and decided to attack.
Mo raised his staff, / and the waters, they drew back!
The Hebrews walked through, / just as dry as they could be,

And Pharaoh's army chased 'em, / but were covered by the sea...
(Drowned, that is... chariots, riders, too)

The Mo's sister Miriam, / she began to sing,
And the womenfolk danced / as she played the tambourine.
Once we were slaves, / but now we are free,
And in every generation / we recall our history...
(The Children of Israel!)

G. children to hunt for the hidden Afikoman

cooperatively, not competitively, and when it is found we ask the children to choose together a tzedakah recipient to which of the adults will (later during Pesach) make a contribution of one or another multiple of \$18, depending on their own sense of their own means.

H. Latifa Kropf suggests A FOUR WORLDS SEDER: This is not meant to be a complete seder but a template to lay over your seder or a colored lens to modify the tint of its courses. Like a Tu B'Shvat seder, it uses the four cups of wine as doorways to each of the four worlds, and in this case to the four aspects of freedom.

After intros, lighting candles, chanting the order of the seder we arrive at the first Kiddush. This cup of wine initiates us into the world of ASSIYAH. The line that the Haggadah connects to this first cup of wine is Exodus 6:6-"I am YHWH, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians." This can be simply saying that God is promising us more physical freedom. Before chanting Kiddush together reflect on how you are enslaved physically and what freedom in Assiyah would look and feel like. (Also: How can you be an agent of freedom for others in the world of Assiyah?) In this part of the seder we connect to the physical world of spring through the karpas. Children sing the four questions and the adults answer with the telling of the literal story of our liberation from bondage. We remember that our sages tell us to feel as if WE personally were freed from Egypt.

The second cup of wine brings us to the world of YETZIRAH. At this time in the seder we are exploring maror -- bitterness -- and mixing it with the sweetness of charoset. We also share the meal with our family and friends. This is a time of feeling and emotional sharing, the world of Yetzirah. The Biblical reference is again Exodus 6:6-"I will deliver you from their bondage..." Before chanting this Kiddush focus on how you are emotionally enslaved. What do you want to birth in the world of Yetzirah this season? Are you keeping yourself in a tight place

emotionally? (Also, how can you act as Moshe or Miriam to help bring more freedom to others in the world of Yetzirah?)

The third cup of wine brings us to both Elijah's and Miriam's cups. This is as a time of envisioning the future. We have moved from the physical, through the watery emotional to the spark of insight. The world of BRIYAH is the time for new ideas. How to attune our hearts to our children's and how to make our world a home for all of us. The line connected to the third cup of wine is also from Exodus 6:6-"I will redeem you with an outstretched arm." As we rise through the worlds of emanation we get closer to the essence of the Holy One. Not only has God freed us but God is reaching for us as we in turn yearn for the Divine touch. So before chanting Kiddush contemplate, How can I be free in my mind? What opinions, thoughts, judgments, mental habits are enslaving me? (Also -- What fresh new ideas can I contribute, birth for the world this Pesakh?) A song I like to use in the world of Briyah is Ya'acov Gabriel's "On Eagle's Wings."

The fourth cup of wine comes at the end of the seder. Exodus 6:7- "And I will take you to be my people." The world of ATZILUT is transcendence and intimacy with the Divine Beloved. In Briyah The Holy One reaches for us. In Atzilut God pulls us towards God's self in an embrace that culminates in unity. As in the Tu B'shevat seder there is no physical fruit to represent the world of Atzilut, in the Passover seder there is nothing more left to be said or done, this is the moment of completeness. Perhaps it is also the moment of spiritual freedom, when we free ourselves from our personalities and discover our own divinity.

At Purim we glimpsed the Divine Presence behind the mask but now we are free to remove the mask and know the Holy One. Before making Kiddush this last time allow yourself the freedom -- How can I be a guide to help others find their way into the arms of Shekhinah?) I suggest ending the seder with Aryeh Hirschfield's song "Open To Me." May we and all creation be free..

To Welcome the Stranger

Cara Fisher

For over 350 years, Jews from around the world have sought refuge on American soil; many in search of economic prosperity and the opportunity to practice their religion freely, others seeking the protection of refugee or asylum status to escape oppression and persecution in their home countries. Throughout modern history, Jewish migration to the United States has faced significant barriers, including restrictive and discriminatory immigration policies, quotas, and an underlying sense of prejudice held by the general public. Despite this, our Jewish ancestors continued to immigrate to this country, establishing long-standing roots on American soil and creating a Jewish community that has significantly influenced the growth of American society.

Today, the United States faces a severe crisis concerning the state of our flawed immigration system. The national debate over how to restructure this system has gained significant momentum in recent years, culminating in a divisive legislative campaign that lingered throughout the last Congress. The need for legislative action could not be more urgent; the escalating state of illegal immigration, the humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, and the complexity of dealing with the future flow of immigrant workers demands thoughtful consideration by Congress and the passage of legislation that addresses the root causes of immigration to the United States.

Currently, nearly 12 million people live in this country without legal status. Many have come in search of work, hoping to send money back to their families. Others have stayed beyond the expiration of their visas for various reasons, often to continue to reap the benefits of life in America. Similar to today's immigrants, many Jews came to this country in search of opportunity and to make a better life for themselves and their families. While Jewish immigrants often came through legal channels, specifically entry points such as Ellis Island and the Port of Galveston, the inherent causes of immigration to the United States have remained the same over time.

The Reform Jewish community has remained steadfast in its support of comprehensive immigration reform, because our immigrant history reminds us that we have a personal responsibility to ensure that today's

immigration policies reflect equitable, generous and humane measures. Additionally, we must not ignore the deteriorating state of the U.S.-Mexico border, where illegal immigration, criminal activity and an increasing number of deaths call attention to the need for enhanced border security. A comprehensive immigration reform bill should address not only border issues, but also should offer a path to earned legalization for undocumented immigrants, expedited family reunification, and regulations to provide a flow of immigrant workers to meet the needs of the United States economy.

It is important to recognize that the millions of undocumented immigrants living in this country make significant contributions to our economy, often paying heavily into both our tax and social security system. Due to their status in the shadows of society, however, undocumented immigrants are unable to receive basic employee benefits and are often victims of unlawful and unethical treatment in the workplace. In addition to the need for a path to earned legalization for undocumented workers is the need for expedited family reunification for those who immigrated legally to the United States. According to the National Immigration Forum, many immigrants hoping to reunite with their relatives in this country face potential backlogs of up to twenty years before their loved ones are able to receive the family visas necessary to immigrate to this country. A comprehensive approach to immigration reform will address these critical issues while establishing a humane immigration policy that will benefit both undocumented immigrants currently living in this country as well as those hoping to come to the United States in the future.

These ideas resonate particularly during the Passover season, when Jews around the world will join together and re-tell the story of Israelites' freedom from the wrath of the Egyptian Pharaoh following years of enslavement and oppression. The Israelites, forced to wander the desert for 40 subsequent years, represent one of the first groups of Jewish migrants who were forced to seek sanctuary in a foreign land.

During the Passover Seder, we are reminded that "in every generation we are obligated to see ourselves as though we personally had escaped from slavery in Egypt." Perhaps that is why we begin the Seder with the compelling words of welcome, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." Furthermore, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of "welcoming

the stranger," guided by the teachings in the Book of Leviticus "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

This year's observance of Passover could not be more relevant to the nationwide grassroots and congressional movement to fix our broken immigration system. The Israelites' experience as "strangers" in Egypt and subsequently as "wanderers" in the desert has helped shape the Jewish community's connection to today's conversation about immigration reform. Throughout this debate, as we continue to advocate for fair and just immigration policies, we must remember our experience in Egypt and how generous immigration policies have benefited Jewish immigrants in the past. As people with a long memory, we recall not only our Exodus from Egyptian slavery but also the moments throughout our history when we were immigrants in a foreign land in search of opportunity, hope, and prosperity.

To send a letter to your senator or representative in support of comprehensive immigration reform, please visit the //Chai Impact Legislative Action Center <<http://capwiz.com/rac/issues/alert/?alertid=9051821>>/. Cara Fisher** is a Legislative Assistant at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Acting Out On Pessah

David Golinkin

Pack your bags and split the sea - this is one festival that should be experienced to be appreciated. The writer is the president of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

Modern Jewish educators frequently use drama as an educational tool in order to bring a biblical or talmudic story to life, or to get a child more actively involved in the subject under discussion. Much of the Pessah Seder is also geared toward children, in order to fulfill the mitzva of v'hisgadta l'vincha - "and you shall tell your children" (Exodus 13:8). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that a number of Pessah customs use drama in order to arouse the interest of children and bring the Exodus to life.

In 1853, the Jewish traveler Benjamin II described a ceremony which he saw at a Seder "in Asia:"

They dress up a young man in kley golah (Ezekiel 12:3 - "exile costume") and before the recitation of the Haggada, he appears before the participants, staff in hand and satchel on his shoulder. The father asks him: "From where do you come, O pilgrim?"

"From the land of Egypt," says the lad.

"Did you go out to freedom from the bondage of Egypt?"

"Yes indeed," replies the lad, "and now I am a free man."

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to Jerusalem," he replies.

With great joy the participants begin to tell the story of the Exodus

THE JEWS of Morocco had a similar custom. After reading the Haggada, all the men put a stick with a bundle on their shoulders and leave the house in haste, running and shouting: "So did our ancestors leave Egypt, 'their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders' Exodus 12:34)."

These customs are widespread among Sephardi and Oriental Jews to this day. However, surprisingly enough, this custom was first mentioned in Germany 650 years before Benjamin II described it in Asia, and it is also documented in Poland, Germany and Hungary.

In 1210, Rabbi Asher of Lunel states in his *Sefer Haminhagot*: "I heard that in Allemagne [Germany], after eating karpas, they uproot the table and take the matzot and wrap them in coverings and bear them on their shoulders and walk to the corners of the house, and then they return to their places and recite the Haggada."

Rabbi Shlomo Luria (Lublin, 1510-1573) devoted one of his responsa to the laws of the Seder: "After the meal [the person leading the Seder] takes out the afikoman wrapped in a cover, and he drapes it behind him and walks approximately four cubits in the house and says: 'So did our ancestors go, with their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks.'"

IN 1951, Prof. Alexander Scheiber documented similar customs among his students at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Budapest. In Puntok, when they reached yahatz, the father would wrap the afikoman in a scarf, put it on his shoulder, stand up, and say to his family in Yiddish: "Geimir, geimir!" (Let us go! Let us go!).

This custom survives among German Jews until today. When I lectured on this topic in Jerusalem a number of years ago, a woman told me that in Karlsruhe, southern Germany, her father would put the matza wrapped in the sedertuch (white matza cover) on his shoulder and say: "So sind die Kinder Jisroel aus Mizraim gegangen, so war es" (Thus did the Children of Israel leave Egypt; so it was).

A SECOND set of customs takes place not at the Seder, but on the seventh night of Pessah. According to the Sages, our ancestors crossed the Sea of Reeds on the seventh night of Pessah. Various groups of Jews have developed ways of reenacting the splitting of the sea.

The Gerer hassidim gather in the shtibl on the seventh night of Pessah; they drink wine, dance and then pour a barrel of water on the floor, lift up their long cloaks and "cross the sea" while declaring the towns located on the way to Gur. At each 'town' they drink l'hayyim, then continue to Gur. When they 'reach' Gur after 'crossing the sea" they once again drink l'hayyim and thank God for reaching their destination.

A similar custom from Reische, Galicia, in the 1890s is described by my great uncle Herman Leder of blessed memory in his Yiddish memoir Reisher Yidn:

There were several other Jews who were devoted to certain mitzvot more than to others. One of them was Reb Ephraim Tzibele. . . He lived in a little wooden house which consisted of one room for himself and his family. One heard little about him all year long But when the seventh day of Pessah arrived, everyone talked about Reb Ephraim Tzibele, because on that night he used to lead his wife and children through the Sea of Reeds. Since there was no sea in his house, he created a miniature "sea." He turned over the keg of water which stood by the door and flooded the room with water. He then took his family and crossed the "sea" with them, from one side of the room to the other. Many people used to gather there that night to witness the demonstration.

IN JERUSALEM, the hassidim of Reb Arele (1894-1947) in Meah She'arim recreate the splitting of the Reed Sea in a different fashion. The disciples act as the sea and the rebbe represents the Children of Israel. The rebbe passes through them and the students slowly part, allowing him to pass through.

Finally, Rabbi Ya'akov Moshe Harlap (1883-1951) developed a custom which was continued by his disciple, Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli (d. 1995). Hundreds of Jews of different backgrounds would congregate at his house in the Sha'are Hesed neighborhood of Jerusalem. Rabbi Harlap would deliver divrey torah interspersed with singing. At 12 midnight, he would stand up, put on a white kittel and begin to chant Shirat Hayam (Exodus 15). He would sing a special niggun (tune) with those assembled, followed by responsive singing of Shirat Hayam, one verse at a time. After Shirat Hayam, they would sing the Melekh Rahaman paragraph from the Musaf service and dance with great fervor.

Erev Pessah Forgetfulness

Levi Cooper

Pessah on a Sunday is a rare occurrence and includes unique halachot that depart from the usual pre-Pessah routine, since erev Pessah falls on a Shabbat. The last time we had such a constellation was in 2001 and we can expect it again in 2008.

Yet the phenomenon can be even more infrequent. Thirteen years passed without a Sunday Pessah between 1981 and 1994, and after 2008 it will not happen again until 2021, when erev Pessah will once again fall on Shabbat.

According to our current calendar, up to 20 years can pass without an erev Pessah falling on Shabbat. Between the years 1954 and 1974, Pessah never fell on a Sunday, and it will not happen again between the years 2025 and 2045, assuming we continue to operate under the same fixed calendar.

In days of old, when the new month was set by witnesses spotting the new moon - not by a fixed calendar - there was no telling how many years could pass without a Sunday Pessah.

Rabbinic literature recounts an episode that transpired in a year when erev Pessah occurred on Shabbat (T. Pessahim 4:13-14; B. Pessahim 66a; Y. Pessahim 33a).

The Sons of Beteira served in the office of the Nasi during the Second Temple period. When erev Pessah once fell on Shabbat, they could not remember whether the korban Pessah - which is sacrificed on the 14th of Nisan and eaten on the 15th at the Seder - was to override the Shabbat prohibitions against slaughtering animals and offering them as sacrifices.

Perhaps with a tone of despair, they asked: "Is there no one who knows whether the korban Pessah takes precedence over Shabbat or not?"

The response came: "There is one person, who has come to Israel from Babylon, and Hillel the Babylonian is his name. He attended the two greats of the previous generation, Shemaya and Avtalyon. And he knows whether the korban Pessah trumps Shabbat or not."

The Sons of Beteira promptly sent for Hillel, and with some urgency queried him: "Does the korban Pessah override Shabbat or not?"

Without directly answering the question, and perhaps with a smug grin on his face,

Hillel responded ambiguously: "Is there only one korban pesah a year that overrides Shabbat? Are there not more than 200 such sacrifices a year that override Shabbat?"

We can decipher Hillel's cryptic response - sacrifices are offered as part of the Shabbat Temple ritual, and there is no reason that the korban pesah should be any different from these sacrifices. In plain words: The korban pesah overrides Shabbat.

The Sons of Beteira, perhaps irked by Hillel's tone, were unsatisfied: "What is your source?"

Adding to his logical argument, Hillel added two verifications based on hermeneutical principles. The first proof cites the method known as gezeira shava - when the same word is used in two different biblical verses, certain laws associated with one context may be transferred to the other. Thus, in our case, the word mo'ado appears both in the context of the korban pesah (Numbers 9:2) and in the context of the korban tamid (Numbers 28:2). Just as a korban tamid can be offered on Shabbat, so too can the korban pesah.

The second corroboration cited by Hillel makes reference to the method of kal vahomer - since the korban tamid overrides Shabbat even though the punishment for not bringing this sacrifice is not the serious karet, surely the korban pesah that carries this serious penalty for those who neglect to offer it should override Shabbat.

According to the Babylonian version, Hillel was appointed nasi without delay and took the place of the Sons of Beteira. In this new role, he immediately began to publicly teach the laws of Pessah.

The Jerusalem version, as we mentioned, is less charmed with Hillel's prowess. His answers are essentially rejected with counter - hermeneutical arguments. Even though Hillel continues to press his opinions, the Beit Midrash is unconvinced. Finally, Hillel declares that this was the ruling that he received from his teachers, the former leaders Shemaya and Avtalyon. At this point, the Beit Midrash concedes his greatness and grants him the title of nasi.

Once Hillel takes office, he begins to scold those he was teaching, perhaps glancing particularly in the direction of the Sons of Beteira: "What caused you to need a Babylonian to come up to Eretz Yisrael to serve as nasi over you? Your

laziness! In that you did not sufficiently attend the two giants, Shemaya and Avtalyon."

In the wake of this reproach, Hillel was asked the following question: If one forgot to bring the slaughtering knife before Shabbat, what should he do so that he may still slaughter his korban pesah on Shabbat as required?

With all eyes turned to him, Hillel responded, perhaps nervously stammering: "That law. . . I heard. . . but. . . I forgot."

The Babylonian version merely hints at a correlation between Hillel's haughty rebuke and his sudden onset of forgetfulness. The Jerusalem version unsympathetically makes this connection outright.

Quickly covering his tracks, Hillel says: "Rely on Israel, for if they are not prophets, they are surely the children of prophets."

Indeed, the next day, on Shabbat, the 14th of Nisan, whoever had a sheep for a korban pesah shoved the knife into its wool and whoever had a goat, wedged the knife between its horns.

As soon as Hillel saw this, he recalled the halacha, and declared: "Indeed, thus I received from Shemaya and Avtalyon."

The sporadic incidence of erev Pessah falling on Shabbat and the different practices this entails means that many of us may not remember the distinct issues that are raised by a Sunday Pessah: When do the firstborns fast? When should we dispose of the hametz? What should we eat on Shabbat?

If we forget a few of the intricate laws, we know that at least we are in esteemed company. May we have an enjoyable and meaningful Pessah.

Not Passed-Over

Maurice Steinhart

Pesach in our family begins very shortly after the last Purim disguise has been put away. Then, cleaning the house from top to bottom begins and usually doesn't finish until 5 minutes before burning the hametz.

The first year in our new house was no exception and we were making the final preparations for the Seder when I went outside for a breath of fresh air. Our neighborhood is largely religious although one of our immediate neighbors was decidedly secular. I had observed him smoking and driving his car on Shabbat.

It occurred to me that here was a golden opportunity to bring someone back to the Jewish fold. I asked my wife if we had enough room and food for some visitors at our Seder. She was most enthusiastic at the idea of inviting our neighbors. Here was our chance to demonstrate the positive side of our religion, and, who knows, maybe we could have a good effect.

After some discussion between us as to how to phrase our invitation so as not to cause embarrassment, I went next door and gingerly rang the doorbell. A voice shouted for me to come in. I did so, running over my prepared speech in the manner of a politician about to persuade the opposition to change their views on a matter important for the good of the country.

I entered the house unprepared for the sight now before me. The dining area had a long set of tables set for about 25 people. The tables were beautifully laid, together with wine, matzot, Seder plates et al.

My neighbor appeared and politely asked me what he could do for me. Stuttering, I managed to say that I had just come over to wish him a happy holiday. He reciprocated my good wishes and then said how glad he was that I had dropped in.

"I've been meaning to mention to you that I hope we won't disturb you tonight but we always have a large crowd for the Seder and it tends to get a little noisy," he said.

I assured him that this would be no problem.

"We also tend to finish rather late so if you don't, we'd be delighted if you would join us for the final Pesach songs!" he added.

I thanked him warmly, excused myself and crept back home.

"Well," said my wife, "How many will be coming?"

"None," I said. "In Jerusalem, this night is truly different from all other nights!"

Pessah Is Upon Us

Ann Kleinberg

AH, the joys of Passover preparation. For anyone celebrating this holiday with some semblance of observance, the arrangements necessary to ready the house often seem like another plague. As I scan my brain for personal recollections, I can almost feel the backaches coming on. Not to speak of the aching feet and steel-wooled hands. Are we even considering a manicure? Forget it.

THE preparations start with shopping. Huge quantities of stuff need to invade your home - and they must stay in the bags, away from the hametz products of your everyday life. In the home I grew up in it started with cleaning products, shelving paper, aluminum foil and potatoes - don't ask me what those were for.

Counters have to be scrubbed, scrubbed again and then totally covered with aluminum foil. Range burners have to be disinfected to the point of nearly burning down the house. And then you have to cover them, too, with tinfoil. Ovens have to be stripped bare, down to the primary coat of enamel. Refrigerators have to be totally emptied. (Ah, so that's where I left the sun-dried tomatoes!) And they too have to be scrubbed down. Best if you just throw it out and buy a new frig.

Every crumb that has ever entered your home must be searched out and zapped. Nuke 'em if you can - just get them out of there. Because then, on the eve of the first night of Pessah when you conduct the bedikat hametz ceremony, there must not be even microscopic evidence left of the nasty leavened products. Except, of course, for the big chunks that you hide and then have to find with a feather and a candle. (I loved that hide-and-seek part).

Every shelf you intend to use during the holiday has to be covered. Wax paper was the covering of choice in my youth. And every shelf that you don't intend to use must be covered, wrapped, hermetically sealed - whatever - just so long as you don't see what's sitting on it.

AND then, after you've shlepped up hundreds of heavy cartons from the basement - all illegibly marked - and unwrapped all the dishes, cutlery, pots, pans, utensils, etc that you will use for exactly one week, you get to put it all away - in the newly covered drawers, cabinets and shelves. I am telling you right now - and anyone who wants to disagree with me - just go ahead, this is the hardest holiday of all and it always falls on a woman's shoulders. Do you think that God decided he would test every modern day woman to see how devoted she is - by making

her shlep, scrub, cover, wrap and unpack?

BUT there's good news. You get to buy new lipstick. That was the treat in my home, new lipstick (I was always considered too young to wear it but Pessah brought an opportunity to enjoy Yardley Happy Pink). You also get new toothpaste (kosher, of course), new toothbrushes and best of all - new clothes. That meant a trip to the Lower East Side in New York to Berent & Smith - every Jewish female's favorite clothing store where you were nobody if you didn't get to pick up a few designer numbers for a great discounted price. And new patent leather shoes. Ooh, I loved these holiday preparations.

AND there were lots of fun food products that I adored (even though we were supposed to be making do with less during these times). There was Horowitz-Margareten chocolate chip cookies, for instance. I think the main ingredient was talcum powder, but I loved them. And there was chocolate-covered matzo and Bartons chocolates and ice cream (that was a really special treat). And almond kisses and macaroons and chocolate covered jellies and chocolate covered orange rinds (Why do people like those?). Now that I think of it, Pessah was a chocoholic's dream of a holiday. And it was fun.

ON one hand I can't stand the thought of so many women/people having to go through the difficult preparations this holiday requires. Isn't the fact that one has to eat matza for an entire week enough? If you're Sephardi at least you get to eat rice and legumes (and I have it on good authority from a "converted" Ashkenazi woman that in general Sephardic food, especially on Pessah, is better).

But perhaps all the fuss and hellish preparations make the holiday feel like a more special time. And maybe all this food one is "forced" to eat is really an enjoyable part of the ritual. And maybe that refrigerator really did need cleaning out. Good luck - I'm thinking of you.

Why Is This Haggada Different?

Shoshana Zucker

It's fascinating to compare haggadot and see how different authors react to the same fundamental text and tradition.

FOR nearly 2,000 years, the text for Pessah Seder, according to Jewish tradition, is the Haggada (literally "telling"), through which we recount the redemption from Egypt and celebrate our own freedom.

Since the traditional commandment for the Seder night is not to read a fixed text, but rather to tell the story in a way that makes it alive and real, it's reasonable to assume that people have always expanded the printed text in many different ways. The last several decades has seen a profusion of new haggadot of every color, shape and size, with a plethora of explanations and readings intended to complement and/or replace sections of the traditional text.

It's fascinating to explore and compare haggadot and see how different authors and editors react to the same fundamental text and tradition, on the basis of their own time and place. Some selections from unusual haggadot follow to get you started. Follow the links to uncover more riches.

** EARLY kibbutzim were among the first communities to make a focused effort to produce new holiday materials that reflected the renewal of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel and the people's return to an agricultural lifestyle.*

At Kibbutz Ein Harod in the 1930s-40s, for example, the children asked:

Why do people all over the world hate Jews?

When will the Jews return to their land?

When will our land become a fertile garden?

When will there be peace and brotherhood world over?

** In 1941, The New Haggadah, edited by Rabbis Mordecai M. Kaplan, Eugene Kohn and Ira Eisenstein, also expanded the concerns of the Seder beyond the narrow limits of the Exodus from Egypt:*

"Now we dedicate ourselves to the struggle for the freedom. Though the sacrifice

be great and the hardships many, we shall not rest until the chains that enslave all men be broken. But the freedom we strive for means more than broken chains. It means liberation from all those enslavements that warp the spirit and blight the mind, that destroy the soul even though they leave the flesh alive. Men can be enslaved to themselves. When they let emotion sway them to their hurt, when they permit harmful habits to tyrannize over them - they are slaves. When laziness or cowardice keeps them from doing what they know to be the right, when ignorance blinds them Men can be enslaved by poverty and inequality. When the fear of need drives them to dishonesty and violence, to defending the guilty and accusing the innocent, they are slaves. When the work men do enriches others, but leaves them in want they are slaves."

** Several recent texts have returned to a literal meaning of slavery. In A Different Night: A Family Participation Haggadah , Rabbi David Hartman of Jerusalem recounts how he once explained to his 4-year-old son about what it means to be a slave:*

"The boy had a birthday and Daddy couldn't come. Then Daddy called and said, 'I'm going to come home.' The boy invited all his friends to come and see his Daddy, because he loved him. He said, 'Abba is coming home' . He watched his Mommy cook kugel, his Daddy's favorite. Just after his friends had come, Abba called to say, 'The boss won't let me come.' The little boy said, 'What do you mean, the boss won't let you come? Tell him your son wants you home. Everybody wants you. We miss you!'"

Suddenly I could not help it, I started crying and my son started crying about the kid in the story. I created this dialogue of the Abba trying to explain to his little son: "I can't make my own decisions. The boss decides my movements for me." We felt the loneliness of the little boy who wanted so much to see his father but who knew that his love is not enough to bring him home. That is what it means to be a slave. You can't control your life.

** Rabbi Arthur Waskow portrays the 24/7 workplaces of the 21st century as a form of slavery:*

Today we face a new kind of Mitzrayim, the Tight and Narrow Place.

Freedom without jobs is a bitter joke - yet many of us find our jobs dissolved, downsized, "disemployed."

Jobs without freedom are slavery - yet many of us are forced to overwork - until our jobs exhaust us.

Things of space seem far more permanent - but as we seek to make such things into our servants,

Their very permanence may turn us into slaves.

When the Israelites went forth from slavery, they sought for rest and self-reflective time: They found Shabbat.

Rather than live under the tyranny of things and overwork, We will in our lives set apart a time for freedom.

** Many haggadot never really answer the four questions. The Feast of Freedom haggadah published by the American Conservative movement considers that a good thing: "Questioning is a sign of freedom, proof that we are free to investigate, to analyze, to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. The simplest questions can have many answers, sometimes complex and contradictory ones. To see everything as bad or good is to be enslaved to simplicity. The Haggada challenges us to ask ourselves whether we are asking the right questions"*

** Not surprisingly, the words of many Zionist leaders can add another level of meaning to our celebration of Pessah. These are quoted in Halaila Hazeh a brand new Hebrew Haggadah www.afikoman.co.il.*

Testifying in 1947, before the U.N. Commission on the Partition of Palestine, David Ben-Gurion said,

"Three hundred years ago a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. This was a great event in the history of England and America. Yet I wonder if there is one Englishman who knows at what time the ship set sail? How many Americans know? Do they know how many people embarked on this voyage? What quality of bread did they eat? Yet more than 3,300 years ago, before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt.

"Every Jew in the world knows on exactly what date the Jews left Egypt and what kind of bread they ate. Even today, Jews worldwide eat matza on the 15th of Nisan. They retell the story of the Exodus and all the troubles Jews have endured since

being exiled. They frame this evening with two statements: This year, slaves. Next year, free men. This year here. Next year in Jerusalem, in Zion, in Eretz Yisrael. That is the nature of the Jews."

Nearly 50 years later, President Ezer Weizman addressed the German parliament:

"I am no longer a wandering Jew traveling the world, immigrating from country to country, exiled from Diaspora to Diaspora. However, every Jew in every generation, is obligated to see himself as if he were there, in the times and places that preceded him. Therefore, I still wander, not on the back roads of the earth but through time, wandering from generation to generation, traveling the paths of memory.

"I was a slave in Egypt. I received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Together with Joshua and Elijah, I crossed the Jordan River. I entered Jerusalem with David, was exiled from it with Zedekiah, and did not forget it by the rivers of Babylon. When the Lord returned the captives of Zion, I dreamed among the builders of its ramparts. I fought the Romans and was banished from Spain I studied Torah in Yemen and lost my family in Kishinev. I was incinerated in Treblinka, rebelled in Warsaw and emigrated to the Land of Israel, the country whence I had been exiled and to which I return. I wander in the footsteps of my ancestors. As I accompany them through their times and places, they are with me here, today.

** Feminist and gender-sensitive texts are flourishing genre of Haggada texts. Many can be found at . The following poem by Chrystal Corces emphasizes the role of women in the redemption process described in the Torah:*

Now the king of Egypt commanded Shifra and Puah

And he said,

"When a boy is born to a Hebrew woman you shall kill it!"

For the women were midwives,
Who helped the mothers of newborn babes.

But Shifra and Puah did not - would not -
Could not do as Pharaoh commanded.
Would not - could not - kill the sons of Israel -
Saved the children of Israel

From death decreed by Pharaoh.

That we may not forget, their names are inscribed in Torah.

And a woman of the tribe of Levi
Had a little son

And she hid him, that the soldiers of Pharaoh
Might not kill him.

Out of reed she wove a little ark
And waterproofed it,
And placed her little boy within
And set it among the bulrushes at the edge of the river Nile.

And Miriam the boy's sister, hid among the rushes
To watch over him.

** In 2001, Rabbi David Wolpe of Sinai Temple in West Los Angeles dealt with a questions that are very controversial in Israel today, such as the literal truth of the Haggada.*

"Are the biblical stories true? Does it matter?"

His comments were quoted in the 2002 New Israel Fund Haggada supplement www.nif.org. "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. We know what it is to be slaves. We know what it is not to have freedom. That is true. Does it matter if that sense comes to us from something that happened 3,000 years ago or 2,000 years ago? Not at all. I have never been in Egypt, but I know what it is to leave. If you sat at the Seder table and you felt like a slave, and you ate the matza and you sang the songs and you were free by the time your Seder was over, then it is true. Then you don't need to be afraid of the findings of the scientists or the archaeologists because in your soul it is true. Pessah has been proved true in virtually every generation of the Jewish people. Don't tell me that Pessah is not true."

Remember to Be Free

Moshe Kohn

The connection between liberty and responsibility 'Remembrance is the key to Redemption,"said Rabbi Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov, the 18th-century founder of Hassidism.

"Judaism and the concept of the messianic Redemption are founded on the idea that God remembers forgotten things and people," said Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Yemay Zikkaron).

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," wrote philosopher George Santayana (Life of Reason).

Most of us - individuals and nations, including the People of Israel - are unredeemed, and are as harnessed to our past and condemned to repeating it again and again, as the threshing ox is harnessed to the grinding-stone it pulls around and around in its rut. Few of us know how to remember or, remembering, know what to do with our memory. For many of us, historical memory has become a burden that we would dump as we charge forward blindly into the future.

There is a beautiful spiritual interpretation concerning the physical features of kosher animals, i. e. chewing the cud and having cloven hooves (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14). A kosher animal must possess both attributes. Neither the camel, which only chews the cud, nor the pig, which only has cloven hooves, is kosher. The explanation is that to be kosher, a creature must have both memory - openness to and the ability to handle, history ("chew the cud") - and hope - openness to and the ability to move firmly into the future ("cloven hooves").

Remembrance is a central - perhaps the central - theme of Pessah. Indeed, it is a central theme of all the holy days ordained by the Torah, and a central theme of the entire Tanakh (Jewish Bible). But the Tanakh doesn't call on us merely to "summon up the remembrance of things past" so that we may wallow in regrets about our 'dear time's waste' (as Shakespeare writes in Sonnet 30), or so that we may sigh about 'the good old days' (a foolish pastime, according to Ecclesiastes 7:10).

The Tanakh mentions "Remembrance" scores of times in its various forms. And it is almost invariably linked to a call to action. Usually it is the basis for a Divine call to do right because of the lesson taught by some event in our history.

The Torah contains many ritual precepts, the purpose of which is to remind us that

God delivered us from slavery in Egypt. Reminded of this, and thus reminded of the experience of enslavement, the Torah commands us here, and in several dozen additional ethical-moral precepts, to conduct ourselves toward our fellow human beings according to high standards we are expected to have learned from that experience.

Let us look at three of the Torah-ordained "Remembrances" that, according to one source, "pious Jews have the custom of reciting each morning after the Shaharit service," or according to another source, that "it is fitting for every person to recite daily." One source lists four "Remembrances"; another adds two, and a third lists 10, including these six.

The first on all three lists is what Jerusalem philosopher Emil Fackenheim calls the People of Israel's "root experience," the week-long celebration of which we begin tomorrow night: "Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exodus 13:3). Remembering this, we are to remember: "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the feeling of the alien, having yourselves been aliens in Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

There is much more: ". . . you shall love [the alien] as yourself, because you were aliens in Egypt. . . You shall not pervert justice. . . You are to have honest scales, honest weights, honest measures [because] I am God, your god Who brought you out of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34 - 36). And, "You are not to deprive aliens and orphans. . . When you reap the harvest in your field and forget a sheaf, do not go back to pick it up. . . When you beat your olive trees, do not strip them afterwards. . . When you gather the grapes from your vineyard, do not go over it again: what is left is to go to the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt: that is why I command you to do this" (Deuteronomy 12:17-21).

Remarkably, it is written, ". . . you shall not despise an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land" (Deuteronomy 23:8). Rashi elaborates (I paraphrase): You are not to despise the Egyptians at all, even though they threw your sons into the river. For when you were in need - when famine hit the land of Canaan and the Patriarch Abraham and Matriarch Sarah sought refuge and sustenance in Egypt, and when famine hit the land again and Jacob and his family came in search of food - they extended their hospitality to you.

These are only a few of several dozen examples of behavior we are commanded to

emulate, as people who experienced slavery and liberation. The Prophets later remind our backsliding ancestors of this many times.

Second on the long list of "Remembrances" is the fourth of the Ten Utterances, the commandment concerning Shabbat observance. The Torah states it in two versions, combining the two central elements that, in the Jewish worldview, distinguish humanity from animals on the one hand and from angels on the other. These are: recognition of a purposeful creation by a purposeful Creator, and recognition that this Creator is also Liberator Who wishes us to be free.

In the first version (Exodus 20:8-11) we are commanded: "Remember to keep Shabbat Day holy. ' We, our slaves, our cattle, and 'the alien living among you' are to rest on Shabbat, because 'in six days God made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and on the seventh day He rested: that is why God blessed Shabbat day and hallowed it.'

Remember: the ordered world, ordered life, are not an accident, nor are they a product of haphazard cosmic circumstances. 'Order is an arrangement that is inherently impossible,' wrote physicist Edward Teller (The Pursuit of Simplicity).

In the second version (Deuteronomy 5:12 - ,)51 we are to "Observe' Shabbat Day by hallowing it, thereby remembering that 'you were a slave in Egypt and God. . . brought you out of there."

The third thing to remember is that liberty entails responsibility. We are told (Deuteronomy 4:9 - ")01 . . be very careful and watch yourself scrupulously so that you do not forget the things you have seen with your own eyes and so they do not pass from your heart so long as you live; and teach them to your children and your children's children: the day you stood before God, your god, at Horeb [Mount Sinai, to receive the Torah]."

It is noteworthy that the first of the Ten Utterances God issued at Horeb was not a commandment at all, but a declaration of His role as Liberator. Both versions begin Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6): "I am God, your god, Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel, who was Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Tel Aviv after Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook, explained the connection between liberty and responsibility with a beautiful metaphor. He saw an intimate connection between Pessah, the festival of "the Spring Month" (as the Torah calls Nisan), and

Shavuot six weeks later, the Time of the Giving of the Torah which is also the First fruits Festival.

At Pessah, he said, we celebrate our flowering as a free, sovereign entity. At Shavuot, we celebrate our "first fruit" as such an entity, the receiving of the Torah. "Flowers," he said, "are wonderful to behold, but they do not nourish or sustain. The Exodus from Egypt was only a means; the purpose, the goal, was the Torah."

Indeed, the Torah reports Moses' demand of Pharaoh in God's name, "Let My people go that they may serve Me." Not "Let My people go that they may have self-determination for its own sake," but so they may serve a sublime purpose.

In our own time, humanity has paid, and is still paying, a heavy price in blood and misery for the freedom-without-responsibility-and-without-purpose of individuals and peoples.

Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenbaum characterized the Exodus as the source of the "vitality not only of Shabbat and the festivals, but of the whole pattern of Jewish life." It "informs the way we go about our daily tasks and dealings as human beings, and our lifeways and hopes as Jews" (Moadim, his collected festival sermons published in Jerusalem in 1980).

Rabbi Nissenbaum, a communal rabbi, a pre-Herzlian Zionist activist, a leader of Herzl's Zionist movement, and then a founder of the Religious Zionist movement, was murdered by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

He noted that the Torah warns against partaking of the sacrifices offered by gentiles and marrying their children, lest that lead Jews to worship alien gods. At the same time, he continued, the Torah commands us to "be holy, because I, God Who took you out of Egypt to be your god. . . am holy" (Exodus 34:15 - ;61 Leviticus 11:44 - .)54

But, he said, that same God commands us not to harass non-Jews living in our land, but to love them. It also commands us to keep honest weights and measures; to help needy aliens living in our midst as well as needy fellow Jews; and in everything to act in a manner that sanctifies God's Name - i. e. reflects well on Him - and not commit acts that profane His Name - i. e. reflect ill on Him.

Hence, "This Exodus, which safeguards the unity of the People of Israel, also most

vigilantly safeguards the honor of its God and the dignity of its people, and also preserves in the heart of the people love for all members of the human race. . . This, indeed, is the very stuff of liberty; this is the cachet of a truly free people. By means of this Exodus concept the People of Israel preserves itself and makes it possible for outsiders to live in its midst. . . "

'It is hard to be a Jew,"we have been told. Since 1948, we've learned it's harder yet to be a sovereign Jew, a Jew running a state that God in His artistry created with such variety. Be that as it may, it is by living in terms of what Rabbi Nissenbaum called "the cachet of a truly free people"that we earn the paean that William Blake sang to us:

Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;
Mock on, Mock on, 'tis all in vain.
You throw the sand against the wind,
And the wind blows it back again.

And every sand becomes a gem
reflected in the beams divine;
Blown back, they blind the mocking Eye,
But still in Israel's path they shine.

The Atoms of Democritus
And Newton's Particles of light
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

Beans of Contention

Gail Lichtman

Legumes separate Ashkenazim from Sephardim during Pessah.

It has been called the "Pessah divide" - differentiating Ashkenazim from Sephardim and creating chaos at the Seder tables of ethnically mixed families. It is the issue of kitniyot and whether or not to eat them during Pessah.

Kitniyot are defined as legumes or pulses. They include rice, beans, corn, millet, soy, peas and buckwheat. In general, it is Sephardi custom to eat them during Pessah and Ashkenazi custom not to.

"The prohibition for Ashkenazim includes legumes and most vegetables that you can make flour out of, with the exception of potatoes," states Jerusalem Rabbi Moshe Dombey, who teaches Halacha at the women's seminary Neveh Yerushalyim.

Halacha prohibits Jews from eating hametz during Pessah. According to Halacha, hametz can occur in five grains - wheat, rye, oats, barley and spelt. Matza, which may contain only something that can become hametz, is made of grain flour and water.

Kitniyot, on the other hand, are not hametz. Maimonides writes that "there is no hametz in kitniyot" and "even if rice were ground into flour, and it were to rise like leavened dough, it is permissible to eat it as it is not hametz." The Talmud does include a minority opinion that hametz can also occur in rice, but the Halacha does not follow this opinion. However, Moroccan Jews do not eat rice on Pessah.

"Not eating kitniyot on Pessah is an Ashkenazi minhag," Dombey explains. "A minhag is a custom. Different customs develop in different communities and are binding on these communities only. Halacha is binding on all Jews."

Until the Moslem conquest of Babylonia in the mid-7th century, there was a central halachic authority for answering questions. "[After that] different communities developed different answers or customs. Kitniyot is a post-Talmudic custom," says Dombey.

According to Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, in his authoritative work *Moadim Behalacha*, the earliest reference in halachic literature prohibiting eating kitniyot

during Pessah is found in the 13th-century book *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* ("A Little Book of Mitzvot") by the Ashkenazi sage Rabbi Yitzhak Ben-Yosef of Corbeil. Rabbi Yitzhak refers to the prohibition, not as a new custom but as one "from the times of previous sages," indicating that the custom was already well-established in his time.

The exact origins of the habit of refraining from eating kitniyot during Pessah among Ashkenazim are unknown and there are at least 11 different explanations. The most widely accepted links the practice to agricultural developments that arose in France and Germany in the 13th century.

In these lands, where there are significant summer rains and winters are not too harsh, it is possible to have both a summer and a winter crop. In the Mediterranean region, where there is no summer rain, this is not feasible. Therefore, in France and Germany, the agricultural cycle moved from a two-year rotation of crops to a three-year rotation - one year a winter crop, the second a summer and the third year fallow.

At about the same time, legumes began to play a more prominent role in the three-year rotation system. Because of their nitrogen-fixing properties, legumes could be used as natural fertilizers for fields depleted of their nitrogen by grains.

"When the wheat was harvested, certain stalks were always left behind," Dombey notes. "Some could take root. If in one growing season the field was used for wheat, and in the next for beans, there was the possibility that grain stalks could be harvested along with beans and mixed in with them. From there, the custom developed. In the Sephardi countries, there was no crop rotation, so there was no reason for this custom to develop."

Other scholars believe that linking the prohibition on kitniyot to crop rotation is a back formation, an attempt to link a custom that arose for entirely different reasons to the prohibition on hametz.

Rabbi David Golinkin, president and rector of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, the Masorti (Conservative) Movement's graduate and rabbinical school in Israel, and current chairman of the Masorti Law Committee in Jerusalem, believes there was an entirely different reason for the origin of the minhag.

"The custom of not eating kitniyot was linked not to Pessah but to all holidays," he notes. "Kitniyot were considered the simple food of the poor, and lentils especially

were the food of mourners. This was true in ancient Rome, and Austria and Germany in the Middle Ages. Therefore, in order to keep the festive nature of the holidays, kitniyot were prohibited."

Eventually, over time, the prohibition for the rest of the holidays fell away and only the one for Pessah remained. Since the custom was now associated with Pessah alone, it was assumed that it must in some way be linked to the prohibition on hametz.

Rabbi Ariel Holland, who teaches Talmud at MaTaN, the Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies in Jerusalem, thinks the custom may have been derived from a mistaken reading of a passage in which Maimonides writes about cooking in fruit juice.

Today, it is clear that Maimonides was talking about the five grains, but some scholars interpreted this to refer to kitniyot. This passage is the basis of the Sephardim eating matza ashira (enriched matza) which Ashkenazim also prohibit.

Because kitniyot are not hametz, Ashkenazim are permitted to eat them under special circumstances - in times of famine or distress - if cooked first in boiling water. On several occasions, including during World War II (Pessah 1942), the Chief Rabbinate of Eretz Yisrael issued a ruling permitting the eating of kitniyot for Ashkenazi Jews in distress.

Also, numerous arguments and divergences of opinions exist concerning the use of oils derived from kitniyot. Many rabbis interpret the ban on kitniyot to be on the legume itself and not on its derivatives, thereby allowing the use of kitniyot-based oils. When the first chief rabbi of Eretz Yisrael, Avraham Yitzhak Kook, was still chief rabbi of Jaffa, he caused a controversy by ruling in favor of using sesame-seed oil for Pessah. Earlier sages had ruled that oil derived from kitniyot could be used for lighting lamps during Pessah.

The prohibition on kitniyot has been controversial almost from its earliest days. Rabbi Samuel of Falaise, one of the first to mention the minhag, called it a "mistaken custom" and Rabbi Yeruham a "foolish custom." Many rabbinic authorities ruled to do away with the minhag, but it continued.

And not only did it continue, but it was extended at various times and communities to include garlic, mustard, sunflower seeds, peanuts, canola oil and more. "An interesting prohibition was the one issued by Hayei Adam [the popular

compendium of Jewish laws by Rabbi Avraham Danzig **8471(- 1)0281** on potatoes which classified them as kitniyot, MaTaN's Rabbi Holland notes. 'His reasoning was that you can make flour from potatoes, so they should be prohibited. Today, no one follows this.'

Twelve years ago, the Masorti Movement in Israel issued a responsum in which it stated that "both Ashkenazim and Sephardim are permitted to eat legumes and rice on Pessah without fear of transgressing any prohibition."

In reaching its ruling, the Masorti Movement cited the objections of various rabbinic authorities to the minhag as "mistaken' or 'foolish,' the fact that it detracts from the holiday joy by limiting the foods permitted, and that it emphasizes the insignificant (legumes) while ignoring the significant (hametz). Also, the Masorti Movement felt the prohibition 'causes unnecessary division between Israel's ethnic groups."

Holland disagrees with this step. "I believe that whether it is a mistaken custom or not is not relevant. We are talking about a minhag of more than 700 years - one that spread all over the Ashkenazi world. The reasons for its origins are no longer relevant. This is now the Halacha and norm for Ashkenazi Jewry."

Dombey concurs with him. "Once a community adopts a custom, for whatever reason, that action is sanctified. There is a spiritual dynamic that gives significance to it. For those communities, the minhag is binding. Customs provide spiritual energy. They are a link between the generations. Until around 60 years ago, people did not move around.

"They lived in the same communities, with the same traditions for hundreds of years. With the upheavals in the Jewish world since World War II, people want to maintain their links with the past. One way is to follow the minhag of our fathers."

As to the claim that the minhag is divisive, Dombey says: "Things are only divisive where people do not respect each other's customs. Sephardim also have different minhagim. The Jewish people over the centuries developed different ways of expressing their Jewish identity. Kitniyot is just one small aspect of this. Different customs are not divisive; they just make Judaism more interesting.

Vegetarian Pessah w for goodness sake!

Richard H. Schwartz

Pessah and vegetarianism: Are the two compatible? After all, what is a Seder without gefilte fish, chicken soup, chopped liver, chicken and other meats? A shankbone is needed to commemorate the paschal sacrifice, and Halacha mandates that Jews eat meat to rejoice on Pessah and other Jewish festivals.

An increasing number of Jews are turning to vegetarianism, finding ways to celebrate meatless Pessahs while being consistent with Jewish teachings.

For many years, Jonathan Wolf, a vegetarian activist, has hosted up to 50 people at his Manhattan apartment for completely vegetarian Seders.

Contrary to a common perception, Jews are not required to eat meat at the Seder or any other time. According to the Talmud (Pessahim 109a), since the destruction of the Temple, Jews need not eat meat to celebrate festivals.

This approach is reinforced in recent scholarly articles by Rabbi Albert Cohen in the *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* and Rabbi J. David Bleich in *Tradition* magazine. Also, the late Shlomo Goren, former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, was a strict vegetarian as is Haifa Chief Rabbi She'ar Yashuv Cohen.

The use of the shankbone originated in the time of the Talmud as a means of commemorating the paschal lamb. However, since talmudic scholar Rabbi Huna states that a beet can be used for this purpose (Pessahim 114b), many vegetarians do so. The important point is that the shankbone is a symbol and no meat need be eaten at the Seder.

Vegetarian values are reinforced by several Pessah themes:

At the Seder, Jews say, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." As on other occasions, Grace After Meals is recited to thank God for providing food for the world's people. This seems inconsistent with the consumption of meat-based diets which involve feeding 70 percent of the grain grown in the US, and two-thirds of the grain that that country exports, to animals destined for slaughter and importing beef from other countries, while 20 million people die of hunger and its effects annually.

Although he is not a vegetarian, Rabbi Jay Marcus of the Young Israel of Staten Island synagogue saw a connection between simpler diets and helping hungry people. He commented on the fact that karpas (eating of greens) comes immediately before yahatz (the breaking of the middle matza for later use as the

afikoman). He concluded that those who live on simpler foods (greens, for example) will more readily divide their possessions and share with others.

Many Jewish vegetarians see connections between the oppression that their ancestors suffered and the plight of billions of people who presently lack sufficient food and other essential resources. Vegetarian diets require far less land, water, gasoline, pesticides, fertilizer, and other resources, and thus enable a more equitable sharing of God's abundant resources, helping reduce global hunger and poverty.

The main Pessah theme is freedom. While relating the story of our ancestors' slavery in Egypt and their redemption through God's power and beneficence, many vegetarians also consider the "slavery" of animals on modern "factory farms."

Contrary to Jewish teachings of tza'ar ba'alei hayim (the Torah mandate prohibiting causing unnecessary pain to living creatures), animals are raised for food today under cruel conditions in crowded spaces, where they are denied fresh air, sunlight, a chance to exercise, and the fulfillment of their natural instincts.

In this connection, it is significant to consider that Moses was chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egypt because as a shepherd he showed great compassion towards a lamb (Exodus Rabba 2:2).

Many Jewish vegetarians advocate commemorating the redemption of our ancestors from slavery by ending the current slavery to harmful eating habits through the adoption of vegetarian diets.

Pessah is the holiday of springtime, a time of nature's renewal. It also commemorates God's supremacy over the forces of nature. In contrast, modern intensive livestock agriculture and meat-based diets have many negative effects on the environment - air and water pollution, soil erosion and depletion, the destruction of tropical rain forests and other habitats, and contribution to global warming.

Jewish vegetarians view their diet as a way of putting Jewish values into practice. They believe that the Jewish mandate to show compassion to animals, take care of our health, protect the environment, conserve resources, and share with hungry people - and the negative effects of meat-based diets in each of these areas - point to vegetarianism as the ideal diet for Jews (and others).

SOURCES FOR further information on connections between Judaism and vegetarianism include:

The Jewish Vegetarians of North America, 6938 Reliance Road,
Federsburg, Maryland 21632; (410) 754 - **.0555**

The International Jewish Vegetarian Society, 855 Finchley Road, London
NW11, England.

Judaism and Vegetarianism by Richard Schwartz, new revised edition (New
York, Lantern, 2001)

Micah Publications (the source for books on Judaism and vegetarianism and related issues), 255
Humphrey Street, Marblehead, Massachusetts 01945; micah@micahbooks.com
<<mailto:micah@micahbooks.com>> (www.micahbooks.com <<http://www.micahbooks.com/>>). It
has published vegetarian-friendly haggadot, Haggada for the Liberated Lamb and Haggada for
the Vegetarian Family, both by Roberta Kalechofsky, founder and director of Jews for Animal
Rights (JAR) and the Micah publishing house, containing traditional and new material for a
vegetarian Seder, including recipes, songs, notes, readings, and a bibliography; and The Jewish
Vegetarian Year Cookbook by Roberta Kalechofsky and Rosa Rasiel, which includes many
recipes suitable for Pessah. It also has a video cassette describing a vegetarian Seder.

Other books with vegetarian recipes appropriate for Pessah include No Cholesterol Passover
Recipes by Debra Wasserman and Charles Stahler (Vegetarian Resource Group, P. O. Box 1463,
Baltimore, Maryland 21203), and Jewish Vegetarian Cooking (the official cookbook of the
International Jewish Vegetarian Society) by Rose Friedman (Thorsons Publishers)

An Italian Pessah

Ruth E. Gruber

Kashrut meets culinary art.

A recent book provides a fascinating - and mouth-watering - glimpse at how Italian Jews sat down to the seder 100, 200 and even 500 years ago.

Mangiare alla Giudia, (Eating the Jewish Way) by Ariel Toaff, a professor at Bar-Ilan University who is the son of Rome's chief rabbi, is not a cookbook and does not include recipes.

Rather, it details the history and development of Italian Jewish cuisine from the Renaissance to modern times. It vividly shows how kashrut came together with Italian culinary art, and how Jewish ways of eating influenced and were influenced by local tastes.

The book devotes a full chapter to Pessah traditions. Toaff describes how Jewish cooks adapted Italian dishes to Pessah requirements, and also sheds light on the partly hostile and partly symbiotic relations between Italian Jews and Catholics.

Jews have lived in Italy for more than 2,000 years. The community was enriched in the late 15th and 16th centuries by Sephardi refugees from Spain and Portugal, and also over the centuries by Ashkenazi newcomers from Central Europe.

In many places in Italy, Jews were forced to live in ghettos starting in the 16th century, and the Catholic authorities took other steps to separate the two groups. Nonetheless there was a rich, if tense, interplay between Jews and Christians in many places.

Food played a major role in this interplay. The rules of kashrut meant that eating habits were a key factor that set Jews apart from Christians. Food thus was a powerful symbol of Jewish identity, and could be a potent source of fascination for non-Jews.

"The food shops in the ghetto bustled with Christian clients, gluttonous rather than hungry, while outside the Jewish quarters, cooks and bakers did not balk at trying Jewish recipes," Toaff writes.

Hundreds of years ago many foods now firmly identified with Italian cooking -

such as the eggplant - were considered "Jewish" delicacies.

For a Christian, Toaff writes, "eating an artichoke cooked Jewish-style or sampling a piece of matza was tantamount to taking a trip to a foreign land." Indeed, matza, writes Toaff, "was considered, by common consent, the 'Jewish food' par excellence." And matza, he writes, was so popular among Italian Christians that in Rome, Mantua, Reggio Emilia and other cities, Catholic authorities striving to keep Jews and Christians apart frequently banned Jews from selling matza to non-Jews and banned Christians from eating it.

An edict issued in Reggio Emilia in 1701, for example, barred Christians from "receiving and eating the unleavened bread of the Jews." And in 1775, Pope Pius VI stipulated a heavy fine for both Jews who sold or gave matza to Christians and Christians who obtained matza from Jews. Italian Jewish bakers, in fact, prepared various types of matza for Pessah: plain matza for the intermediate days of the holiday, strictly controlled ritual shmura matza for the seders, and, for refined tastes, the so-called "rich" or fancy matza, a sweet delicacy made with white wine, eggs, sugar, anise and goose fat.

According to one account dating from 1683, the matza, and particularly the "rich matza," baked in the Adriatic port of Ancona was so renowned for its quality that wealthy Jews in Venice spared no expense to import it for their seder tables.

Pessah has always involved the creation of distinctive dishes based on the special dietary restrictions of the holiday.

"Given the amount of dietary restrictions and prohibitions that were either permanent or linked to the holiday, cooking and eating well during Pessah were difficult arts," Toaff writes. "They required knowledge and experience and did not allow for improvisation." That said, it should come as no surprise that in Italy, home to one of the world's great cuisines, Jewish cooks over the centuries invented a host of elaborate but ritually correct dishes that even include a type of kosher-for-Pessah pasta.

Called "sfoglietti" or "foglietti," these are noodles made with flour and eggs, but without water, that are quickly dried and baked in a hot oven and then served in soup or with sauce.

Toaff describes dishes still served at Italian seders whose origins date back to the Renaissance or Medieval times.

These are dishes such as "scacchi" - or "checkers," squares of matza soaked in capon broth, browned in goose fat and baked in alternating layers with cooked greens or poultry giblets.

In Venice, the matza squares were not baked, but cooked in a pan on top of the stove, with legumes - peas, fava beans or lentils - which are considered kosher for Pessah in the Italian tradition.

The menu for a seder in the central Italian city of Urbino on April 10, 1892, included, among other things, scacchi and a form of Pessah pasta in broth, boiled meat served with goose salami, salad and desserts made from marzipan, matza meal and quince preserves.

One writer in 1738 described a haroset made of "apples, pears, figs, almonds, hazel nuts and similar things, cooked in wine." But some families used ingredients such as dates, raisins, cinnamon, pine nuts and - particularly in parts of northern Italy - boiled chestnuts.

Pastry chefs and confectioners outdid themselves at Pessah in creating a rich array of unleavened sweets.

Venice was famous for unleavened cakes in the shape of snakes, round sweets made from eggs, sugar and matza meal, unleavened cakes stuffed with marzipan, and flat, doughnut shaped cakes rolled in sugar and cinnamon.

Tuscan Jews ate thick cakes made from matza and egg, and in Ferrara the specialty was matza fritters made with egg, honey, cinnamon, candied citron, pine nuts and raisins.

Jews in Rome, forced to live in a ghetto until 1870, were famous for lemon sorbet, almond cookies and pizzarelle con miele - matza that was soaked, squeezed dry, fried in olive oil until crisp, and served covered with pine nuts, raisins and warmed honey.

Filmmaker and father of the 'Neighborhood Seder'

Ronda Robinson

On a snowy morning in Woodstock, New York, retired filmmaker David Tapper is sitting comfortably inside Storybook, his country Tudor-style house.

Surrounded by family photos and fresh-cut flowers in a vase, he tells a tale. "When I raised my family we always had guests for Pessah," he says. "Many weren't Jewish, and they always loved it."

Tapper, 72, expanded the tradition when he moved to Woodstock and spearheaded the Neighborhood Seder for the entire community. After all, he reasons, the Haggada says, "Let all who are hungry come and eat."

The all-volunteer crew welcomes everyone who shows up. In the legendary hippie haven of Woodstock, that can mean quite a cast of characters.

"The community of people who come together is extremely diverse," Tapper says. Guests range from the rich to the homeless, and from neighborly gentiles to Jews with nowhere else to go for Seder.

"Woodstock is a very unusual town. It's an artistic town. You can be schizoid, clearly out of touch with reality, and get along in Woodstock," he says.

The filmmaker says his fellow creative individuals who helped start the Neighborhood Seder seven years ago used to do a dramatization of Moses crossing the Red Sea. Soon the service became so unbearably long that they asked Rabbi Jonathan Kligler of the Woodstock Jewish Congregation to take over.

As Tapper puts it, "We were inviting people to dinner and then starving them." So now the script lasts an hour or less. The motley and not-so-motley crew of guests enjoys klezmer music, Jewish folk songs, Torah readings, and, of course, lots of food. Their bellies are full, and so is the venue.

The Woodstock Community Center seats 160 persons for "the world's oldest continuous celebration of freedom," and more arrive for take-home portions of vegetarian matza balls, salad, broiled chicken, tsimmes, kugel, and macaroons.

Volunteers hold a matza-ball party the night before, cooking up plenty of food and fellowship among themselves. Many take on the mitzva of roasting chickens at

home to help feed the guests. "The spirit is very sweet," comments Tapper. "The sweetest thing about it is that everybody pitches in."

Tapper also helps out at an area shelter throughout the year. "If I work at the soup kitchen, they'll greet me a month later and say, 'Hi Dave. Great Seder.'"

The Neighborhood Seder illustrates what Tapper likes about Judaism. A religiously eclectic man who was married to a gentile and has an Israeli Arab daughter-in-law, he defines himself as a Buddhist intellectually and a Jew emotionally.

Mystically, he muses over tea and chocolate biscuits, "My Buddhism informs how I hear and receive the Jewish teaching. The wisdom I see in Judaism always has a Buddhist flavor.

"I think the thing Judaism has done better than any religious tradition is sangha, community. Judaism has caring for each other and the world built into its structure, and it makes it a very rich and beautiful place to be."

Tapper grew up Conservative in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn before the area became a Hassidic enclave. He describes himself as a Type-A personality. He elbowed his way into the fledgling TV business by way of the CBS mailroom in Manhattan. He rose to cameraman, and then the US Army put him through motion-picture school on Long Island, New York.

"When people ask, 'What did you do in the service?' I say I was a tailgunner on the subway," Tapper quips.

He launched his career as a freelance writer/director by producing a script by an Israeli, Daniel Bourla. Many years later, with Peabody Awards and Emmy nominations under his belt, Tapper still considers Bourla's work the most brilliant script he ever read. It concerned the last man on Earth, Noah, who created a whole world in his head - much like Tom Hanks in the recent movie Castaway.

Tapper's credits include Circus Town, a prime-time documentary about a circus's winter home in Indiana, and That's the Spirit, a series for a Catholic organization which garnered him an Emmy bid.

In real life, the show-biz hustle and his drivenness made for tense drama. In 1974, Tapper took up meditating to click his high-strung personality down a few channels.

Stretched out casually in blue jeans and black shirt on his living-room couch, Tapper talks about the health benefits of meditating. He reflects, "It seemed to me that if we have a fight-or-flight response, then nature also would have given us the opposite.

"The scientific evidence persuaded me to meditate. After my first meditation I knew it was something bigger, broader, and deeper than relaxation. I went home flying."

He intuitively knew that mysterious seizures he had suffered since the early 1960s would never trouble him again. And they haven't.

A widower, he joined the Zen Mountain Monastery after moving to Woodstock in 1992. Two years ago, he underwent a ceremony called jukai to become a committed Buddhist.

The more-serene Tapper has still found it hard to stop working in his retirement. He started a company two years ago selling SeiFus, adjustable cushions he developed to allow meditators to sit either cross-legged or in a kneeling position. He recently gave the business to the Zen Mountain Monastery.

Tapper and his girlfriend traveled to Israel in February to study Jewish "koans" with Bernie Glassman, the first abbot of the Zen community of New York. Koans are questions which cannot be answered with logic. According to Tapper, they go deeper, and they don't measure one's brain power.

His previous trips to Israel included a visit with his daughter, Gwendolyn, when she lived on a kibbutz, and a wedding celebration for his son, Seth, in Galilee.

Seth and his Israeli Arab wife, whom he met at Harvard University, held their first wedding ceremony at the boat basin of Central Park in New York, then traveled to her home village of Arrabe in Lower Galilee for a second one.

Tapper says his son "did all the traditional things. I was so proud of him. He really got into the Arab customs." But not Jewish customs.

What's left for this peripatetic grandfather of one Jewish-Arab-Chinese-Scotch/Irish little girl? Tapper confides that a great yearning at this stage of life is to learn Hebrew.

Ritual and Reminiscence

Moshe Kohn

From the first Pessah, celebrated on the eve of the Exodus, Seders have given us food for thought.

The Pessah Seder is really meant to be a little pageant reenacting our liberation from enslavement some 33 centuries ago and not just another sumptuous banquet.

Similarly, the Haggada is really meant to be only an outline and a basis for the telling and retelling of the story of our liberation. It is not intended as a final, sealed, canonized script of narration and songs to be repeated by rote year after year, to which we are forbidden to add and from which we are forbidden to deviate in any way.

On the contrary: the Haggada itself tells us early on, in the passage read immediately after the Four Questions, that the more you talk about the Exodus, the more praiseworthy you are. Some commentators understand this passage, which is somewhat ambiguous in the original Hebrew, to read: The more you dwell on the story of our liberation, the more the story is enhanced. Either way, we enliven the Seder by each of us adding liberation tales of our own to the national liberation narrative, and by each of us adding thoughts of our own to the thoughts of the generations from which we sprang.

The Talmudic sages tell us to celebrate Pessah as though the Exodus is an experience that each and every one of us has personally undergone, and not just as something that happened to our ancestors a long time ago. Here is how they put it (I paraphrase from Pessahim 116b, Mishna 10:5): In every generation, each person is obligated to see himself as having personally been liberated from enslavement and having left Egypt in the Exodus led by Moses. They base this injunction on the passage in the Torah (Exodus 13:8): "You shall tell your son on that day [the Exodus day]: 'This [celebration and all these rites] is because of what God did for me when I went out of Egypt.' It does not say ". . . did for them when they went. . . ."

The sages add: For God redeemed not only our ancestors; he redeemed us as well along with them. For the Torah tells us "When, in time to come, your son should ask you: 'What is the meaning of all these [laws] that God, our god, commanded you?' you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves in Egypt, and God. . . took us out

of there so that He might take us and give us the land He pledged to our fathers.‘”

We will read this passage in the Haggada just before raising the second of the four Seder cups of wine to chant the passages of praise and thanksgiving, which we introduce with the words: "Let us then acclaim [God] with a new song.‘ Note: ‘a new song.‘ Over the ages, across the map of Jewish dispersion, we have added a great variety of ‘new songs" to our Pessah liberation celebrations.

The first Pessah was the family Pessah we marked just before leaving Egypt. We took "one lamb to a family, one lamb to a household,‘ and slaughtered the paschal offering. Only circumcized males were permitted to partake of the paschal sacrifice. Then, on our way out, we ‘baked unleavened cakes of the dough [we] took along out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since [we] had been driven out of Egypt and could not tarry" (Exodus 12:34ff).

The first recorded Pessah observance after the Exodus took place in the Sinai wilderness, when the Mishkan had been built. This time the problem arose of men who were ritually unclean and therefore could not offer the sacrifice on time. So God instructed Moses to institute the offering of the paschal sacrifice on what the Jewish calendar lists as Pessah Sheni (Second Pessah) on 14 Iyar at twilight, exactly one month after the regular date, for people ritually impure on 14 Nisan and those far from home that day. This applies also to the aliens living in our midst wishing to offer a paschal sacrifice to God (Numbers 9:1ff).

The next recorded observance took place 39 years later, after the people, led by Joshua, crossed the Jordan River westward into Cana‘an near Jericho, and all the males born after the Exodus were circumcized at Gilgal. When they recovered, "the Children of Israel offered the paschal sacrifice on the 14th day of [Nissan] toward evening in the Plain of Jericho. They ate of the produce of the country the day after the paschal offering, unleavened bread and parched grain. . . And the manna ceased the next day, after they had eaten of the produce of the land. . . (Joshua 5:9)

We then read about Pessah in Solomon’s time, about which we are told tersely: "Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to God on God’s altar which he had built. . . as the duty of each day required according to Moses’s commandment for the Sabbaths, the New Moon days, and the three annual festivals - the Matzot Festival, Shavuot and Succot (II Chronicles 8:12).

Next we read how King Hezekiah summoned all the tribes to Jerusalem, to a gala

Pessah celebration (II Chronicles 30:1). This one took place on Pessah Sheni, on the 14th of Iyar. This was because Hezekiah had just completed the reconsecration of the Temple, the priests and the Levites to the worship of God after succeeding his deceased father, Ahaz, who had polluted the land by instituting everywhere the idolatrous worship of "the gods of Damascus." By 14 Nissan, "the priests had not yet sanctified themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem."

Now, in response to Hezekiah's call, "A multitude of people assembled in Jerusalem to observe the Matzot Festival. . . And God heard Hezekiah and healed the people. And the Children of Israel who were in Jerusalem kept the Matzot Festival seven days with much rejoicing. . . So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem."

Before and after all this, Hezekiah and the people busied themselves destroying all the idolatrous sites and objects throughout the land.

We then read of the Pessah celebration proclaimed by another reformist ruler, Hezekiah's great-grandson Josiah. Hezekiah had been succeeded by his son, Menashe, who not only restored the idolatry his father had rooted out, but also "put so many innocent persons to death that he filled Jerusalem [with blood] from end to end" (II Kings 21:16). Menashe was succeeded by his son Amon, also an idol-worshipper, whose courtiers assassinated him.

Amon was succeeded by Josiah, who "did what was pleasing in the eyes of God (II Kings 22:2). After renovating and reconsecrating the Temple and, like his great-grandfather, destroying all idolatrous objects and sites, he 'commanded all the people: 'Offer the paschal sacrifice to God, your god, as prescribed in this Scroll of the Covenant [which had been found secreted away in the Temple]. ' Now the paschal offering had not been offered in this manner since the times of the Judges who ruled Israel or during the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. . . And the Children of Israel who were present made the Pessah. . . and the Matzot Festival for seven days. No Pessah like it had been celebrated since the days of Prophet Samuel. And none of the kings of Israel had made a Pessah like the one Josiah. . . made. . . (II Kings; II Chronicles 35:1).

Another religious revival and Pessah celebration in Jerusalem took place in the time of the Return to Zion, with the encouragement of the ruler of the Persian (formerly Babylonian) Empire, Darius. "The returned exiles celebrated Pessah on the 14th day of the first month [Nissan]. . . They joyfully celebrated the Matzot

Festival for seven days. . . Ezra 91:6).

A later literary reference to a particular Pessah celebration tells us of the "Pessah of the Crushing." This happened in the late Second Temple days. The Temple Court - the Azara - normally could contain a great throng at the time of the offering of the paschal sacrifice without anyone getting crushed. But that Pessah, an old man was crushed in the press of people. At about the same time, King Agrippa wanted to take a count of the people, and he instructed the high priest to put aside a kidney from every paschal sacrifice. When they took the count, they found they had 'sixty-myrriad pairs of kidneys, twice the number of Israelites who left Egypt in the Exodus. And there was not a single paschal sacrifice that did not feed more than 10 persons. That Pessah was called the 'Crowded Pessah' (Pessahim 64b; Midrash Eicha Rabba 1:2. See also Josephus's The Jewish Wars VI:9: iii, for a similar census conducted by the Romans).

Finally, a true story about observing the mitzva of the four cups at the seder with milk.

A man asked Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik of Brisk (1820 -1892) great-grandfather of the late Yeshiva University teacher who was named after him, whether this was permitted. The rabbi asked the man: "Why, are you ill?"

"No," the man replied, "I'm quite fit, thank God. But the price of wine this year is too much for my pocket."

The rabbi asked his wife to give the man the tidy sum of 25 rubles so that he could have the proper four cups. "No, no, rabbi," the man said. "I didn't come to you for a handout, but to ask a question of law."

The rabbi pressed the man: "I'm not giving you the money. It's only a loan until God helps you to get back on your feet." The man took the money and left. The rabbi's wife asked her husband: "Twenty-five rubles?! Wine for four cups doesn't cost more than two or three rubles."

Rabbi Joseph Ber replied: "Think about it: he asked whether he could observe the mitzva by drinking milk. Right? If he were preparing a seder in proper style, with fish and meat, he would be forbidden to drink milk at the seder table. From his question I understood that he couldn't afford to buy any of the items that properly belong on the seder table.

Fast-food at the Seder?

Harvey Belovski

And now the fifth question - when do we eat? This question, a joke of course, should actually help us to focus on a vital Passover theme: the extent of our ability to delay gratification for a higher purpose.

More than just a commemoration, every festival is intended to help us recapture a major event of Jewish history and internalise its message. As the Exodus was the moment of the founding of the Jewish people, Passover is an opportunity to consider what it means to be a member of the Jewish nation. What character traits are we to inculcate and which areas of personal growth are we to spotlight at this time of year? What will we have gained from all the intense preparations, from the Seders, the vast expense and effort? If all we will be left with after Passover is exhaustion and a few extra pounds to shed, will it be worthwhile?

The ability to delay gratification is a key determinant of adult human behaviour; it distinguishes us from everything else in the world. Animals are driven by irrepressible needs; hunger, fear, the urge to reproduce. Once a need arises, its fulfilment becomes paramount; all energies are channelled into its realisation. Babies are scarcely different; when little Jimmy is hungry, tired, cold or has a dirty diaper, nothing will divert him from screaming until he gets what he wants.

In contrast, adults have a sense of higher meaning and value, which can often be strong enough to enable us to delay realising our immediate personal needs in lieu of achieving something of greater overall significance. There are dozens of examples of this phenomenon, ranging from the simple decision not to eat another piece of chocolate, to complex life-choices in which personal needs are completely marginalised in favour of national or even world improvement. This is, of course, a function of the struggle between the physical and spiritual drives; while Judaism prioritises the harmonisation of the two, there are occasions in life when the higher, spiritual yearnings must overcome and sublimate the lower, physical needs. The extent to which we are capable of doing this determines just how successful we really are as human beings.

As popular psychologist M. Scott Peck puts it. 'Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with.' (The Road Less Traveled) I think that Jewish sources would view it quite differently. While initially there may be a sense that one is scheduling the pain before the pleasure,

the capacity to do so is one of the most profound human achievements, one that transforms the 'pain' into purpose and possibly a higher form of pleasure itself.

While central to meaningful human experience, the ability to delay gratification doesn't come easily. We don't naturally graduate from childhood into mature and disciplined altruists. What we gain at adulthood is the capacity to control ourselves, but development in this area is a lifetime's work. One need look only at advertising and the media to see that immediate gratification with no consideration for the consequences is very much in vogue. High-risk sports, sexual exploration and many other activities that focus solely on immediate gratification are as popular as ever. The descent into instant fun and the consequential move away from the development of quintessential human sensitivities is all too easy. And we have all experienced people consumed with physical needs of one sort or another - they are unstoppable until they have what they want. In position as major leaders, such people can quite literally destroy the world; they nearly have on a number of occasions.

The Jewish people are expected to be the world experts in the field of delaying gratification, when necessary, to achieve higher goals. All humanity was originally destined to be proficient in this area, as evidenced by the prohibition of eating from the fruit in the Garden of Eden. Seen through Kabbalistic eyes, G-d did not demand that Adam and Eve forever deny themselves the fruit, only that they wait to eat it until after the first Sabbath. Had they demonstrated their ability to postpone their desire to eat it in order to fulfil G-d's will, they could have enjoyed the fruit legitimately. Instead, they were expelled from the Garden, forever changing the course of history.

As the nation of the Torah, the Jewish people are charged with the task of restoring, by example, this capacity to the whole of humanity. This began at the Exodus, the birth of our people. Our ancestors clearly demonstrated the capacity to wait for redemption, to tolerate the backbreaking Egyptian slavery, to put their dearest yearnings for salvation on hold until the right moment. Some members of the tribe of Ephraim had not been able to wait and had escaped before the appointed time; the Talmud records that they sadly died in the desert. Even when the time for deliverance seemed to be at hand, the Israelites' ability to wait enslaved until G-d was ready for them was tested to the limits. No sooner had Moshe introduced himself to Pharaoh than the slavery deepened; the Jews were no longer given straw, yet were expected to maintain the same level of brick production. Just when they thought the end of the slavery was in sight, they discovered that they had to wait a little longer. When the Exodus finally occurred,

the nascent Jewish people were already well-trained in the art of waiting.

Each Passover, and especially on Seder night, we are afforded a unique opportunity to relive those crucial final moments in Egypt. The lessons learned there were so central to our national and personal mission that we must revisit them every year to ensure that we are attuned to our key Jewish responsibilities.

This message is most obviously expressed in the structure of the Seder. We begin the evening in much the same way that we would commence any Sabbath or Yom Tov. Kiddush is followed by hand-washing, in preparation for the meal.

But instead of eating the matzah and commencing the delicious Yom Tov feast, there is disappointment in store. Each person gets a small piece of vegetable dipped in salt-water (known as Karpas), then the matzah is broken, as if to eat it, but then hidden away and the plate containing the Seder foods is removed from the table, to be replaced with story books! We are tempted into thinking that the meal is coming (the fifth question - when do we eat?); we are taken to the point when the food is almost in our mouths and then told that we will have to read the story of our ancestors' miraculous escape from Egypt before we can actually have the meal. The Karpas makes matters worse, for it is a salty hors d'oeuvres; not only do we prepare for the meal and then take the food away before eating it, but we make the participants extra-hungry before doing so!

This is all part of a genius plan to ensure that the annual re-enactment of our redemption inculcates within us the same sense of priorities as the original Exodus experience. We have waited all day to start the Seder, we are hungry, delicious food odours are wafting from the kitchen and all the 'let's eat now' switches have been thrown (Kiddush, hand-washing, hors d'oeuvres, breaking matzah). Pavlov would have been proud. Yet something much more important than food must happen first -recounting the story of the Exodus. Understanding our roots, the very fibre of our national being, the unfolding Divine plan for Mankind, G-d's miraculous intervention in human history and the very concept of purposeful freedom - all of these must be achieved before we may begin our meal.

On Seder night, we sacrifice our need for immediate gratification (having rather cruelly stimulated it) to the noblest ideal; transmitting the wonders of Jewish history and our unique relationship with G-d to the next generation. This should inform our sense of priority in all our endeavours, throughout the year. We have seen that developing the capacity to delay gratification is central to the Jewish understanding of real achievement, defines us as a nation and contributes to

rectifying the primeval sin of the Garden of Eden. If we finish this Passover having learned, even a little, to delay our immediate needs long enough to pursue some of the majestic goals of Judaism, then it will all have been worthwhile.

Have a kosher, joyful Yom Tov and meaningful and uplifting Seders.

Yearnings for Freedoms

Racelle R. Weiman

I call for a Magna Charta Libertatis concerning the Rights of the Child.

Janusz Korczak

Pesach has several names, but is best known as /Hag HaHerut/, the Festival of Freedom, the great unifying theme of the Passover season and central to the Jewish worldview. To authentically teach that freedoms are valued in a post-Holocaust world, people realized that it was imperative to create universal standards and advocate for the protection of freedom for all.

It is significant that the most important modern document declaring "respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people without distinction to race, sex, language, or religion" was drafted by a Jew. *René Cassin*, a French jurist, scholar and diplomat, served alongside Eleanor Roosevelt at the United Nations. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968 for his lifelong contributions, including the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This Declaration, presented at the UN General Assembly, became the source of future human rights legislation.

Henryk Goldszmit, a.k.a. *Janusz Korczak*, a pediatrician, author, and educator, inspired an important document that protects the freedoms of the most vulnerable and powerless citizens--the children. The 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* was inspired by his list of children's rights, which included: "a right to respect . . . a right to love . . . a right to live in the present . . ." and many more that view a child as a person with inalienable rights and freedoms. In /How to Love a Child/, he wrote: "Children are individuals who are people--not people-to-be, not people of tomorrow, but people now, right now, today."

To commemorate the centennial year of his birth, UNESCO designated its "year" that covered 1978-1979 as the "Year of the Child" in his name. In 2000, the American Academy of Pediatrics bestowed him with honorary membership. Because Nobel Prizes are awarded only to the living, Henryk Goldszmit did not receive this noted honor for his prominent role in establishing new standards of justice and respect for all children. Goldszmit died as he lived, committed to the children that he rescued from the streets of Warsaw, Poland. He was deported with 200 children from the orphanage that he miraculously kept running inside the Warsaw Ghetto. He and his "children" perished in the Treblinka death camp on

August 6, 1942, among the very first to be killed there.

The public knows of him mostly because of his tragic death and under his pseudonym, unaware of his major accomplishments. Though all the medical papers that he authored were published under his given name, Henryk Goldszmit, most of his work on educational philosophy and children's literature was written using his pen name, Janusz Korczak, in order to reach a larger audience in 1920s anti-Semitic Poland. He also broadcast a widely popular radio show, calling himself simply "The Old Doctor." Korczak taught what today we refer to as "moral education." He also founded the first national children's newspaper, established progressive orphanages for both Polish and Jewish populations, worked to reform the rights of children in the juvenile courts and wrote books, plays, and novels about and for children.

A teen in the Warsaw Ghetto remembers that Korczak asked him what profession he wanted to pursue "when the war is all over." Korczak told the youth that there were three noble professions that helped humanity: medicine, adjudicating and education. He explained that a doctor cares for the body, a judge cares for the conscience, and a teacher cares for the mind. "If you want to reform the world, first you must reform education," Korczak wrote.

In her 1988 biography on Korczak, *The King of the Children*, Betty Jean Lifton used these words to describe Korczak's philosophy: "Within each child there burned a moral spark that could vanquish the darkness at the core of human nature." Korczak wrote that life "threw me these children like sea-shells. I didn't ask where they came from or where they were going. I only wanted to be good to them so that their hatred toward man wouldn't harden into stone."

The Jewish orphanage in which he lived with the children was an oasis of love and respect. Even in the Warsaw Ghetto, Korczak, teachers and children continued to invite guests to share their holidays. The last holiday they celebrated was the Passover seder in April 1942, which was recorded in the Ghetto newspaper. While the responses that Korczak gave to the child who asked The Four Questions were not recorded, they might have echoed these last lines from his diary, written one day before the orphanage's children were deported, with Korczak leading the way to the railroad cars:

"I can give you but one thing only--A longing for a better life; a life of truth and justice. Even though it may not exist now, it may come tomorrow. Perhaps this longing will lead you to God, Homeland,

and Love. Farewell. Do not forget."
August 5, 1942, Janusz Korczak, /Ghetto Diary/

Of the 17,000 stones that compose the memorial at Treblinka, only one carries an individual's name: *JANUSZ KORCZAK (HENRYK GOLDSZMIT) AND THE CHILDREN.*