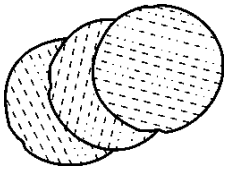


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# How Long Can We Wait?

It is so hard to wait.

Watching a loved one in pain or in crisis, waiting desperately for a turn for the better.

When you've done everything you could do, prayed every prayer, cried every tear.

When there's nothing to do but wait.

Like Miriam, waiting on her brother Moses. She had just seen the casket holding her precious baby brother float away down the Nile. And she stood waiting. *"His sister stood from afar, to know what would happen with him."*

The birth of Moses, in large

part, was due to Miriam. The Midrash relates that her parents, Amram and Yocheved, had separated. What use was there to bring more children into the world when the Egyptian enslavement was so bitter, when all newborn baby boys had been condemned to death by being cast into the Nile? And what Amram did, the rest of the Jewish people followed.

Miriam, only 5 years old, admonished her father. "Your decree is worse than Pharaoh's! He decreed only on the boys, but your decree is on the girls as well!" She promised her parents that if they remarried, they would be blessed with a child who

would redeem the people of Israel.

When Yocheved placed baby Moses in the river to escape Pharaoh's cruel decree, Amram tapped Miriam on the head, saying, "What's with your prophecy now, Miriam?"

And Miriam stood behind the reeds, waiting. Not in horror, not in despair, but in expectation. What would be of her prophecy?

And because she was there waiting, she witnessed Pharaoh's daughter, Batya, lift Moses out of the water. She saw Moses refuse to suckle from the Egyptian nursemaids. And because she was right there, waiting, she was able to offer Batya the services of a Jewish nursemaid - her own mother, Yocheved.

Was it a miracle that baby Moses was saved to grow up to redeem the Jewish people from Egypt? It was a miracle all right, but a very natural sort of miracle. Batya spotted the baby and lifted him out, Miriam noticing and calling her mother - nothing supernatural about any of these events. But none of this would have happened without Miriam being on the spot, waiting.



We Jews know what it means to wait; we've been doing that for a long time. And we haven't been waiting idly. We've done a lot of good work, too - prayers, Torah study, good deeds, acts of kindness. But we've been waiting for so long, and it's hard to wait anymore. It's natural for bitterness to set in. This exile has been long and brutal. So much suffering and pain.





But Miriam shows us how to wait. With bitterness over our suffering but not with despair. Nobody felt the exile more deeply than Miriam. It is reflected in her name, from the Hebrew root of *mar*, bitter. Yet despite her pain,



Miriam crafted tambourines in Egypt. She had no doubt that her prophecy would be fulfilled, their suffering would end, and they would dance one day. After their liberation, she carried those tambourines into the desert, and led the Jewish women in song and dance.

As we wait for our univer-

sal and personal redemption - in whatever area it may be - we derive strength from Miriam. Just as she stood by her brother's side, she stands by our side as well, instilling us with courage and hope. And with her power, we will merit to see the Redemption, and we will be the first to celebrate.



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# WHY IS MATZAH THE FOOD OF FAITH?



A Chassid of the TzemaCh Tzedek, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866), once lamented to him that he struggled with doubts in his faith.

“So what?” asked the Rebbe. “Why does it bother you?”

“But Rebbe, I am a Jew!”

## Why Do We Grapple With Faith?

It’s not particularly surprising that we grapple so much with faith, given that G-d created the world with the express purpose of hiding Himself from us. The Hebrew word for “world,” *olam*, derives from the word *helem*, “concealment.” And this concealment is not passive. The word *olam* is also related to *ilem*, which means “youthful, vigorous.” The world actively conceals G-d by creating an illusion that it exists independently of Him.

The fact that these questions bother us so deeply and we are motivated to dissect them endlessly reflects on how critical they are to us; how deeply we desire to believe in and connect with G-d, and how troubled we are by the fact that our physical and intellectual senses cannot grasp Him.

## What Is The Commandment ‘To Know G-d?’

In the town of Berditchev lived a self-proclaimed atheist. Once, the great Chassidic master Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev heard him pontificate at length about why he doesn’t believe in G-d. Reb Levi Yitzchak turned to him and said, “You know, the G-d you don’t believe in, I don’t believe in either.”

The first mitzvah in Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah – his monumental compendium of all the mitzvot in the

Torah – is “to know that there is a First Being, Who caused the existence of all beings.” It’s not enough simply to declare your faith in G-d. It is a positive mitzvah to *know* G-d; to engage with your mind and intellect to bring this faith into a level of knowledge and comprehension. By studying and meditating upon the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut, the mystical aspects of Torah, we deepen our awareness of G-d and develop love and awe of Him.

The teachings of Chassidut are predicated on a simple principle: *ElokuT b’pshitut, olamot b’hitchadshut*. In other words, usually, the starting point of intellectual inquiry is that the world we experience with our physical senses is real, and the existence of G-d is up for debate. Prove it to me! In Chassidic teachings, the basic premise is reversed. It is self-evident that G-d is real and the Torah is real. It’s the existence of the world that’s a novelty.

Moreover, belief in G-d is the starting point, since as Jews we are *maaminim bnei maaminim*, believers and the descendants of believers. As a result, we don’t spend a whole lot of time pondering the existence of G-d, or coming up with arguments and proofs for why to believe in Him. What concerns us a great deal is why does the world exist? What are we here for?

This perspective is not pure idealism; i.e., that only the spirit exists and matter is an illusion. All of Creation – from the most transcendent spiritual lights to the coarsest physical material – was brought into being by G-d, and that alone gives it existence and reality. The world exists because G-d desires that there be a world.

## G-d Is Unknowable

An agnostic was once asked whether he believed in G-d, and his response was: “No, I believe in something much greater!”

That agnostic may have accidentally stumbled on a profound truth. Whatever understanding of G-d we have, it is by definition limit-

ed. Try to imagine whatever might be “greater than G-d.” Whatever conception you have of G-d, there is a level that’s beyond it, and when you’ve grown and learned and grasped that level of G-d, there’s a still greater level beyond that.

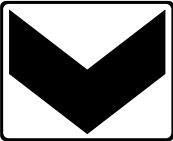
Jewish philosophy sums it up as *tachlis hayedia shelo neida* – the ultimate knowledge of G-d is to know that He’s unknowable. And despite being unknowable, G-d still wants us to use the tools of our intellect to grasp Him with the best of our ability.

Questioning and grappling with challenges of faith is part of our heritage. Moses himself challenged G-d when he witnessed the suffering of his people in Egypt: “Why have you done evil for this nation?” There is questioning, and then there is doubt. They are fundamentally different.

## Questions Are Encouraged

Jews by nature are a questioning lot. We aren’t particularly known for our credulity or submissiveness. Moses had his hands full in the desert dealing with the constant combativeness of the Israelites. We are blessed with the ability to think, to engage, to question, to want to know. And the Torah encourages us to cultivate and nurture that native curiosity.

One of the first commandments given to us as a people is to tell our children the story of the Exodus, as prompted by their questions: “When your child will ask you ... .” During the Passover seder, we



Adapted from the works of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, The Lubavitcher Rebbe by Chaya Shuchat



perform unusual rituals just to spark the curiosity of our children; to get them to ask.

Questioning and grappling with challenges of faith is part of our heritage. Moses himself challenged G-d when he witnessed the suffering of his people in Egypt: “Why have you done evil for this nation?”

There is questioning, and then there is doubt. They are fundamentally different. Questioning is bracing and invigorating; it opens our mind to learn and discover more. But doubt? It drains the life right out of us, leaving us limp and deflated.

## Where Does Doubt Come From?

The Hebrew word for “doubt,” *safek*, has the same numerical value as *Amalek* – the nation that ambushed the Jews as they left Egypt, an act for which we have never forgiven them to this day: “Remember what Amalek did to you on your way leaving Egypt ... you must obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. You must not forget.”

When the Jews left Egypt, they were on a high. G-d had performed miracles for them and liberated them from Egypt with a mighty outstretched hand. He split the sea for them, rained on them manna from heaven and spread His clouds of glory over them. Nevertheless, as soon as they faced a bit of discomfort, they questioned, “Is G-d with us or not?” Immediately after this, Amalek pounced.

Amalek, the voice of doubt, assails us when we’re “on the way out of Egypt,” trying to throw off the shackles of enslavement and self-limiting beliefs. Its purpose is

to find our weak spots and dampen our enthusiasm. Amalek tells us to play it cool, not to get carried away. It’s that voice whispering, “Who do you think you are, anyway?”

The answer to Amalek is to recognize that doubt serves no useful purpose. Questions can be answered through further study, thought and analysis. Doubt functions only to weaken us, to cool us off, to leave us vulnerable and defenseless. When assailed by doubt, the Torah’s response is to shut it down. Refuse to engage with it; choose not to entertain the voice of cynicism. An honest question deserves an answer; doubt merits no response. The only antidote to Amalek is our rock-solid belief and commitment to truth and goodness beyond all reason.

## How Can We Feed Our Faith?

So faith is not passive; it must be fed and nurtured. Since the world actively conceals G-d, we must actively work to uncover Him. We may be tempted to sit around and wait for G-d to make the first move; indeed, we constantly pray to G-d asking him to come out of hiding. Until that happens, though, we need to use our full arsenal of intellectual and emotional tools to grasp G-d.

Because faith is transcendent, it takes effort to integrate it within ourselves. Otherwise, we are like the proverbial thief who prays to G-d for success before breaking into a house. Obviously, the thief believes in G-d, but it hasn’t penetrated his consciousness enough to affect his behavior, to make him act as G-d wants him to.

•Continued on page 12



# SELLING YOUR CHAMETZ



We include, as a public service, a legal form for the Sale of Chametz. Besides not eating Chametz (leavened foods such as bread, cakes, cookies, pasta, beer, whiskey, etc.) on Pesach, we are also forbidden to possess Chametz. In order to avoid this prohibition we lock up any Chametz (this includes "Chametzdik" utensils) and empower a rabbi (through power of attorney) to sell it to a non-Jew before Pesach. This is a legal binding sale that is recognized by the courts. After Pesach the rabbi then buys the Chametz back from the non-Jew and we are thus able to use it again. Fill out the form below, sign it and mail it to us and we will take care of the Sale of Chametz for you.

KNOW YE that I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit Rabbi Nechemia Vogel to act in my place and stead, and in my behalf to sell all Chametz possessed by me (knowingly or unknowingly) as defined by the Torah and Rabbinic Law (e.g., Chametz, possible Chametz, and all kinds of Chametz mixtures.) Also Chametz that tends to harden and to adhere to inside surfaces of pans, pots or cooking and usable utensils. And to lease all places wherein the Chametz owned by me may be found, especially in the premises located at:

and elsewhere. Rabbi Nechemia Vogel has the full right to sell and to lease by transactions as he deems fit and proper and for such time which he believes necessary in accordance with all detailed terms and detailed forms as explained in the general authorization contract which have been given this year to Rabbi Nechemia Vogel full power and authority to appoint a substitute in his stead with full power to sell and to lease as provided therein. The above given power is in conformity with all Torah, Rabbinical regulations and laws, and also in accordance with laws of the State of New York and of the United States. And to this I hereby affix my signature on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year of 5783/2023.

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To avoid having Chametz in your possession during Passover, please fill out the form and mail it to: CHABAD, 1037 Winton Rd. S., Rochester, N.Y. 14618, Attn:Rabbi Nechemia Vogel, Tel. (585) 271-0330 - Fax: (585) 271-0213 and we will take care of it as a public service. Mail early, so that it reaches us NO LATER than Tuesday, April 4. Responsibility cannot be accepted for forms returned later.



# Singing With G-d

by Aharon Loschak

A friend of mine told me the following story:

“I was visiting a synagogue in New Jersey, and as I was about to leave, I noticed a wallet on one of the tables, clearly left behind. I picked it up, looked through it, and didn’t notice any clear identifiers. As I had a number of matters to tend to in the synagogue, I figured I would take care of those first and on my way out, ask the rabbi if he knew who the wallet belonged to.

“But then I thought to myself, “What if the owner already realized his wallet is missing? He must be going crazy! Why should I make him wait?”

“So I approached the rabbi, who immediately identified the wallet’s owner. When the owner answered his phone, he was greatly relieved, and to my joy, hadn’t even noticed yet that it was misplaced.

“Minutes after I left the synagogue, I received a call from a store in nearby Monsey, N.Y. Apparently, my

wife had been shopping there and had left her purse in a shopping cart. My number was inside, so the owner contacted me right away. When I called my wife to let her know, she exclaimed, ‘Wow, I didn’t even realize I left my purse there!’”

There’s an empowering lesson here: G-d behaves with you as you behave with Him and others.

The Torah recalls one of the most spectacular miracles - the splitting of the sea. As the awestruck Israelites marveled at their fortune, they burst into song:

*Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to G-d, and they spoke, saying, “I will sing to G-d.”*

While this translation isn’t inaccurate, the original Hebrew can also be rendered as, “Then Moses and the children of Israel *made G-d sing* this song, *for Him to say...*” There are two notable differences which both point to the same idea: the people sang in order to make G-d sing with

them.

What is the meaning of this significant difference from the original?

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, one of the early Chassidic masters and protagonist of many beloved Chassidic stories, cites a moving idea from the Baal Shem Tov to solve our riddle.

In Psalm 121, King David declares, “G-d is my shadow” (or “shade”). The Baal Shem Tov understood these words as a metaphor for the relationship between a person and G-d. A shadow is cast according to a person’s dimensions and movements. If you move your hand up, the shadow will move up; kick your foot out, and the shadow will do the same. And so it is with you and G-d: G-d responds to how you behave.

In other words, we “trigger” in-kind responses from G-d based on the actions we take, the words we say, and the way we think.

And so, at the sea, the peo-

ple did so-to-speak make G-d sing with them. Following the second translation above, the verse tells us that on the banks of the Sea of Reeds, the people sang, and thereby inspired G-d to sing along with them.

That our ancestors induced G-d to sing gifts us all a remarkable life hack: When things are rough, one thing you can do is reverse engineer the process and try to “force” G-d’s Hand.

Of course, there aren’t really any “tricks” to play on G-d. The underlying message of this whole story is that G-d cares about you and me so much that He has deigns to respond to our overtures. Surely G-d could say, “Ah, let them do what they want, and I’ll check in once in a while.” But that’s not what He wishes to do, instead choosing to care deeply about every human action, so much so, He is prepared to respond and “match” our behavior.

you might, you can’t string together a workable budget. You’re suffering from internal anguish, and as much as you try to hold your head high, you get beaten down time and again.

You’re right. You’re in a pickle.

So here’s one helpful hack: try living as if you’re already there. Start being really nice to other people, or working things out with that person as if they’re already your good friend. Give tzedakah to someone else or an organization of your choice that stretches you just beyond your means. Start humming a tune, tapping your feet a little more regularly - even if you don’t feel like it.

G-d will take notice. If you keep at it, you’ll “force His Hand” to reciprocate and treat you more generously, shower blessings upon you, and truly cause you to burst out in song.

## The Other Darkness

by Katia Bolotin

This is an incredible level of attention and care. It’s empowering and inspiring.

Imagine you’re stuck. You’re in a pickle with a certain relationship and it’s not going anywhere. You’re not making ends meet, and try as

Just as every structure has a foundation, our lives are anchored by our spiritual beliefs. Beliefs help us interpret everyday reality and make sense of the world. Our beliefs help us ascertain what’s right, wrong, true or false. They define who we are.

But what happens if one’s belief system suddenly collapses? People can be plunged into a mental state of darkness and despair.

The ninth plague G-d wrought upon the Egyptians was intense darkness. Rashi describes it as “Thick darkness in which they did not see each other for those three days, and then another three days of darkness twice as dark as this, so that no one rose from his place.”

While there was actual physical darkness, on a deeper level, through each of the plagues there was the manifestation of G-d’s presence catapulting the pagan Egyptians into an existential crisis. The reality that they had known was suspended and ceased to be. Everything in which they believed crumbled before them; their life was a sham - a mirage of false illusions.

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The experience of clinical depression can feel as if one is subsumed - plagued by



hopelessness and social isolation. The psychological anguish of depression places one in a type of solitary and “soul-itary” confinement. Whereas physical darkness is outside us, depression comes from within. Depressed individuals don’t want to get out of bed because they feel hopeless; there’s no reason to rise. This loss of hope can prevent people from even trying to improve their reality. They can become mentally and physically catatonic.

Regarding the Plague of Darkness, the Torah states that “A man did not see his fellow, nor did anyone get up from his place for three days.” (Exodus 10:23).”

Many of us have experienced low points. Personal pain becomes our “inner Egypt of constriction.” The anguish of mental illness is a comprehensive affliction of both body and soul.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* states that “there is no greater darkness than one in which ‘a man did not see his fellow,’ in which a person becomes oblivious to the needs of others.” When that happens, a person becomes stymied in his/her personal development as well.

What can we learn from darkness? Is there an upside to it?

•Continued on page 12

# FIND YOUR INNER PEACE

Welcome to FridayLight, a campaign encouraging Jewish women and girls to illuminate the world with the light of Shabbat. By observing this special tradition each and every Friday night, you will not only bask in a personal moment of inner peace, but also connect to a global community of Jewish women who together hold the power to bring light to the world.

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# The Giving Boomerang

by Mendy Kaminker

A few months ago, I received a phone call from a family member of an older woman who lives in our area. The woman was aging, and shopping was becoming difficult for her. The family member asked if I could meet with her and try to help. "But it might be difficult because she is refusing to receive any help from anyone outside her family," I was told.

I came across various tips online for how to handle these kinds of situations.

One suggestion was to patiently explain to the person the benefits of getting help.

Another emphasized building trust and showing empathy. And yet another approach was to "just let them know you are there for them whenever they need you."

Great ideas, but I am afraid none address the core issue.

In most cases, people are reluctant to receive help because they don't feel comfortable being on the receiving end.

This wonderful woman put a lot of effort into becoming self-sufficient and giving back to society. The concept of being a recipient, instead of being able to provide for others, was difficult for her to accept.

I knew I had to tap into the wisdom of the Torah to get her to accept help.

The Torah presents two revolutionary ideas about giving.

\*Idea number one\*: We are G-d's savings account.

You know of someone who needs help but refuses to receive. How do you persuade them to receive the help s/he needs?

Traditionally, we view charity as something we do when we feel benevolent.

For example, when we gift some of our wealth to charity. This money belongs to us. We worked hard to earn it. But we decide to act charitably and share some of it with those in need.

According to the Torah, some of our wealth - and by extension, our abilities - is not ours. G-d gave it to us for safekeeping until we find a worthy cause where the money belongs. In essence, G-d entrusts us to be His "savings account."

When we help someone else, we give them what G-d had intended for them to have!

When discussing the Mitzvah of *Gemilut Chessed*, providing free-interest loans to people in need, the Torah states:

*"When you lend money to My people, to the poor person with you, you shall not behave toward him as a lender; you shall not impose interest upon him."*

The words "with you" can be interpreted as referring to

the poor person and the money. In other words, the money is not yours but only "with you" until you find the person who needs it.

\*Idea number two\*: G-d created inequality so we can have relationships.

G-d could have given equally to everyone. He doesn't need a savings account or a third party to deliver the goods. Still, He chose to create an unequal world because that's the only way to foster genuine and sincere relationships.

A real relationship is about being both a giver and a receiver. And as the relationship deepens, the line between giving and receiving becomes increasingly blurred.

Because the world is unequal, we all need each other. And when we help each other, the lines are blurred: I might be giving you, but the satisfaction and the sense of purpose I receive in return are priceless.

So receiving is also an act of giving.

Ultimately, I approached the woman who needed help and said: "I need a big favor from you."

She got excited because she was the type of person who always loved to help others. "Yes, Rabbi" she said. "I'd love to help! What can I do for you?"

"There is something you can do that will bring a big smile to my face. It will help me feel better and will make my day!"

By now, she was very curious.

"What is it?"

"Allow me to do some shopping for you. Please give me a list of the groceries and where you like shopping. Letting me do it for you is going to be very generous of you."

She smiled and agreed.

When we give, may we remember how much we receive in return.

And if we need to receive, let us remember how that is also a gracious act of kindness.

# Freud's Great Freudian Slip

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks o.b.m.



It was Freud's greatest Freudian slip, and for some reason his commentators, at least those I've read, haven't noticed it.

It appears in his last book, 'Moses and Monotheism', a strange work if ever there was one. It was published in 1939, by which time Freud had taken refuge in Britain. Had he stayed in Vienna, one wonders what humiliations he would have suffered before being murdered along with his fellow Jews. For some reason, at this desperate time, Freud wrote a book (he originally described it as a "historical novel") in which he tried to prove that Moses was an Egyptian. There have been many speculations as to why he wrote it, and I have no wish to add to their number. Early on in the book, though, there is a most curious episode.

Freud notes that several scholars have identified a common theme in stories about the childhood of heroes. The hero's birth is fraught with danger. As a baby, he is exposed to the elements in a way that would normally lead to death - sometimes by being placed in a box and thrown into the water. The child is rescued and brought up by adoptive parents, and eventually he discovers his true identity. It is a story told about Sargon, Gilgamesh, Oedipus, Romulus and many others. It is also the story of Moses.

At this point, however, Freud notes that in one respect the story of Moses isn't like the others at all. In fact, it's the opposite. In the conventional story the hero's adoptive parents are humble, ordinary people. Eventually he discovers that he is actually of royal blood, a prince. In the Moses story, the reverse is the case. It is his adoptive family that is royal. He is

brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh. His true identity, he discovers, is that he belongs, by birth, to a nation of slaves.

Freud saw this and then failed to see what it meant. Instead he changed tack and concluded that the story is a fabrication designed to conceal the fact that Moses was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he really was a prince of Egypt. What Freud failed to realize is that the story of Moses is not a myth but an anti-myth. It takes a myth and turns it upside down.

Its message is simple and revolutionary. True royalty, the Bible suggests, is the opposite of our conventional wisdom. It isn't privilege and wealth, splendor and palaces. It's moral courage. Moses, in discovering that he is the child of slaves, finds greatness. It's not power that matters, but the fight for justice and freedom. Had Moses been an Egyptian prince, he would have been eminently forgettable. Only by being true to his people and to G-d did he become a hero.

Freud had mixed feelings about his own identity. He admired Jews but was tone-deaf to the music of Judaism. That is why, I suspect, he failed to see that he had come face to face with one of the most powerful moral truths the Bible ever taught. Those whom the world despises, G-d loves. A child of slaves can be greater than a prince. G-d's standards are not power and privilege. They are about recognizing G-d's image in the weak, the powerless, the afflicted, the suffering, and fighting for their cause. What a message of courage Freud might have sent his people in that dark night! Let us at least see what he did not, that the story of Moses is one of the great narratives of hope in the literature of mankind.

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by Yossy Goldman

## Why The Rush To Leave Egypt?

Matzah. It all started back in Egypt.

"And on that very day all the legions of G-d left Egypt." Rashi, quoting the Midrash, explains: "When the time of redemption arrived, G-d did not delay the Exodus even for as much as the blink of an eye."

Indeed, they left Egypt in haste.

"They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for they could not be leavened, for they were driven out of Egypt and they could not delay."

Why couldn't they wait for the dough to rise?

Eighteen minutes. Although when baking challah or bread one typically allows more time for the dough to actually puff up to the required texture, nevertheless, just eighteen minutes after the flour and water mix the leavening process begins.

I don't get it. Our ancestors had spent 210 years in Egypt. They couldn't wait another eighteen minutes? Why the mad rush?

Conventional thinking suggests that they needed to hurry before the Egyptians changed their minds and reneged on their offer of freedom.

Really? After suffering through ten devastating plagues, being wiped out physically, financially, and emotionally, would the Egyptians really want still more trouble? Was that a

realistic concern?

Surely they were so badly beaten that they couldn't wait to say "good riddance" to those who had made their lives so miserable. Pharaoh himself was a broken man with no more appetite for resistance. He'd lost his own son in the final devastating plague.

So the question remains, why the rush?

The Rebbe offers a novel approach to this difficulty, arguing that it wasn't the Egyptians who were the problem - it was us!

G-d wasn't concerned that the Egyptians might have gone back on their offer of liberation, but that the Israelites themselves might have had a change of heart.

"Better the devil you know..." goes the old proverb. It must have been quite a leap of faith for the longtime slaves to leave the infrastructure of Egypt and head out into an unknown wilderness.

I can just imagine their thinking: Here, we have a roof over our heads. True, there are no luxuries, but we do get fed every day. What will we have in the wilderness? No food, no shelter, not even water. We'd have to be crazy to leave an established country and wander off into uncharted territory. Even with all our problems, are we not better off just staying here in Egypt?

Indeed, when they reached the Sea of Reeds and realized they were trapped, there were

many who clamored to return to Egypt. Better to be a living slave than a dead free man, they reasoned.

So, when the moment of the Exodus arrived, it was a dramatic window of opportunity. Had they not grasped it with both hands at that very moment, it's possible that these and other doubts might have crept in and delayed the whole experience. Thank G-d, they did seize the opportunity.

Frankly, it can happen to all of us. We all get comfortable in our little slaveries, and daily drudgeries. They might not be ideal, but they are far less intimidating than the challenges that come with new opportunities. There's an old Yiddish proverb that expresses this idea: "May we never get used to what we can get used to." With the passage of time, we become weary, worn down, and what was previously intolerable becomes all too acceptable.

We've all experienced missed opportunities at various points in our lives. Could have, should have... But we hesitated, and as another old proverb goes, "He who hesitates is lost."

In our Jewish lives, too, we should take advantage of the many opportunities now available to us that we may not have had when we were younger. Regular Torah study, more time in the synagogue, a new mitzvah. There is so much on offer today that we easily can make up for any lost opportunities.

It takes courage to grasp the moment and embrace new visions and horizons. When opportunity knocks, let's not miss our chance.



## Seeing Is Believing?

When our first child was born, I stopped believing in G-d. When people hear me say this, they are shocked. The rabbi doesn't believe in G-d?! I'll explain. I stopped believing. And I started knowing!

When you witness the miracle of creation with your own eyes, up close and personal, faith is unnecessary. The proof is right there.

Long before me, there was the legendary Chassidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. When he returned from his sojourn in Mezeritch his father in law asked him to share something he had learned. R. Levi Yitzchak said, "I learned that there is a G-d in this world."

"What?!" exclaimed his father in law. "For this you had to go to Mezeritch? Even our maid knows that!"

"Martha," he called to her. "Do you believe in G-d?"

"Of course!" she answered.

"She believes," said R. Levi Yitzchak. "But I *know*."

We read in the Torah about the Splitting of the Sea, arguably the biggest miracle in all of history. One of the verses, which found its way into our Siddur and daily prayers, reads as follows:

"And the people of Israel saw the great, mighty Hand which G-d had inflicted upon the Egyptians ... and the people believed in G-d and in Moses his servant."

This is impressive? They saw the incredible miracle of the Splitting of the Sea, and they believed there was a G-d in the world? How could they not believe?! What's the big deal to see a miracle and then to believe?

Faith is about believing in G-d when He is not that obviously present in our lives. True faith is believing even when we are going through difficult or tragic times and G-d seems entirely absent.

To believe before seeing the miracle would be something worth writing about, but to believe after the miracle seems mundane, obvious, and even somewhat dull.

However, I must tell you that in my own rabbinic practice I have seen all too frequently how people have remained untouched and unaffected after experiencing

an event that was clearly miraculous.

Yes, some people don't believe even after the miracle! They attribute their good fortune to luck or coincidence.

Others, however, see the Hand of G-d in everything.

I was at a wedding the other day and the father of the groom got up, but instead of speaking he sang a song. The main lyrics of the song are two well-known Hebrew words, "Baruch Hashem," or, "blessed be G-d." Indeed, he had much to be thankful for. And when the whole crowd of hundreds of guests joined him in singing and repeating the words, "Baruch Hashem, Baruch Hashem," it was a particularly moving moment.

If only we could all recognize the many miracles and deliverances in our daily lives with that kind of attitude!

My late father was the sole survivor of his entire family from Poland. I once asked him why he hadn't lost his faith the way so many other survivors had.

He replied that he had witnessed the unmistakable Hand of G-d plucking him from one danger to the next. He escaped Poland, travelled to Vilna, then from Moscow to Vladivostok by train, by boat to Japan, and later Shanghai, before arriving in the United States after the war and meriting to rebuild his family. "How could I not believe?" he said.

The Israelites watched the sea split and saw their mortal enemies washed ashore. Their freedom from Egyptian bondage was finally assured. They saw the awesome Hand of G-d ... and they believed.

I imagine there may well have been others who would have attributed their deliverance to some natural effect – perhaps a freak tsunami. That our ancestors believed it was the Hand of G-d without any doubt at all is indeed a credit to them.

There are those who deny even the most blatantly obvious wonders, and then there are those who don't stop thanking G-d for even their smallest salvations. May we soon see the unmistakable Hand of G-d bringing Redemption to our people, and peace and tranquility to our broken world.

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**PAGE 2**

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# Passover Guide 5783 - 2023



## What Is Pesach - Passover?

On Pesach we celebrate the liberation of the Jewish People - not just our physical liberation from Egyptian slavery, but also our spiritual freedom from the 'abominations of Egypt'. The civilization of ancient Egypt was steeped in idolatry and immorality. Beyond that, however, the name 'Egypt' - *'Mitzrayim'*, in Hebrew - implies 'limitations', or narrow straits. In a very real sense, freedom from the 'abominations of Egypt' is freedom from narrowness of mind, freedom from a constricted heart. The Torah laws concerning Pesach, besides being G-dly commandments, are to help us experience this spirit of freedom. This guide, though concise, covers some practical details, the significance of the Seder, basic Pesach laws plus useful tips and profound insights to enhance your Passover experience.

### Preparing The Home

**What Is Chametz?** Unique to Pesach is the eating of Matzah (*Please Note: Matzah used all year round is not for Pesach use. Only Matzah baked especially for Pesach may be used on Pesach*), and the stringent prohibition of eating or possessing Chametz. Chametz is a general term for all food and drink made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt or their derivatives, which is forbidden on Pesach because it is leavened. Even a food that contains only a trace of Chametz is prohibited and must be removed from our homes.

**Getting Rid of Chametz:** Obvious Chametz - both food and utensils used throughout the year (and not koshered for Pesach) - should be stored in closets or rooms that are not easily accessible (locked or taped shut). It should be sold to a non-Jew by filling out the sale form on page 3. Clean the entire house thoroughly to remove all crumbs and small pieces of food. Also check for Chametz in the car and office (desks and drawers, etc.) clothes, pockets (especially the children's), pocketbooks, and attaché cases. Vacuum cleaner bags should be discarded or cleaned.

### Kitchen Koshering

To prepare the kitchen for Pesach, we must kosher it from Chametz that has been cooked in it. **Dishes and Utensils:** Have special sets of dishes, silverware, pots, pans and other utensils for Pesach use only. (If necessary, certain 'year-round' utensils may be used provided they are koshered for Pesach. To do so, consult a Rabbi.) **Stove:** Thoroughly clean and scour every part of the stove. Heat the oven to the highest temperature possible for 1-2 hours. Heat the grates and the iron parts of the stove until they glow red-hot. It is suggested that the oven and stovetop should be covered afterwards with aluminum foil. **Microwave Ovens:** Clean the oven thoroughly. Fill a clean container (that was not used for 24 hours) with water. Turn on the microwave and let it steam heavily. Turn it off and wipe out the inside. To use the microwave during Pesach, use a flat piece of styrofoam or any other thick object, as a separation between the bottom of the oven and the cooking dish. When cooking, the food should be covered from all sides. **Sink:** Meticulously clean the sink. For 24 hours before koshering it, do not pour hot water from Chametz pots into the sink. Afterwards, boil water in a clean pot (that was not used for 24 hours), and pour water 3 times onto every part of the sink, including the drain stopper. Afterwards, line the sink. **Refrigerator, Freezer, Cupboards, Closets, Tables and Counters:** Thoroughly clean and scrub to remove any crumbs and residue. Afterwards, cover with a heavy covering those surfaces that come into contact with hot food or utensils. **Tablecloths and Napkins:** Launder without starch.

### Shopping For Pesach

While shopping for Pesach we must be careful that the foods we buy are not only kosher but are also kosher-for-Pesach - that is, Chametz-free. **Starting From 'Scratch':** All fresh fruits and vegetables as well as all kosher cuts of meat and kosher fish are kosher for Pesach - provided they have been prepared in accordance with Jewish law and have not come into contact with Chametz or Chametz utensils. The prevailing Ashkenazic custom is that we do not eat on Pesach rice, millet, corn, mustard, legumes, (beans, etc.), or their derivatives.

**Commercially Prepared Products:** Nowadays, there are many Kosher-for-Pesach packaged foods available. However, care must be used to purchase only those packaged foods that have reliable Rabbinical supervision which is valid for Pesach. Obviously, all leavened foods made from wheat, barley, rye, oats or spelt are actual Chametz and are prohibited on Pesach. Examples are bread, cake, cereal, spaghetti, beer and whiskey.

**Check The Medicine Cabinet!** Many medicines, sprays and cosmetics contain Chametz. Consult a competent Rabbi as to which ones may be used on Pesach. The same applies to pet food.

### Pesach Calendar

On the Thursday evening before Pesach, make a formal search of the home for Chametz while holding a lit candle. It is customary to distribute ten small individually wrapped pieces of Chametz throughout the home before the search. **The Blessing:** Recite the following blessing before the search: *Boruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-hei-nu Melech Ha-olom Asher Kidishanu Bemitzvo-tov Vetzi-vanu Al Bi-ur Cha-metz.* Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to remove the leaven. **The Search:** Afterwards, hold the lit candle and search for Chametz in every room, as well as any other areas of the home that may have Chametz, such as the basement, attic, garage, or car. When the search is completed, recite the following: 'All leaven or anything leavened which is in my possession, which I have neither seen nor removed, and about which I am unaware, shall be considered naught and ownerless as the dust of the earth.' Then take all the Chametz that was found in the search, cover it securely and place it in a conspicuous spot - this Chametz will be burned on Friday morning. Food intended to be sold or eaten later should similarly be carefully put aside. The search should also be conducted in one's place of business.

**Burning The Chametz:** On Friday morning burn the Chametz that was found during the previous evening's search, or that was left over from breakfast and not stored with the Chametz which is sold to the non-Jew. See calendar for the latest time to burn the Chametz. After the Chametz is thrown into the fire, recite the following: 'All leaven or anything leavened which is in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have observed it or not, whether I have removed it or not shall be completely considered naught and ownerless as the dust of the earth.' **Erev Pesach:** On Saturday (Erev Pesach), Chametz may be eaten only in the early hours of the morning, until 11:02 am. Any remaining Chametz crumbs should then be flushed down the toilet by 12:03 pm. After that time only foods which are kosher for Pesach may be eaten. However, we do not eat Matzah until the Seder.

**The Intermediate Days:** In between the first two and last two days of Pesach, go ahead and function relatively normally. The only exception is, like your mother keeps telling you, you shouldn't work too hard. But keep the wine flowing; it's a custom to drink a glass of wine every day of Pesach. **Last But Not Least:** On the last day of Pesach Yizkor memorial prayers are recited during services. Following the custom of the Baal Shem Tov, Pesach concludes with the 'Feast of Moshiah' - a festive meal complete with Matzah and, yes, four cups of wine. It begins before sunset and is designed to offer us a 'glimpse' into the Messianic age. Nightfall marks the conclusion of Pesach. Wait a while to give the Rabbi enough time to buy back your Chametz and then eat Chametz to your heart's content!

## The Pesach Calendar 5783 - 2023

Times shown are for the Rochester Area

Date	Activity	Time
April 4	Formal search for chametz .....	after 8:11 p.m.
April 5	Stop Eating Chametz ..... Burn left-over Chametz ..... Make an Eruv Tavshilin Light Shabbat & Yom Tov candles and say blessings # 1 & 3.....	before 10:59 a.m. before 11:59 a.m.  at 7:23 p.m.
April 6	Start the Seder. Eat at least 1 oz. of Matzah within 4 minutes .....	after 8:25 p.m.
April 7	Light Yom Tov candles from a pre-existing flame* and say blessings # 1 & 3.....	after 8:26 p.m.
April 11	Start the Seder. Eat the Matzah again Light Shabbat candles and say blessing # 2 .....	at 7:26 p.m.
April 12	Light Yom Tov candles and say blessing # 1 .....	at 7:30 p.m.
April 13	Light Yom Tov candles from a pre-existing flame* and say blessing # 1 .....	after 8:33 p.m.
April 13	Yizkor Pesach ends .....	at 8:35 p.m.
	Wait one hour before eating your chametz to allow time for the Rabbi to buy it back for you.	

\*A pre-existing flame is a flame burning continuously since the onset of the festival, such as a pilot light, gas or candle flame.

### BLESSINGS FOR FESTIVAL CANDLE LIGHTING:

- Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom A-she  
Ki-de-sho-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Vi-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik Ner Shel  
Yom-Tov.
- Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom A-she  
Ki-de-sho-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Vi-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Shabbos  
Kodesh.
- Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom She-heh-  
che-yoh-nu Vi-kiye-mo-nu Ve-he-ge-o-nu Lizman Hazeh.

1. KADESH – SANCTIFICATION

**BODY** It’s been a busy week, or a busy year. The first step tonight is to forget the noise and leave it behind. Tonight we enter a timeless space, where we experience the Seder together with our great-grandparents and Moses. How do we begin? With a full cup of red wine. A cup filled with generations of rejoicing and tears and celebration and wisdom, and of doing just what we will do tonight.

Fill a cup with wine (or grape juice). That’s cup #1. You can have someone else fill your cup. Then return the favor. This way, we are all like nobility, whose cups are filled by someone else. Make sure your cup holds at least 86 mil. (a little more than three ounces).

Everyone stands and says Kiddush together. The rest of the year, one person says Kiddush for everyone at the table. Tonight, each man, woman and child recites every word together.

Drink. And get ready for some serious relaxing. Recline on a cushion to your left side. Remember the ancient times, when we used to recline on our couches while sampling grapes? That’s what we are dramatizing by reclining now. Tonight we are free.

**SOUL** Every journey begins with a separation. You’ve got to leave somewhere to get somewhere else. In this way, separation is the first step to freedom. By ignoring the negative voice of Pharaoh’s mockery that says, “Who are you to begin such a journey?”, we’re ready to leave Egypt behind.

Separation is the first meaning of the word *kadesh* – to transcend the mundane world. Once you’ve set yourself free from those things that hold you down, you can achieve the second meaning of the word *kadesh* – to return and sanctify it. Spiritual freedom is achieved through sanctifying the material world, using its elements as physical expressions of a higher purpose. The first two steps of the Seder, Kadesh (to separate/sanctify) and Urchatz (purify), describe what we set out to accomplish through this night: to rise above the restraints of our world in order to elevate it.

**Personal Application:**

**Bondage Mentality:** Look, I’m a down-to-earth kind of person. I’m trying to manage real life. I can’t get into this spirituality stuff. Let’s just get to the Matzah. **Freedom Mentality:** I can master my world by staying above it. I come to the Seder to get that strength. *Kadesh - Time to split*



2. URCHATZ – PURIFICATION

**BODY** Fill a cup with water. You could leave the table to go to the kitchen or you could bring a basin and towel to the table. (What? We just sat down and now we have to get up and leave? Well, that’s a fairly standard Jewish migration pattern.)

Pour the water over your right hand three times, then over your left hand three times. That’s how the Kohanim (priests) washed when they entered the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Dry your hands.

Throughout the year we wash this way for bread and we would say a blessing at this point, but not now. When we wash the second time before eating the Matzah, we’ll say it then.

**SOUL** Our hands are the instruments that allow the mind to interact with its environment. Our hands reflect our mental state, and act according to our emotions: love, fear, compassion, the urge to win, to be appreciated, to express ourselves, to dominate. But too often the aspects of our psyche sit compartmentalized, detached from one another. The mind sees one way, the heart feels another, and our interface with the world is disoriented.

Water symbolizes wisdom. Flowing downward from on-high, everything in its stream is affected by its pure and simple essence. We pour water over our hands so that our heart and emotions may be touched by wisdom, and from there shape our interaction with the world.

A wise rabbi asked, “Wouldn’t it make more sense to wash first and then say Kiddush? To first purify, so you can then sanctify?” Then he answered, “First you need to get out of the pit, and then to clean up your act. That’s why G-d first took us out of Egypt and only then had us purify ourselves for 49 days in the wilderness to prepare us for the revelations at Mount Sinai.”

**Personal Application:**

**Bondage Mentality:** Just react. Let your instinct be your guide. **Freedom Mentality:** Count to 10. Let your mind and heart talk things over with one another. *Urchatz - It’s a clean scene*



3. KARPAS – THE APPETIZER

**BODY** Take a small piece of vegetable (onion, potato, parsley). The rest of the year, we would be getting to the meal now. But we’re doing things differently tonight, principally to spark questions from the small children. If they ask, “Hey mom and dad! Aren’t we supposed to eat real food now? Why the funny green stuff?” - you know you’re doing things right.

How do you answer them? “We are doing this so that you will ask questions. You can’t learn if you don’t ask questions. And the first thing to learn is that not all questions have immediate answers.” This is one of the most distinctive elements of Jewish education: more than we teach our children how to answer, we teach them how to ask - and how to be patient in their search for answers.

Dip it into saltwater. These are our tears, and the tears of all our people beginning with the tears of our labor in Egypt. Look at the Hebrew word *Karpas* and read it backwards, *Samach Perekh*. That refers to the backbreaking labor (*Perekh*) of the 600,000 Jewish slaves (*Samach* = 60 x 10,000). Say the blessing that is said over the vegetable, and munch it down. Munch well. You’re not going to get much more for a while.

**SOUL** In order to liberate ourselves from Egypt, we need to taste its harshness again, because this harshness prepares us for freedom. This labor gives us the humble spirit to accept wisdom.

About the Seder and the Child: On the night that we left Egypt, we were like a newly hatched chick, breaking out of our shell to discover life and the light of day. It was with those fresh eyes that we were able to experience wonder, to travel forth with faith and innocence and trust. So tonight, again, we enter the mind and heart of a child.

The child is the most important participant at the Seder. In fact, the entire Seder with all its customs revolves around the child. The Mitzvah of the Haggadah is “to tell the story to your child.” The child asks, we respond.

But more than the child learns from us, we learn from the child. We awaken the mystical child within us, the place that is still innocent and fresh and able to grow, to be amazed, to sense awe. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch once said, “If you want to know what it is like to see with the eyes of a prophet, to experience the Divine Spirit resting upon you, look at life the way you did as a child.”

**Personal Application:**

**Bondage Mentality:** I owe, I owe, so off to work I go. **Freedom Mentality:** My work helps me appreciate the higher things in life. *Karpas - For bitter, or worse?*



Journey To The Co

The Seder may appear like a drawn-out series of rituals, re into the liberation energy that is present and break free f ascending a spiral staircase - we pass over the sa

To enhance your Seder, we highlighted its 15 steps, divid “Body” describes what we do at each step and how; “Soul suggests an example of it

THE SEDER PLATE

The Seder Plate (Ka’arah) includes most of the ingredients tha the Seder. Its three matzahs and the six other items are arranged by their mystical significance and relationship vis-a-vis each oth

Here’s how you set it up:

On top of a large plate, tray or cloth place three whole matzah other. It’s best to use round, hand-baked shmurah matzah. Cover cloth or tray. On top, position the following six items as pictured

- 1) “Zeroa” - a roasted chicken bone with most of the meat rem the Passover offering. It will not be eaten.
- 2) “Beitzah” - a hard-boiled egg, representing the festival offe
- 3) “Maror” - grated horseradish (just the horseradish -- not th gar and beets added) and/or romaine lettuce, for use as the “bitte
- 4) “Charoset” - a paste made of apples, pears, nuts and wine.
- 5) “Karpas” - a bit of vegetable, such an onion or potato (used
- 6) “Chazeret” - more bitter herbs, for use in the matzah-maror

We’ll also need a wine cup or goblet for each participant, and salt water (in which to dip the Karpas).

Matzah is unleavened bread. It’s made from flour (from one o water only - absolutely nothing else - that are swiftly combined. and begin to rise. It looks something like a large, round flat crac

Matzah may be flat, but it has many faces: it is the “bread of as slaves in Egypt. It’s the “bread of proclamation” over which w represents our self-abnegating commitment to G-d, and the “bre to Him. It’s the “bread of healing” with which we imbibe spiritua

Shemurah matzah (“guarded matzah”) is made from grain tha tact with even the merest hint of water or moisture. It is baked b used as a vehicle of G-dly connection - to fulfill the mitzvah of

4. YACHATZ – BREAKING THE MATZAH

**BODY** Remove the middle Matzah. We need the top Matzah to re it later on. (Blessings are said on whole things.) Break it in two dif between the two complete Matzos.

The piece you put back is the “poor man’s bread” over which th ple only eat a small portion of their bread - saving the rest in case

Wrap the remaining (larger) piece in a cloth. Hide the package u as the Afikoman, or dessert. In many homes, the children hide the end of the meal. In others, the adults hide it and the children find suspense until the end of the Seder.

Some Sephardic Jews have the tradition of tying the Afikoman like that all night, just like when we left Egypt.

**SOUL** Why is so much broken in this world? Why did the Create

Because a whole vessel can only contain its measure, while a l bread. He is low and broken. And it is this being broken that allows fectly whole, there is no room left for us to grow. When we realize that so much of ourselves is missing – then miracles begin.

**Personal Application**

**Bondage Mentality:** I know who I am. Look at what I have achie only started to grow. *Yachatz - Flat broke... got any bread?*

5. MAGGID – THE HAGGADAH

This is it, folks. This is why it’s called a Haggadah. Now we get for. (As for the other meat & potatoes, you can probably smell them

**BODY** Fill your cup with wine (or grape juice). That’s cup #2.

There are “four sons” at the Seder table, as described in the Hagg and child - the “wicked” child. This is the cup the story is told over story most, and the one who can really appreciate it. Children ask th ask more. No children at your Seder? Let an adult ask. There’s jus Father. While you’re at it, ask Him a few other difficult questions f

Continue recounting the Passover story in the Haggadah. Hey, y written so that everybody would have something to say. But now e every story you know about the Exodus. Examine the Haggadah a

Basic rules of telling the story: 1. Get the children involved. 2. Egyptian scene until we receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. 3. Tell i Hebrews. . .” say, “When we were slaves in Egypt, the perverse sys parallels something within. We are truly living it now. We are simp about miracles. Moses and his signs and wonders. The ten plagues. look at the events of our lives and recognize that they too are mira this long by abrogating natural law. The very fact that we are her of 3,327 years is beyond human comprehension.

We say a blessing and drink the second cup of wine at the end

**SOUL** The Exodus is not simply an event that happened to us. I one of us, occurring again and again, in our wrestling match with dom in a constant mode of escape. Perhaps that is why Jews have

The experience of leaving Egypt left such an indelible mark on o ceases to allow his soul to breathe. The story brings our essential s

**Personal Application**

**Bondage Mentality:** I’m free already. I live in a land of freedom. is free because my soul is free. *Maggid - Tell the story*

# Center Of The Seder

repeated year after year. But when it is experienced, we tap from our personal bondage. Experiencing the Seder is like some points, but each year we reach a higher level.

ing them into "Body," "Soul" and "Personal Application". "explores its deeper meaning; and "Personal Application" s effect on our daily lives.

t go into the making of in a formation dictated er.

hs, one on top of the r the matzahs with a l above right:

moved. This will represent

ring.

e red stuff that has vine- er herbs" (step #9).

We'll be dipping the bitter herbs in this (steps 9 and 10).

d in step #3).

r sandwich (step #10).

plenty of wine or grape juice (four cups each). And a dish of

f the "five types of grain" - wheat, barley, oats, rye or spelt) and y, kneaded and baked before the dough has a chance to ferment ker. It tastes simply delicious.

affliction" and the "bread of poverty" which our forefathers ate ve tell the story of the Exodus. It's the "bread of humility" that ad of faith" that embodies our simple faith, trust and devotion al wholeness and wellness into our beings.

t is guarded from the time it was harvested lest it come in con- y hand, with the specific intention and awareness that it will be eating matzah on seder night. (No machine can do that, can it?)

remain whole because we'll make a blessing on ferent-sized pieces. Put the smaller piece back

ne tale of our slavery is recounted. Poor peo- e there is no more tomorrow.

until the end of the Seder when it will be eaten Afikoman and the adults have to find it at the it. Either way, it keeps the kids awake and in

under the arms of the children, who carry it

or make a world where hearts break, lives shatter, beauty crumbles?

broken one can hold the Infinite. Matzah is called the poor man's s him to open his soul and escape his Egypt. As long as we feel pe- e that we are just a fragment – that we need the others around us,

ved! Freedom Mentality: There is so much that I am lacking. I have

to the meat & potatoes your soul is longing in the kitchen. Hold on, we'll get there soon.)

gadah. The second cup corresponds to the sec- The "wicked" child is the one who needs this he Four Questions. Of course, they can always t you? You be the child, and G-d will be the for us all.

you're not limited to the Haggadah! That was s're the chance to get creative. In addition to the Haggadah text, tell nd get into its deeper meaning. Keep it real - make it profound.

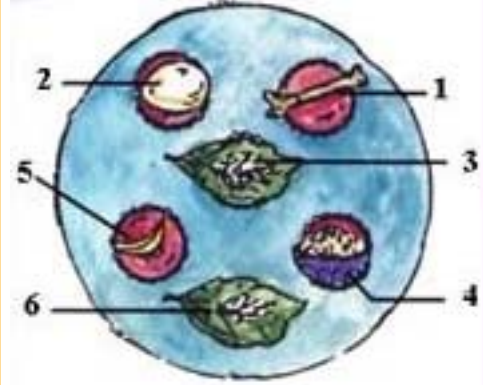
. Start with Abraham and Sarah and work your way through the t in the first person, in the now. Instead of, "Long ago, the ancient stem crushed our sense of self." Everything that happened in Egypt ly examining our own lives in the dress of ancient Egypt. 4. It's all The splitting of the sea. These miracles happened so that we would cles. Tell it like it is. We are a people born of miracles, who endured e now telling this same story to our children in an unbroken chain

of this step.

t is an event that we became. It is who we are. It is the life of each n the world, in our struggle with our own selves. We embody free- always been rebels of society.

ur souls that we never stop doing it. A Jew who stops leaving Egypt elf into the open, and to come face-to-face with who we really are.

Who needs more freedom than that? Freedom Mentality: My body



## 6. ROCHTZOH - WASHING FOR MATZAH

**BODY** Fill a cup with water. Again? Yes, again. It's been a long time since the last washing. (And it's good to get up and stretch a little.) Pour the water over your right hand three times, then over your left hand three times. Say the blessing: "Blessed... concerning the washing of the hands." Dry your hands.

**SOUL** As long as we live in the world, freedom remains elusive. While moving forward, we are free. Stop, and we are fettered again.

That is why freedom is something that you cannot buy or steal. Never can you put freedom in your purse and say, "Freedom is mine forever!"

Spiritual freedom is like a marriage between our finite selves and the Infinite, providing the power to transcend the material world while working inside of it. It is a marriage of heaven and earth, spirit and matter, soul and body. And like marriage, it is kept alive through constant renewal.

Our release from slavery was only the first step of our Exodus. We were granted eternal freedom – the power to perpetually transcend Egypt.

That's the order of the Seder tonight: Kadesh, Urchatz – Transcend and Purify. Over and over. Rise higher, then draw that into deeds. Rise higher again, draw even more. Never stop rising. Never stop applying.

### Personal Application

Bondage Mentality: Passover? Been there, done that! Freedom Mentality: Each year at the Seder, I discover new things that I just never saw before.

*Rochtzoh - Free your mind and the rest will follow*



## 7. MOTZI - THANK G-D FOR BREAD

**BODY** Grab all three Matzos - the top one, the broken middle one and the bottom one - and pick them up. Say the blessing: "Blessed...Who brings bread out of the earth."

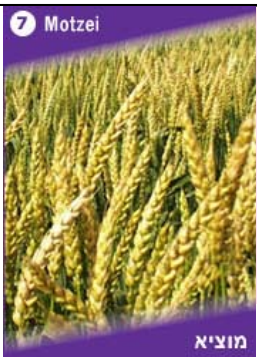
This blessing, "Who brings bread out of the earth," may seem ordinary, even odd. But think about it: The earth upon which we tread germinates all the nutrients a human being needs to survive - it is the substance that powers our thoughts, creativity, music, art, philosophy, meditation, and prayer.

**SOUL** We feel an affinity with foods we eat: we too are a miracle out of the earth. We share a common journey with bread. The bread begins as a seed buried beneath the ground. And then, a miracle occurs: as it decomposes and loses its original form, it comes alive, begins to sprout and grow. As Spring arrives, it pushes its way above the earth to find the sun, and then bears fruit for the world.

We too begin buried in Egypt, our identity all but lost. But that furnace of oppression becomes for us a firing kiln, a baker's oven, and the womb from whence we are born as a nation in the Spring. In our liberation, we bring our fruits of freedom to the world.

### Personal Application

Bondage Mentality: I'm stuck here under the ground. Life is rotten. Freedom Mentality: My challenges in life help me discover the strength of my soul. *Motzi - You eat what you are*



## 8. MATZAH - BLESSING & EATING

**BODY** Carefully release the bottom Matzah. Recite the blessing on the top Matzah and the broken middle matzo: "Blessed...and commanded us concerning eating Matzah." Hold it! Didn't we just say a blessing on the Matzah bread? That blessing was for giving us what to eat. Now we bless G-d for connecting us to Him through the Mitzvah of eating Matzah.

Break off a piece from each of these two Matzos for yourself and for each of those sitting at your table. Pass them around. Everybody eats at least two thirds of a Matzah (one ounce from each Matzah - to do this, they will need to help themselves to an auxiliary reserve of Matzah.) Hey, it's a Mitzvah after all! Lean to the left while you munch.

**SOUL** Since the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, Matzah is the only opportunity we have to actually *eat* a Mitzvah. That's right, the Matzah you are eating is pure G-dliness.

The Zohar calls Matzah, "Bread of Faith" and "Bread of Healing. "Faith?"

Well, actually, that's a rather feeble translation. "*Emunah*" is a word in Hebrew, and it means a lot more than "I believe." Faith can often be something people claim when they don't care to think too much. Emunah is when you go beyond thinking to a place your mind could have never brought you.

*Emunah* means touching the place where your soul and essence of the Infinite Light are One. It's a place that nothing can describe. Where there are no words. No doubts, no uncertainty, no confusion, nothing but a magnificent Oneness before which nothing else exists and the challenges of life withdraw.

Eating Matzah is a way of tapping into that reservoir. Your physical body digests the *Emunah* of your soul, everything is integrated back into One, and your body and soul are whole and harmonious.

How on earth can a mixture of water and wheat baked in an oven contain such a spiritual cure? Welcome to Judaism, where there is no dichotomy of spirit and matter, soul and body. Where the spiritual transforms into the physical, and material objects become spiritual in a perpetual chemistry of exchange. Where the body is healed through empowering the soul, and the soul is nourished with the rituals of the body. (After all, we live in the world of One G-d.)

### Personal Application

Bondage Mentality: Sure, I'll eat a little Matzah because that's the tradition. Freedom Mentality: I can't get enough of this stuff! Feed me Matzah! Feed my soul! *Matzah - Soul food*



## 9. MAROR - THE BITTER HERBS

**BODY** Grab some of that bitter herb (horseradish, romaine lettuce or both). Take enough to make the size of an olive if you were to crunch it into a ball (one ounce). Dip the bitter herb in the Charoset. Shake off any excess.

It's a careful balance: you want bitter herbs, but you want to sweeten the bitterness. But it still has to be bitter herbs - not a sumptuous Charoset hors d'oeuvres.

Say the blessing: "Blessed... and bonded with us through the eating of bitter herbs." Eat the bitter herbs without reclining. (Don't worry if it doesn't taste that great - it's not supposed to.)

**SOUL** We can never get used to Egypt. We never belonged there. We can never say, "They (Continued next page)



are the masters and we are the slaves and that’s the way it is.” It must remain something we remain bitter about, something that is unjust and needs to change.

If we get used to Egypt, it is very hard to leave. In fact, many Jews said, “Egypt is our land. How can we leave it?” And they stayed and died there.

As for the rest of us, when Moses came and told us we were going to leave, we believed him. It was our bitterness that had preserved our faith. This is the sweetness we apply to the bitter herb: bitterness alone, without any direction, is self-destructive. Add some life and optimism to it, and it becomes the springboard to freedom.

**Personal Application:**

Bondage Mentality: Look, this is what I’m used to. I can’t change. Freedom Mentality: I don’t belong to my habits. Maror - Perception or possibility?

**10. KORECH – THE SANDWICH**

**BODY** Break the bottom Matzah into two pieces. If you’ve followed the instructions until now, the bottom Matzah should still be whole. Take an ounce of the bitter herbs (horseradish, romaine lettuce or both) and dip it into the Charoset. Shake off any excess.

Now you know what the second pile of bitter herbs on the Seder plate is for. Place the bitter herbs in between your two pieces of Matzah. Say the words: “This is what Hillel did when the Holy Temple stood. He wrapped some Pesach lamb, some Matzah and bitter herbs and ate them together.” Hillel understood the words of the Torah about the Pesach lamb, “with Matzah and bitter herbs you shall eat it,” in their literal sense. And so he invented the sandwich. (Or should we call it a Hillel?) Lean to the left while you eat.

**SOUL** The world, when viewed from within Egypt, looks to be a mass of fragments. It’s a “Passoverly Challenged” perspective. Plain materialism.


Mitzvahs appear to be a mishmash of dos and don’ts; the Jewish people are a collection of irreconcilable individuals; daily life is a cacophony of hassles and just, well, stuff.

Once we escape materialism’s gravitational pull, we look back and see a whole new perspective. Mitzvahs are multiple expressions of a single spiritual path; Jews are multiple faces to a single soul; elements of today’s journey harmonize together as a delicate symphonic melody.

After we make ourselves into a temple for the Divine, then the bitter, the sweet and the tasteless responsibilities of life wrap together in a single package.

**Personal Application**

Bondage Mentality: I have to take care of career, family, health, hobbies, handball, friendships, parents, taxes, the house, the car, the cat... Freedom Mentality: I am a conductor and the world is my orchestra to play a symphony for its Creator. Korech - All together now...



**11. SHULCHAN ORECH – THE FEAST**

**BODY** Time to really eat. You know how to do this, right? Oh, don’t forget the tradition of eating the boiled egg on your Seder plate, dipped in some saltwater. Most do this at the very beginning of the meal. A boiled egg is a sign of mourning and symbolizes the cycle of life. On every festive occasion, we mournfully remember the destruction of our Temple and Jerusalem. Note: The chicken neck is not eaten at the Seder.


**SOUL** This step, along with Korech before it, marks the re-entry we mentioned at the beginning (in Kadesh). We’ve escaped Egypt and reached a higher vision. But freedom consists of more than escape. Complete freedom is when you can turn around and liberate all the elements of your world from their pure material state, and make them transcendent as well.

That’s what we do when we eat every day – we take foods grown from the earth, say a blessing over them and bring them into our journey as human beings. And when it’s a Jewish holiday or Shabbat, we elevate them further, into the realm of pure spirituality. As for tonight, this meal is going to be truly Divine.

So don’t imagine we’re just feasting. We’re reaching a higher state. And it’s a great way to do it.

**Personal Application**

Bondage Mentality: I am a slave to food. I live to eat. Freedom Mentality: I am a food liberator. I eat to live. Shulchan Orech - Feed your head



**12. TZOFUN – OUT OF HIDING**

**BODY** Grab that last bite. Be sure you’ve eaten enough, because the only thing to pass our lips after this step of the Seder tonight is another two cups of wine (Oy!). Retrieve that hidden Matzah. If you can’t find it, you may have to enter into negotiations with your kids to get it back. Eat another two-thirds of a Matzah. Lean to your left.

With the first Matzah, we fulfilled the Mitzvah to eat Matzah. This one is also in place of the Pesach lamb, which is meant to be eaten on a full stomach.

**SOUL** There is the body, there is the soul, and then there is the essence. If the soul is light, then that essence is its generator. The Kabbalah teaches that this essence remains elusive. It is called “Tzofun,” meaning hidden, concealed, locked away and out of reach. It is unlikely to experience it.


We dance around the essence-core, like a spacecraft in orbit, unable to land. We can be inspired, we can meditate, we can pray, but to touch this inner core – the essence of our soul – takes a power from beyond.

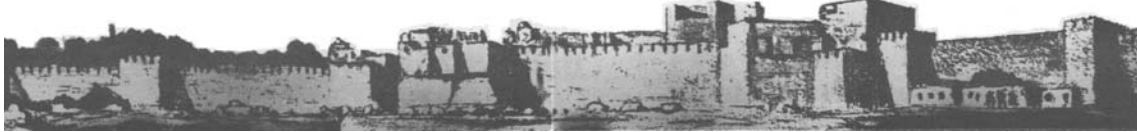
On Passover night, we have that power. But only after all the proper steps: destroying our internal chametz, preparing our homes for liberation, the previous eleven steps of the Seder. Then, when we are satiated with all we can handle, connecting every facet of ourselves to the Divine, that’s when the power comes to us. Whether we sense it or not, tasteless as it may seem, the Matzah we eat now – the Matzah of Tzofun – reaches deep into our essence and transforms our very being.

Those things you find inspiring and nice may take you a step forward. But to effect a real change, you need to do something totally beyond your personal bounds.

**Personal Application**

Bondage Mentality: Seeing is believing. Freedom Mentality: Believing is seeing. Tzofun - Now find the power





**13. BAIRACH – GRACE AFTER MEAL**


**BODY** If you’re still awake now, you know it’s getting late. Adults are falling asleep. Kids are having a great time taking advantage of that. But it’s not over. There are songs and wine, and Elijah the Prophet is on his way...

Fill your cup with wine (or grape juice). That’s cup #3. Say the Grace After Meals as printed in your Haggadah. Say a blessing on the wine and drink it all down. Lean to your left.

**SOUL** The theme of the Grace After Meals is confidence. Confidence in a Higher Force that is with us in our daily lives. Why did miracles happen in Egypt? Because we believed they would. Those who didn’t believe in miracles saw only plagues. To see a miracle, you need an open heart and mind, open enough to receive the Infinite. That is the opening we make when we thank G-d for the miracle of our food.

**Personal Application**

Bondage Mentality: I thank G-d for giving me what I need. Freedom Mentality: I thank G-d for letting me know what He “needs” from me. Berach - A new opening



**14. HALLEL – SONGS OF PRAISE**

**BODY** Now fill your cup with wine (or grape juice). That’s cup #4. Yes, you can handle it.

The kids open the front door to welcome Elijah the Prophet. Recite the prayer, “Pour out Your wrath...” from the Haggadah. Watch Elijah enter. (Can’t see him? Maybe you’ve had too much wine.)

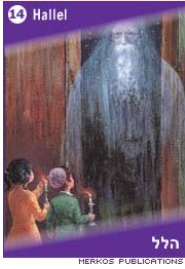
Tonight is called “Leil Shimurim” – a night of protection – when we are secured by G-d’s gentle hand. We open our front door in the middle of the night with confidence and trust that no harm will befall us. On that very first Passover in Egypt, we were redeemed in the merit of our trust that He would redeem us. Tonight we are liberated again, and again we demonstrate our trust. It’s all there, in your Haggadah. Sing whatever Psalms you know a song for.

At the end, say a blessing and drink the fourth and final cup of wine whilst leaning to you left (after four cups of wine the leaning comes naturally!).

**SOUL** The ancient rabbis clued us in on a key principle in the cosmic function: whatever G-d tells us to do, He does Himself. Of course, there’s a difference. We do it in our little human world, while He does it on a grand cosmic plane. He told us to open our door on the night of Passover. So, tonight, He opens every door and every gateway of the spiritual cosmos to all of the Jewish people. To each one of us, regardless of what we have been doing the rest of the year, tonight is our chance to reach the highest of spiritual levels.

**Personal Application**

Bondage Mentality: Since it’s Passover, I’ll make a little change. Freedom Mentality: Since Passover, I totally changed. Hallel - The designated drinker



**15. NIRTZAH – ACCEPTANCE**

**BODY** This last step of the Seder is easy: expect a miracle. (This is His job now.) Look up from your wine. The table’s a delicious mess. Uncle Irving is snoring in his Haggadah, serenaded by the first chirping of dawn. As you carry the little ones to their beds, the sound of Matzah crunching beneath your feet, you wonder, “Who will carry me to bed?”

Was it the best Seder that could have been? Look, it had its highlights. A few times, the kids got a little over-excited. And the horseradish and chicken soup didn’t mix too well. Grandpa told some great stories, but we heard them last year. We all had fun with the songs. We told the tale again, with new embellishments, just like we have for 3,329 years. We did what we are supposed to, in our own human way.

And now, let the Creator do what He has promised to do: a rerun. Starring us, in the Ultimate Redemption. With lots of miracles. But this time, forever.

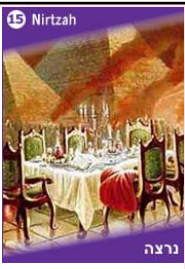
**SOUL** If G-d wanted us to be perfect, why did He create such imperfect beings?

Because what He wants of us is our very humanity. Sometimes we do good. Sometimes we fall. But we keep on struggling, and eventually make some real change in order to create a perfect world. And then, once we have done all we can, like a kind parent helping with the homework, He makes sure to touch up our work and make it shine.

For 3,329 years we have been leaving Egypt. For 3,329 years we have been doing our human job of transforming the darkness of His world into light. And now it is His turn to banish darkness forever, to make our work shine.

**Personal Application**

Bondage Mentality: Yaaaa-wwwn! Well, there goes another Passover night under the belt. Freedom Mentality: I’m done with Pharaoh; I’m through with Egypt. Take me to Jerusalem! Nirtzah - Discover your miracle



# The Bulkhead

## A Chassid's Hilarious Adventure At 35,000 Feet

There are Chassidim who relish *davening* - praying on airplanes. Immediately after takeoff, a Chassid of this breed stands up in the aisle (the farther forward, the better), intones a thunderous *brachah*, and with a great sweeping motion, envelops himself in a *tallit*, causing nearby passengers to flinch as flying *tzitzit* miss their eyes by millimeters. He then prays with an ardor rarely seen in shul, blocking the aisle and attracting the attention of everyone on the plane, and that, of course, is precisely his intent. He is, after all, a Chassid, charged with the mission to reveal G-d's presence within whatever niche of Creation he happens to occupy at any given moment.

Although the airline is under the impression that it has scheduled the flight in order to make money, and the passengers think that they are on the plane in order to actually arrive somewhere, the Chassid knows better. The Chassid understands that the objective of the flight is to sequester hundreds of souls 35,000 feet above sea level so that they can watch him pray and learn that there is a G-d in the world. When finished praying, any Chassid worth his salt works the cabin, entwining Jewish men in *tefillin*, reminding Jewish women to light Shabbat candles, and exhorting non-Jews to keep the seven Noahide commandments.

Although my admiration for these stalwarts knows no bounds, I am most definitely not one of them. I just do not have the genes. I abhor public display and I cannot bear to make a spectacle of myself, no matter how worthy the cause. It goes without saying that I am useless on mitzvah campaigns, except in those instances in which an adult is simply needed to drive the getaway car.

Thus, some years ago, while en route to LA, my stomach knotted up as I realized that I would have to pray on the plane on my return trip. The homeward flight left too early to pray the morning service beforehand and because of the time change, it would not arrive until well past noon. The fact that the flight was scheduled for the Tenth of Tevet, a fast day on which the morning service is unusually protracted, didn't help.

While pondering my predicament, I recalled that, when our kids were small, my wife always asked for the bulkhead seats when we trav-

eled. As I remembered, the bulkheads were partitions that separated the last five or so rows of seats from the rest of the plane. I looked down the aisle and confirmed that there were indeed panels partially isolating the back end of the cabin, just as I had remembered. If I could secure a seat immediately behind a panel for the return flight, I could stand facing this partition and pray in relative privacy. Such an arrangement was not ideal, but I could live with it, and I began to relax.

**Suddenly I froze... This was simply one of those shlock disaster-movie interludes, the moment of false hope, in which the poor suckers about to be decimated by an inevitable catastrophe are deluded into believing that salvation is at hand...**

Immediately upon my arrival in LA I rushed to the ticket counter and procured a boarding pass for a bulkhead seat for my homeward flight. Thus assured of a reasonable place to daven, I left for the city with a light heart.

When I arrived at the departure gate for my return flight, I glanced at my precious ticket to semi-invisibility and noted, with some unease, that the seat number seemed quite low for a position at the back of the plane. My uneasiness ballooned into anxiety when I caught a glimpse of the plane. It was much larger than the one on which I had arrived and it had an upper deck. I approached the agent at the gate who examined my boarding pass and assured me that I did indeed have a bulkhead seat. However, when I boarded the plane and showed my pass to the flight attendant, she indicated a seat right at the doorway, facing the cavernous entry to the plane.

I stared at her in disbelief and explained to her that I had been assigned a bulkhead seat. Just so, she replied, and pointed to the same seat. It began to dawn on me that the airline personnel and I did not speak the same language. Another brief exchange with

the attendant set me straight. The "bulkhead", as the term applied to this particular aircraft, was nothing other than the door to the plane, behind which were endless rows of seats all facing forward.

My praying that morning would be graced by a captive audience of about 300 people. Pavarotti could have wished for no better...

The plane took off and soon the captain switched off the seatbelt sign indicating that we had reached our cruising altitude.

The moment of truth had arrived, and I had no choice but to pray as best I could. As I stood up and donned *tallit* and *tefillin*, I soon discovered that the doorway area afforded plenty of space in which to stand and I found that if I positioned myself hard by the door, I was visible only to a few forward rows. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all. However, the revelation that it *would* be so bad after all was not long in coming.

Just as I finished reciting *Baruch Sh'amar*, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to confront two very impatient flight attendants standing by a mammoth mobile bar. "Sir, you can't do that here. This is the bar area".

"See here young lady, it so happens that I am a servant of G-d and a Chassid of the great and holy Rebbe of Lubavitch, and I intend to sanctify this spot by reciting my morning prayers here. So take yourself and your bar elsewhere". This is precisely what I did *not* say. In fact I didn't say anything because I was between the prayers *Baruch Sh'amar* and *Yishtabach*, an interval in which speech is not permitted.

I couldn't have spoken in any case because my stomach had lurched up against my diaphragm, and I began to wheeze and hyperventilate. I raised my eyebrows, which had become decorated with fine beads of sweat, and shrugged hoping that the attendants would understand this gesture as an appeal for sympathy, help and understanding.

Unfortunately, they were unresponsive. They were clearly annoyed that this apparition from the biblical era had

by Prof. Yaakov Brawer



not only commandeered their bar area, but wouldn't even speak to them. "Sir, you can do whatever you are doing at the back of the cabin near the rear galley."

So there *was* a place at the back of the plane where I could do whatever I do. A sense of relief surged through my distraught brain, and my stomach let go of my diaphragm, allowing me to take a couple of normal breaths. I nodded vigorously at the flight attendants, utilizing the opportunity to shake a drop of perspiration from the tip of my nose, and I began untying the strap of my *tefillin* in preparation for my escape to the refuge at the back of the plane.

Suddenly I froze with the dread realization that Providence was not about to let me off so easily. This was simply one of those shlock disaster-movie interludes, the moment of false hope, in which the poor suckers about to be decimated by an inevitable and inescapable catastrophe are deluded into believing that salvation is at hand.

I would remove my *tallit* and *tefillin* and walk to the rear of the cabin, but what then? Did I need to recite another blessing upon re-strapping the *tefillin* or not? Did a walk down the aisle of the aircraft imply *hesech hadaat* (loss of conscious attention from the *tefillin*)? If it did, then a blessing was required. If not, and I recited the blessing on the *tefillin*, it would be "a *brachah* in vain" - a severe halachic prohibition. Al-though instinctively I felt that another blessing was unnecessary, I wasn't really sure. Just two weeks before I had listened in on a complicated debate on just this subject at the Yeshivah, and the

situation was far from clear.

What should I do? My frenzied cogitations were cut short by the flight attendants, now, openly hostile, who insisted that I must move at once.

There was no way out. I picked up my *tallit* bag, took my prayer book and walked the full length of the plane, resplendent in *tallit* and *tefillin*. My trek down the aisle electrified the entire cabin. "What the...?" "Mommy, what's that?" "Hey look Lucy, Moses is back" "Bizarre, man" "What's that box on his head?" From the corner of my eye, I caught images of bewilderment, shock, and amusement.

As for me, the death of a thousand cuts would have been preferable. Somehow I made it to the semi-secluded haven at the back of the cabin and tried to collect myself. I started to pray but the only prayerful thought that I could muster was a fervent hope that the rear emergency door would blow open, and I would be mercifully sucked out of the aircraft.

This would never do. I had to pull myself together and pray properly. After all, the brain, by virtue of its innate superiority, rules the heart, right? I thought of Reb Mendel Futerfas, who managed to perform mitzvot and pray with zeal in a Siberian labor camp surrounded by the dregs of humanity. I reminded myself of the parable in Tanya of the "heathen" whose efforts to distract a Jew from praying were really a Divine gift, intended to elicit from the afflicted individual hidden spiritual strengths. I told myself that this episode presented a golden opportunity

•Continued on page 12

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MATZAH - FOOD OF FAITH  
Continued from page 3

So how do we nurture our faith? Literally, by eating “food of faith,” as the matzah we eat on Passover is known. How does eating matzah accomplish this? For one thing, matzah is flat, bland and tasteless. We don’t eat it because we appreciate its flavor; we eat it only because G-d has so commanded. On Pass-over night, the Jews left Egypt with such haste that their dough had no time to rise; it baked in the hot desert sun and turned to matzah. Thus, matzah is a reminder of the way we followed G-d into the desert trustingly, unhesitatingly.



At that stage, the Jews were freshly redeemed slaves at the very beginning of their journey to receive the Torah. They had only rudimentary knowledge or awareness of G-d. All they had was their faith and trust. Consuming and internalizing the matzah during our infancy as a people empowered us to apply the same level of faith to all the mitzvot to follow. The way to feed our faith is through mitzvot, through action. During times when our faith is weak and hope is waning, we can pull ourselves together and do a good deed, uplifting ourselves and the world in the process.

THE OTHER DARKNESS  
Continued from page 4

Brief experiences of darkness can help us in how we view others around us. Let’s notice, enquire and get up from our place to respond. Asking someone if she or he is OK and expressing concern signals that you care. Acknowledging another’s struggle may help decrease it. It sends a message that “you matter.”

If you are suffering, let someone you trust know. Verbalizing your inner burden can help alleviate it, at least to some degree. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi stated that “one small light can push away a whole lot of darkness.”

We are so busy living our lives that it’s easy not to notice when someone else is in a low place. Keep in mind that it’s not just what you need, but what you are needed for. Be a light for someone else, whether it’s a child or anyone experiencing confusion, pain or loss. Lighting another person’s candle doesn’t diminish your flame. We all can be lamplighters.

We live in an ever-changing world of beliefs. Truth transcends time and place; its inextinguishable light penetrates the darkness. Ignite your inner light from the everlasting flame of the Torah; then, light someone else’s.

THE BULKHEAD  
Continued from page 11

to transcend my own personal limitations, and that I should be overjoyed.

None of it worked. The emotional turbulence and the effects of caffeine withdrawal as a result of the fast had dissipated whatever inner resources I might have had. My brain, despite its vaunted innate superiority, did not rule my heart, nor, for that matter, any other part of me. I recited the prayers like a zombie and removed my *tefillin* and *tallit*. I cringed at the thought of walking back up the aisle to my seat, and I briefly considered crawling, until I realized that everyone would be able to see me anyway.

I hunched my shoulders, stared at the floor and quickly proceeded up the aisle. The cabin was quiet and fairly dark. It was obvious that the in-flight movie had begun. I glanced up at the movie screen and the marvel that met my eyes stopped me dead in my tracks. There on the screen were Jews, dozens of them, all wearing *tallit* and *tefillin*, and all praying! I couldn’t get over it. I stood and watched until this extraordinary tableau faded to another scene, and I then continued up the aisle. The movie, which as I later discovered was “The Jazz Singer”, had also apparently made quite an impression on the other passengers.

As I made my way, I



attracted considerable attention, but it was of a totally different kind than that which I had received an hour earlier. The looks were those of admiration and respect. People nodded knowingly to each other and smiled. I saw one woman pointing to me and explaining something to her small child. People in aisle seats wished me good morning and one man even stood up. When I arrived at my place the erstwhile testy flight attendants deferentially inquired after my comfort.

I was aglow with wonder, gratification, and thankfulness. I was also more than a little ashamed of myself. The Al-mighty did not produce and direct this magnificently orchestrated comedy of errors only in order to apprise 300 people of His eternal and all-encompassing presence. It seems that the 301st passenger, namely myself, was also in need of some serious instruction in this Ultimate Truth.

I thought of the Kotzker Rebbe. When he was a child someone jokingly told him “Mendel, I will give you a penny if you tell me where G-d is”. The little boy answered “I will give you two if you tell me where He is not!”

*Yaakov Brawer grew up in Massachusetts. He received his B.Sc. from Tufts University and his Ph.D. from Harvard. He currently lives with his family in Montreal where he is a Emeritus Professor of Anatomy and Cell Biology at McGill University*

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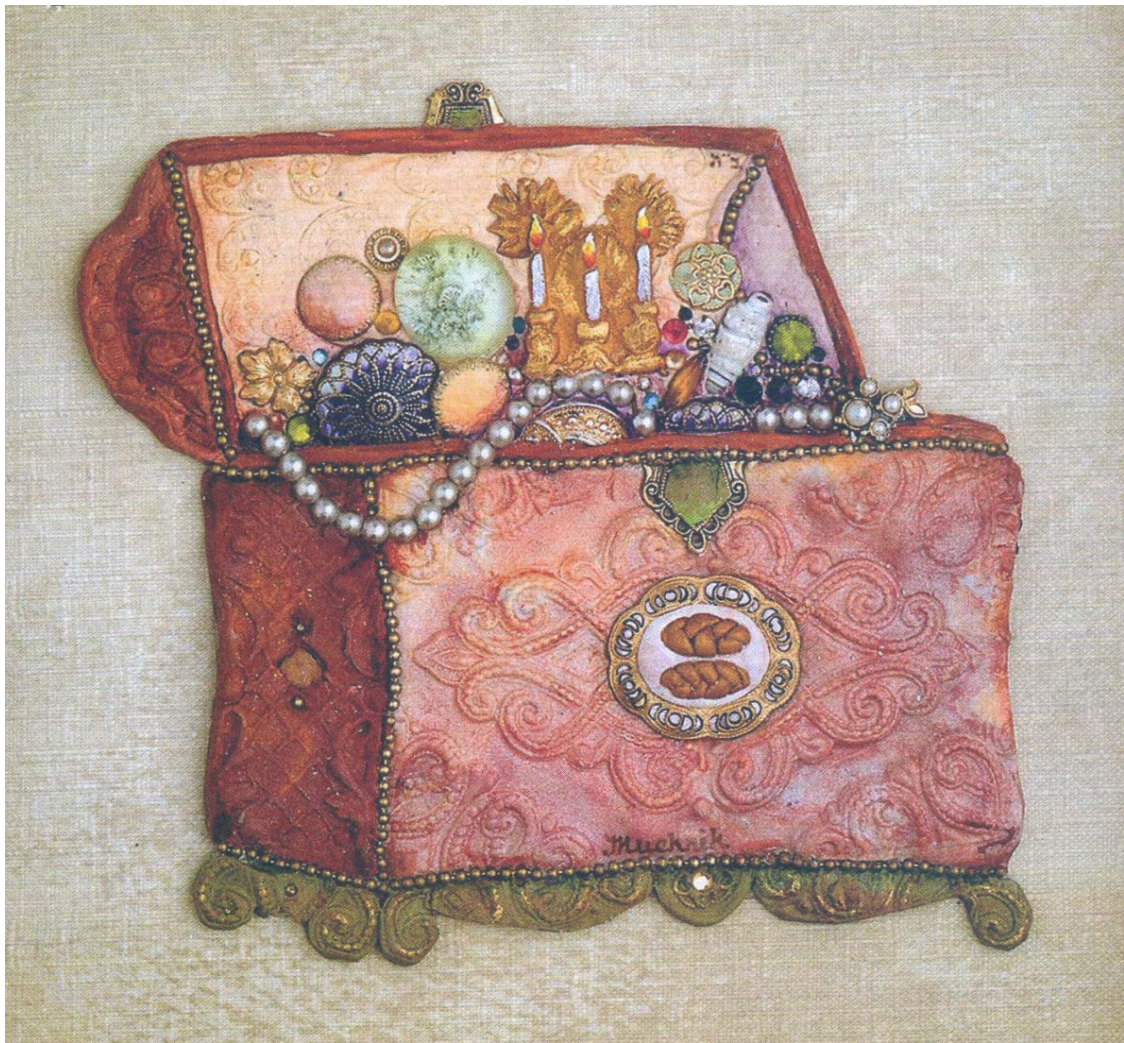
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## Meeting A Friend From The Past

by Chana Cotlar

It started with a phone call from a relative I hadn't spoken to in years. A visit from an old classmate followed. And then, one by one, I found myself bumping into people I had known years back but hadn't engaged with for some time. As I spoke with and interacted with these "blasts from the past," I noticed a feeling inside of me; it was just a gentle niggle at first. But it kept on surfacing. It began to take root and blossom. And then it hit me like a bolt of lightning.

"People change, Chana," the voice inside me called. "People grow up. They move on. They mature. They work on themselves," the voice continued.

The one who seemed aloof and distant years ago is now a softer and nurturing presence. The one who spoke with criticism and judgement now conversed with undertones of acceptance and love.

The one uninspired by spiritual truths is now alive with soulful energy and connection.

No, not everyone develops, it's true. But so many do. In small, yet significant ways.

Perhaps more than we take the time to notice.

And that voice within me is growing - with each passing day, it grows stronger and ever more passionate. It beckons me to let go of all preconceived notions of another and to embrace the G-d-given power of change. To create the space within my heart and within the relationship for the other to rise higher.

You see, so often, we remain frozen in time. We take a snapshot of another person during a particular period and then allow it to freeze in time and space as it hovers in mid-air above us. But in truth, the connections that bind us one to the other are flowing rivers in time; they are dynamic, pulsing with new energy at each twist and turn along the way.

This ever-changing energy is rooted in Creation itself.

Kabbalah explains that G-d did not simply create the world and then leave it to run on its own, checking in from time to time to make sure all is running smoothly. Rather, G-d creates and recreates the world at every given moment. G-d breathes new energy into

each and every second of life. So while we take our history and baggage with us into each new moment of life, we also have the ability to change the course of the direction we are going. A new moment means a new space to redefine my journey - to redefine the way my past will affect my future. Indeed, life is in constant motion, allowing us to make great changes to our lives.

It is an epiphanous realization that can fill us with excitement and hope about the potential that our relationships hold.

True unconditional acceptance of another lies at the foundation of a relationship, embracing the other for who they are regardless of any change/growth/action/inaction on their part. We love another by virtue of their humanity, soul and having been created in G-d's image. And we cannot try to change the other (we all know how well that works!).

But built upon that foundation (in normal relationships, where there isn't a breach of trust or respect) is the hope and realization that what the relationship looks like today may change over time. It isn't stagnant.

The energies that bind us together are running waters of connection. Right now, they may seem distant or superficial in nature, but as they ebb and flow, they may one day carry a depth and connection that we could not have previously foreseen.

I'm empowered by this paradigm of life. I want to see you that way, and I hope you'll see me that way, too. The waters continue to flow...

## JEWS... & TATTOOS?

by Tzvi Freeman

### STAR OF DAVID TATTOO?

#### Question:

I'm a 21-year-old Jewish man who is thinking of getting a tattoo. My two best friends have both gotten tattoos, and I'm thinking of getting the Star of David. I have heard that tattoos violate Jewish law. What do you think?

#### Answer:

The fact that you would like a Star of David tells me that you're a proud Jew. The question is how proud King David would be about having his star pierced into your skin. To him, tattooing was something the decadent idolaters did, along with child sacrifice and body-gashing.

You see, G-d couldn't get much more explicit in the Bible. It's right there, along with other idolatrous acts, in Leviticus 19:28: "You shall not etch a tattoo on yourselves. I am the L-rd."

All those things that idolaters once did, even if they are not done with idolatrous intent, still have a spiritual impurity (known in Hebrew as *astumah*) attached to them. The Torah forbids tattoos so that we will not come in contact with that impurity - and carry it around for the rest of our lives.

That's the nasty thing about tattoos: they're permanent. An online survey back in 2002 indicated that 19% of those who had gotten tattoos regretted it later on. Imagine you decide at some point that you just don't want yours anymore. It is difficult to remove a permanent tattoo, and almost impossible to remove it without a trace.

Yes, there's a lot of peer pressure. Some of these tattoos really do look cool. But, look, you are an adult now. Think a little more deeply about what you're doing before doing it. Maybe try some other way to connect to your Judaism, like black leather straps and boxes (i.e., tefillin) to strap around your arm and head instead.

### HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL?

#### Question:

My 98-year-old mother is a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp who was separated from her mother by Dr. Mengele. We honored my murdered grandmother by naming our daughter after her. In turn, my now teenage daughter would like to honor my mother by getting a tattoo of her Auschwitz number.

My daughter and I are quite divided on this issue. Can you please help?

#### Answer:

Symbols are important, but instead of perpetuating an ugly symbol, why not transform that ugliness into something beautiful? This is how Judaism has survived until today: After each tragedy, we manage to channel our grief into something productive and positive.

And indeed, children need to get the message that Judaism is alive and well - that it is a life of joy, not oy. Museums and memorials are also important, but children must be excited about the future of Judaism; they should feel a sense of purpose and pride as Jews.

We want our children to live lives to make the six million souls proud, and to ensure that the torch will continue on to the next generation.

So perhaps encourage your daughter to think about the following: How would a tattoo impact a positive change in the world? Certainly it would give the person who has it a sense of solidarity with those who were in the camps. However, it doesn't truly do anything positive, or do anything to elevate the souls of the six million who perished in the Holocaust. In fact, tattoos are forbidden in Judaism. If you had asked someone who was forced to get that tattoo in the camps if they'd want a Jew 70 years later to get one as well... what do you think would be the reply?

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# Soul Sisters

A few days after the war in Ukraine broke out, while under siege in Sumy, Ukraine, Rabbi Yechiel Shlomo Levitansky, Sumy's Chabad Rabbi, spoke on zoom to Jewish community members around the United Kingdom. He shared the Rebbe's guidance, the faith and hope they were living with and encouraged his Jewish audience to do another mitzvah for the safety of the Jews in Ukraine.

Carol, a Jewish woman from Bristol, was touched by the Levitansky Family's story of faith and commitment to their community. She prayed daily for their safety and for and their speedy escape from the besieged city. Carol found online a photo of Levitansky family, printed it and placed it near her Shabbat candles to have the family in mind as she lit the candles and



The Singer girls help Carol with her new Mezuzah



left to right: Rochi Levitansky, Carol and Chaya Singer prayed.

She asked her Chabad Rabbi, Rabbi Mendy Singer, to put up a Mezuzah on the two doors in her home that didn't yet have one, in merit of the Levitansky Family's safety, along with the safety of all the Jews in Ukraine.

Carol's Chabad Rebbetzin, Chaya Singer, told her aunt, Sori Levitansky, who is Yechiel Shlomo's sister-in-law, about Carol's special prayers and Mitzvos. Chaya sent Sori a photo of Carol putting up her Mezuzah to share with her brother, Yechiel Shlomo and his wife, Rochi. When the Levitansky family finally crossed the border, Sori sent Chaya a photo of the family safely on the other side which she forwarded to Carol who was so delighted and grateful to hear the good news!

A year later, at the Kinus Hashluchos, the annual international gathering of Chabad

Rebbetzins, Chaya brought Carol to the guest program as a devoted friend of Chabad. While sitting at the banquet with her guest, Chaya suddenly noticed Mrs. Rochi Levitansky from Sumy sitting at the table right next to theirs!

Carol and Rochi Levitansky shared a heartfelt embrace. "It is your prayers and good deeds that brought us to safety. We are so grateful to Jews all over the world who were praying for us!" exclaimed Rochi.

"It was really emotional meeting her, I didn't expect it to be so moving. It was like our G-dly sparks igniting." Carol said afterwards.

It was so beautiful to watch them embrace and share such a special moment. Two women who had never met before, sharing true care and gratitude. A meeting that neither ever thought would happen; yet by the Hand of

Hashem, they were brought across the ocean to meet at the Kinus Hashluchos. Two Jewish women, in two different countries, connected by their G-dly souls in true Ahavat Yisrael - one Jew caring and praying for another.

Perhaps their unplanned meeting was G-d's way of saying, 'Your thoughts and prayers do matter, your care for other Jews and the Mitzvos you do in their merit, connect you to each other,

soul to soul and have a tangible impact.

Am Yisrael - like one person with one heart.

Chaya Singer is the daughter of our very own Rabbi Dovid & Chany Mochkin. Together with her husband, Mendy, and children, the Singers serve as the Chabad Shluchim-Emissaries in Bristol, U.K.

## ISRAEL

by Sarah Zadok

She is a beggar with red strings and century-old eyes.  
She is techina dripping down a sun kissed forearm.  
She is an entrepreneur in pressed Armani at lunch break;  
double latte two sugars please.  
She is chess in the park, Arak and cigarettes. Hard hugs,  
long smiles, short tempers.  
She hides nothing.  
She is the sunrise over Judean hills,  
Stone, fire, wind, and sea.  
She is prayer book and she is soccer field, sandal and boot.  
She is as much castle as she is farm,  
As much memorial as she is testimony.  
She is skull cap and knee high,  
She is a wild flower on the wing of the earth.  
With ancient, weathered hands and a prayer so constant  
that her earth hums,  
She nestles her way into your heart,  
Sits cross armed in the corners of your soul,  
Curls into fetal position inside your dreams,  
And whispers across the sands... "I am yours and you are mine."  
You can't help but yield to her.  
She is pulse and movement, breath and radiance.  
She is your journey.  
Walk hard on her earth, glide upon her cobbled stones.  
High-five her successes and break when she weeps.  
She is the backdrop of your soul. As much a part of you  
as the air that you breathe.  
Hold her tight. Make her proud.

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