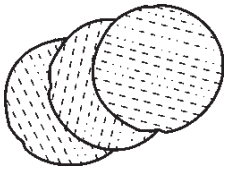


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## A Billboard In Oklahoma Changed A Young Man's Life

by Aharon Loschak

Sometimes, all it takes is a billboard. In the middle of Oklahoma, no less.

Seth Feldman grew up in the Bayside neighborhood of Queens NY, where, in his words, "everyone was Jewish." In an environment like that, being Jewish was only natural, and young Feldman didn't give it much thought. Then he left home - first as a student at Northwestern University in Evanston IL, and then traveling throughout the country in the context of his budding TV-production career. Suddenly, he was forced to reckon with his Judaism in an entirely different way. Over the decades, and with the help of rabbis and mentors in the various places he lived, Feldman grew closer to his roots. Today, he leads an observant Jewish life in Manalapan NJ.

But on a visit to his alma mater late last year, a chance encounter at a Shabbat meal sparked a long-forgotten memory: The starting point of his Jewish journey when he was still a student at Northwestern in the early 1990s. It happened on a lonely highway in the middle of Oklahoma.

"As an alumnus, I'm still

an avid fan of Northwestern's football team," said Feldman. So in October 2019, he decided to catch a game, traveling with his son, Oren, from their New Jersey home to the Chicago area.

Mindful of the fact that he would be there for Shabbat, Feldman contacted Rabbi Mendy and Ariella Weg of Chabad of Northwestern University to make arrangements. The WEGs were happy to help, and so there they were - the Weg family, Feldman and his son, and dozens of Jewish college students sitting together for Shabbat dinner that October night.

Playing the typical game of "Jewish Geography", Feldman asked Rabbi Weg where he was from. Atypical to the average Chassidic Jew, Weg responded that he was from Tulsa OK, where his parents, Rabbi Yehudah and Etel Weg, have served as Chabad emissaries since 1987.

"That's when I had the flashback," says Feldman.

"When I was a student at Northwestern, I was on the rowing team. During Spring Break, we trained in warmer climates. One year, we trained down in Austin, Texas. It was

a great opportunity for rowing, but it was horrible timing: I completely forgot it was Passover that week."

Fortunately, on that first night of Passover, he was able to join a Seder at the University of Texas. But on the second night, he found himself on the team bus heading back to Chicago.

"I was feeling sad and angry with myself," recalls Feldman.

And it was then, as the bus sped down the highway somewhere in Oklahoma, that he saw the sign that changed his life forever. As the rumination of a passed-over Seder were festering in his mind, he looked up and saw a billboard emblazoned with the words, "Don't Pass Over Passover," together with a picture of matzah and wine.

"I was so upset with myself on that bus that night that my teammates noticed and asked me what was wrong," he says. "When I saw that billboard, I decided that I would never miss a Seder again. I felt that G-d was showing me a sign, and I wasn't going to miss it."

And that's when it began. From Aruba to Honolulu to Los Angeles, New York,

Portland, Hoboken, and finally Manalapan, Feldman took a Jewish journey that changed his life - and the lives of many others. Together with their local Chabad rabbi, Seth and his wife, Stacy, helped create an innovative High Holiday service dubbed "Project Rosh" that attracts more than 500 people annually. Feldman is the proud *gabbai*, and uses his marketing and narrative skills to spread the message near and far.

It's a journey that, in his words, "is far from over."

So, who put up that billboard in Oklahoma?

Rabbi Yehudah Weg of Chabad of Tulsa, of course.

"The funny thing is that there was a good chance that the billboard would never have happened," the elder Weg remembers. "I never really thought of putting up billboards; it's an expensive project. It so happened that for that year in the early '90s, the Shluchim Office in New

York arranged a nationwide billboard campaign, securing funding for the rental, design and all other logistics. All we rabbis had to do was pay for the printing and installation, which amounted to \$400."

But back then, even \$400 wasn't a small sum for Weg's fledgling operation, and he hesitated.

What swayed him to go ahead?

When he personally visited the billboard site over the highway, he saw that the current advertiser was Coca Cola. "If Coke is advertising here, there must be something to it," he reasoned. He paid the money and before long, "Don't Pass Over Passover" with Passover graphics blared across the Sooner State Highway.

For 30 years, Weg had no idea how impactful that billboard turned out to be. It took decades, a football game, a Shabbat meal and his own son's Chabad center in Chicago for him to find out!



## Why Do I Need a "Hebrew Name"?

On the most basic level, a Jewish name is a keystone of Jewish identity. Our sages tell us that although more than two centuries of exile and slavery had all but assimilated the Children of Israel into the pagan society of Egypt, they nevertheless remained a distinct entity - because they retained their Hebrew "names, language and dress," and thus merited their miraculous redemption.

On a deeper level, the Torah teaches that G-d created the world with "speech" ("And G-d said, 'Let there be light!,' and there was light" etc.). In the Kabbalah it is explained that the 22 sacred letters of the Hebrew *alef-bet* are the spiritual "building blocks" of all created reality, and that the Hebrew name of any creation represents the combination of sacred letters that reflects its distinct characteristics and the purpose for which it was created.

Your Hebrew name is your spiritual call sign, embodying your unique character traits and G-d-given gifts. Ideally, you should use it constantly, not just when you're called to the Torah or when prayers are offered on your behalf. Your Hebrew name functions as a conduit, channeling spiritual energy from G-d into your soul and your body.

This is why, say the Chassidic masters, an unconscious person will often respond and be revived when his or her name is called.

According to Jewish custom, a critically ill person is sometimes given an additional Hebrew name - somewhat like a spiritual bypass operation to funnel fresh spirituality around their existing name and into their bodies; with the influx of spirituality, the body is given renewed vigor to heal itself.

Usually, your Hebrew name is applied to you soon after birth. Jewish boys are named at their *brit* (circumcision), and girls at a Torah reading shortly after their birth. Your name is selected by your parents who may name you after a dear departed loved one, most often an ancestor. Or, you just might end up with a Hebrew name of their own preference. Either way, however, our sages have declared that your parents' choice of a name constitutes a "minor prophecy", since the name they choose conforms with the inborn nature of your soul.

If your parents didn't give you a *brit* or didn't name you at a Torah reading - or if you're a non-Jew who's converting to Judaism - you can select any Hebrew name that resonates with you. Often, people will choose a name that is phonetically similar and/or of similar meaning to their "given" name (e.g., Bernie becomes Baruch, Barbara becomes Brachah).

**HANDMADE SHMURAH MATZAH FOR YOUR SEDER - SEE PAGE 6**

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# THE EIGHTH DAY OF PESACH: THE FEAST OF MOSHIACH

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



The eighth day of Pesach is traditionally associated with our hopes for the coming of Moshiach. For this reason, the *haftorah* (from the Book of Isaiah) read on that day contains many prophecies which refer to the era of the redemption. Among the best-known of these: "The wolf will dwell with the lamb; the leopard will lie down with a young goat"; "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather in the exiles of Israel."

About 250 years ago, in keeping with the Moshiach theme, the Baal Shem Tov instituted the custom of Moshiach's *Seudah*, the festive meal of Moshiach to take place in the afternoon, following Minchah, of the eighth day of Pesach. In Israel, where Passover lasts for seven days, Moshiach's Meal is held on the seventh day. The celebration customarily extends past nightfall, ushering out Passover amid song, words of Torah and Moshiach inspiration.

Moshiach's *Seudah* is intended to deepen our awareness of Moshiach and enable us to integrate it into our thinking processes. The twelfth article of Maimonides' 13 principles of faith states, "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach. Even if he delays, I will wait every day for him to come."

Though all believing Jews accept this principle intellectually, for many the concept of Moshiach remains an abstraction. Partaking of Moshiach's *Seudah* reinforces our belief in this principle, translating our awareness of Moshiach into a meal, a physical experience which leads us to associate this concept with our flesh and blood.

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The Baal Shem Tov's linking of our awareness of Moshiach to the physical is significant, because it prepares us for the revelations of the era of the redemption. In that era, the G-dliness that is enclothed within the physical world will be overtly manifest. As the prophet Isaiah declared, "The glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together." At that time, "the glory of G-d" will permeate even the physical aspects of the world - "all flesh."

Chassidic philosophy explains that the preparations for a revelation must foreshadow the revelation itself. Since, in the era of the redemption, the revelation of G-dliness will find expression even in the physical world, it is fitting that our preparation for these revelations be associated with physical activities such as eating and drinking.

Moshiach's *Seudah*, as mentioned above, is held on the eighth day of Pesach. The Torah originally commanded us to celebrate Pesach for seven days. When our people were exiled, however, a certain degree of doubt arose regarding the exact date on which the holidays should be celebrated in the Diaspora. To solve the problem of determining the Jewish calendar in exile, our sages added an extra day to each festival. In other words, the eighth day of Pesach had been an ordinary day, but through the power endowed by the Torah, the Jewish people were able to transform it into a holy day.

When Moshiach comes, a similar transformation will occur throughout all of creation. Even the material and mundane aspects of the world will reveal G-dliness. The celebration of Moshiach's *Seudah* on the eighth day of Pesach - once an ordinary day, now transformed - anticipates the kind of transformation that will characterize the era of the redemption.

It is particularly fitting that it was the Baal Shem Tov who originated the custom of Moshiach's *Seudah*. Once, in the course of his ascent to the heavenly realms on Rosh Hashanah, the Baal Shem Tov encountered Moshiach and



## THE MIRROR-SEDER

by Yanki Tauber

Time is a tyrant. It plants a "One Way Only" sign on the road of life, another dictating "No Stopping, No Standing", and mercilessly enforces both rules without equivocation. It wrenches us away from our past and holds off our future behind a wall of ignorance, making compost of our most treasured moments and a mockery of our predictions.

We might overthrow political dictators, cure diseases, overcome poverty; but if we want to be free, we must conquer time. For of what use would it all be, if we remain imprisoned within a sliver of present, sliced so thin that anything we have and everything we are already was or hasn't yet been?

That is why Passover, the festival of freedom, is predi-

cated upon the power of remembering. Memory is our answer to the tyranny of time. Reclining at the Seder, eating the Matzah and the Maror and drinking the four cups of wine, we ingest history into our very flesh and blood, tasting - and becoming - the bitterness of our slavery, the triumph of our Exodus, the faith that carried us from Egypt, and the commitment we entered into at Sinai. Time's bounds fall away that night; the past becomes current, history becomes now.

But if only the roadblock to the past were lifted, ours would be only a partial victory. If time surrendered only one of its frontiers on Passover but maintained its blockade of the future, we'd be only a half-free people, masters of our past but pris-

oners of the unknowable to come.

That is why Passover has two parts. The "first days" with its Seders and its reliving of history, and the "final days" with its messianic themes - days that herald the divine goodness and perfection which, the prophets promise us, is the end-goal of creation and the fulfillment of our present-day lives.

This is the significance of the Chassidic custom, instituted by the Baal Shem Tov, to conduct a "mirror-Seder" in the closing hours of the last day of Passover, complete with Matzah and four cups of wine. These are hours, say the Chassidic masters, when time relinquishes its last hold upon our lives; when the future, too, can be remembered, and the Era of Moshiach tasted and digested as the Exodus is on the Seder night.

asked him, "When are you coming?" Moshiach replied, "When the wellsprings of your teachings spread outward."

The goal of the Baal Shem Tov's life was to prepare us for Moshiach, and the institution of Moshiach's *Seudah* was part of that life's work.

Like many other teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, the custom of conducting Moshiach's *Seudah* was explained



and widely disseminated by the successive Rebbes of Chabad. Moreover, in 5666 (1906) the Rebbe Rashab (the fifth Rebbe) added a new element to Moshiach's *Seudah*: the drinking of four cups of wine.

During the time of the Baal Shem Tov, the main ingredient of Moshiach's *Seudah* was matzah. The flat bland tasting matzah symbolizes selfless humility, a desire to transcend oneself. Wine, by contrast, is flavorful and pleasurable, and thus symbolizes the assertiveness of our individual personalities. Combining matzah and wine in Moshiach's

*Seudah* teaches us that self-transcendence does not require that we erase our personal identities. Self-transcendence may be accomplished within each individual's nature. A person can retain his distinctive character and identity, yet dedicate his life to spreading G-dliness instead of pursuing personal fulfillment. Once he has fundamentally transformed his will, an individual can proceed to a more complete level of service of G-d in which his essential commitment permeates every aspect of his personality.

•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.

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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 Wednesday, April 13. Responsibility cannot be accepted for forms returned later.**



# Aleph Bais... Ball!

by Aharon Loschak

## When Life Knocks You Down

On April 28, 2021, pro baseball player Bryce Harper stepped into the batter’s box and was hit in the face by a 97-mile-per-hour fastball.

He crumpled to the ground, and after a few scary moments, walked off the field.

Seven months later, at the conclusion of the season, the Most Valuable Player of the league was announced: Bryce Harper.

After getting hit in the face and missing the next few games, one can only imagine how frightening it must have been to step back into the batter’s box. Just the thought of that piece of cork coming at you with such velocity can send shivers down the spine. But somehow he summoned the courage to do so, and apparently, with smashing success.

But can everyone do this? What if you get smacked in the face with a proverbial fastball and are too scared to even step back into the batting cage of life? When life smacks you down and you’re feeling unable to step in to take a swing, how can you become the next MVP?

### Passover

The final plague that broke the Egyptians and set the Exodus in motion was the death of the firstborn. In preparation for that fateful night, Moses had instructed the Jewish people to prepare the Paschal Lamb and to stay indoors the entire evening. “Paint the doors of your homes with the blood of the sacrifice,” Moses told them, and then:

*G-d will pass to smite the Egyptians, and He will see the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, and G-d will pass over the entrance, and He will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses to smite [you].*

And thus, the holiday of Passover was born.

But why is this the moment we remember for eternity? The Exodus narrative is full of miraculous and dramatic moments, so if we’re looking for holiday names, why this particular moment? Yes, there are other names for this holiday, like “Festival of Freedom” or “Festival of the Matzot,” so how did “Pass-over,” or Pesach in Hebrew, earn the medal for all time?

### Making An Entranceway

Passover is the name of choice because it captures the true theme of the holiday.

To explain, we’re going to take a detour to a beautiful Midrashic statement in which G-d tells the Jewish people:

“Make an entranceway for me the size of a needle’s eye, and I will open it for you like the doorways of a palace.”

The Midrash refers to a Jew seeking to turn to G-d, whether after spending time apart due to sin or apathy, or simply a Jew’s desire to get ever closer to his or her Creator. G-d tells them, “Make just a small effort, however small it is. If you do that, I will help you do the rest.”

You see, G-d is always willing to help us. But the way it works is that we must take the initiative. It need not be something huge, but it must be something. As soon as we do that, G-d pulls us up, lifting us past any benchmark we could have reached on our own.

This is a comforting thought - for most. The problem in Egypt was that the people weren’t even capable of that little bit. They desperately needed G-d’s help, but they were sadly unable to make even the smallest effort to do anything about it.

This reality was true on both the physical and spiritual level.

In the literal sense, the people were simply exhausted. When Moses first came to them with tidings from G-d that redemption was on the way, the Torah tells us that they didn’t listen for they were “out of breath from the hard work.” This was a profound psychological prison, in which the slave was so deep into his oppression that he was no longer capable of even contemplating freedom. Even the hopes and dreams were gone, leaving a shell of a human too deep in bondage to consider freedom.

And from a spiritual perspective, the Zohar tells us that the people had sunk to the 49th of the “50 gates of impurity.” After centuries in that depraved land and so much suffering, they had nearly forgotten their identity and many had even stooped to idolatry.

All in all, our ancestors in Egypt were in no position to do anything to better their own situation. They were unable to follow the classic rule of “You make the first move.”

So what happened? How did they end up leaving?

## G-d Passes Over The Entranceway

This is the deeper meaning of Passover. The Hebrew word for “entrance” in the verse, “And G-d will pass over the entrance” is the same word for “entranceway” used in the Midrash in which G-d declares that we must make the first effort.

So, when the Torah tells us that on Passover night, “G-d will pass over the entrance,” what that means is that when it came time for Exodus, G-d made a dispensation, and said, “This time, I’ll forgive even the need for a small entrance. I’ll pass over that, too.”

In other words, G-d did all the heavy lifting, from A to Z. He required the people to do nothing. Instead, G-d reached out and whisked them away from the physical fatigue and their spiritual abyss. They didn’t entirely deserve it, other than the Paschal Lamb they didn’t do much, yet G-d did it for them anyway.

And that’s why Passover is the name - because it highlights just how much G-d loves us and will ultimately do anything for us.

### Your Passover Moment

So it is with us. Of course, the right way to do things is to try, to do something. If you want to improve your life - physically, emotionally mentally, spiritually, or what have you - you should make a move. And then G-d will do the rest.

That’s indeed how it should be. But sometimes we’re simply exhausted. We know our life could be better, and that we should be doing something about it, but the months and years have piled up and we feel trapped underneath the weight of it all. We can’t even make that first move.

We sometimes feel as if there’s really nothing we can do to right our ship. We are now trapped, unable to do even the smallest thing in repair.

So is all lost? Are we destined to fall further and deeper into the abyss?

No way! G-d is big and benevolent. There’s a “Pass-over moment” in store for us yet. We need to believe in Him, pray to Him, and believe in ourselves that come what may, all is not lost.

Perhaps we don’t deserve it, but neither did our ancestors in Egypt - and G-d was still there for them. He’ll be there for us, too.



## When You Are In A Slump

When professional baseball players start slumping, it’s bad news. They can’t hit, they get depressed, and pretty soon, they’re benched.

When it happens to the best in the sport, we hear about how they’re “trusting their mechanics” even if it’s not delivering results. “Trust the process” they say, “and it’ll eventually bring the results.” It’s a fair argument: After all, the mechanics are still there, it’s just a matter of time until they break out.

And it usually works.

You see, a player whose swing is off is hopeful and even confident that whatever he’s doing will eventually bring the results he’s looking for. Day after day, he accumulates empty at-bats, yet his coach (the type that inspires confidence) believes in him and tells him, “Keep doing what you’re doing. Any day now, you’ll make sweet contact and that ball will pop right off your bat.”

He’s a professional, after all. He has it in him, and there’s no reason to assume he’s magically lost his touch. It’ll come, it’s just a matter of time. There are countless stories to prove it.

This is a wonderful metaphor for life.

### Collect Empty Jugs

In the Book of Kings, we read of a distraught woman who turns to the prophet Elisha crying that her husband died and she’s destitute. Worse still, creditors are threatening to kidnap her children as collateral and she doesn’t know what to do.

The prophet tells her to collect empty pitchers and fill them from the one small jug of oil that she does have. Miraculously, the oil continues pouring until all the empty containers fill up. She now has a valuable resource, and everyone’s happy.

*And he said, "Borrow vessels for yourself from outside, from all your neighbors; do not borrow only a few empty*

*vessels. And you shall come and close the door about yourself and about your sons, and you shall pour upon all these vessels; and the full one you shall carry away."*

### When Your Fire Is Lost

The Alter Rebbe sees this as a metaphor for a person who used to have a “fire” (the Hebrew word for “my husband” - *ishi* -can also be read “my fire”), but now it’s dead.

You know exactly what that’s like. Don’t you remember when you were young, passionate, and idealistic? Who doesn’t recall those early days when you first started exploring your Judaism and everything was fascinating and oh-so-wondrous? Every new ritual, every new teaching was exhilarating and refreshing; you simply couldn’t get enough of it.

Don’t you remember when you were young and naïve, and your marriage “sparkled?” People talked about how you were so in love, and you felt as if you had discovered the best thing ever? Your relationship was alive, and every time you looked at your spouse, you couldn’t help but think how lucky you were and how much richer your life had become.

Or how about the early days of your career? Each time you entered the office, every time you got into your truck to start the day, you felt like you were changing the world. You spun magic, and people adored your skills, services, or management.

But then you get older, life roughens you up a bit, and now you’re “dead.” Religion can get boring, your marriage isn’t that sparkling, and your job is a black hole. It’s not bad per se, it’s just “dead.” You drag your feet around and scoff at all those young, naïve puppies who think they’re making a difference. “Been there, done that, son. It’s all downhill now.”

•Continued on page 12

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# THE PRINCE AND THE PIT

by Eli Landes

There's a story they tell, when the taste for all other stories has run dry. When the heart feels cold and afraid, and nothing seems sufficient to chase away the dark. On days like those, when they've exhausted all other options, they tell the story of the pit.

And the prince who fell into it.

The pit is dark and deep, and the chances of the prince ever climbing out are slim-to-none. For all intents and purposes, this tale is over.

But not for him. His story doesn't end when he falls into the pit.

That's when it begins.

He falls long; falls hard. Bangs his head, scrapes his skin, sprains some bones. To a prince who has only ever known the soft comforts of a palace, the pain is blinding. He comes to a stop eventually, though how far away from the bottom is anyone's guess. This pit is as wide as it is deep, filled with ledges and alcoves branching off into darkness. It seems endless - an impossible distance to climb and an impossible distance more to fall.

But the prince is indignant. He is a prince, after all. A prince does not belong in a pit. He belongs outside, free and proud and reunited with his father. So he picks himself up, dusts himself off, and sets off to find a way out.

It's on one of his explorations that he finds the rope. There's not much to it, really - just a thin, long rope, rising out of the pit into the world

beyond. And yet, it's somehow the most beautiful thing he's ever seen. He runs to it, grasps it with both hands. At last, he has a way out.

The pit the prince fell into is dark and deep, and the chances of the prince ever climbing out are slim-to-none. For all intents and purposes, this tale is over. But not for him. His story doesn't end when he falls into the pit. That's when it begins.

But, as he soon discovers, leaving this pit is not so simple. He's a prince, after all - his body isn't made for rope climbing. His hands bleed, his muscles ache, his grip slips again and again. He forces himself to keep climbing, to fight through the exhaustion and the sweat and the pain, but for every step he gains he seems to fall two more, the excitement that once fueled him long since lost.

Yet still he climbs, compelled by a drive he cannot comprehend. A need to ascend. To return.

Until, one day, his grip fails.

And he falls.

He falls hard, hits a rocky ledge with a groan. He hasn't fallen in a long time - not since he first fell into the pit. The pain is the first to hit, flooding his eyes with tears and spasming through his muscles. Then comes the anger. He surges to his feet, bends over and screams. It's not fair! He's a prince. What business does a prince have in a pit?

So he sulks for a while: kicks at rocks, explores some caves, not accomplishing anything of value. He knows he's procrastinating. He should be climbing the rope. But he's afraid. He's never been afraid before, but now he's terrified. What if he tries again, and fails? What if he climbs and falls even further?

But in the end, even his fear is not enough to stop him. He needs to climb, more than he needs to breathe or eat or sleep. He walks back to the rope, gazes up, takes a deep breath.

And climbs.

It's different this time - he's not as enthusiastic as he once was, but he's not as naïve, either. He remembers the parts where he struggled last time; remembers how he pushed himself too hard and gave up. He tries a more measured approach, taking longer breaks, pausing to eat and drink.

But climbing is hard, especially when you're a prince. His grip slips one day, and he falls a few feet - catching himself on a nearby ledge at the last minute. He jumps to his feet and dashes for the rope, but in his fervor he forgets his earlier measured approach. He scrambles upwards, desperately trying to regain the ground he lost, but his muscles are sore and his hands slick with sweat.

He falls, and falls hard.

What follows next is as familiar as it is soul-crushing. The anger settles in; the despair, the fear. He rages at his situation - resolves to just give up. And finds that he cannot. He attempts the climb, again and again and again, sometimes climbing further, other times barely making it more than a few feet.

In the end, he always falls.

Until one time, he falls harder and farther than ever before. Far enough that, for a moment, he feels suspended in space, wondering if he'll finally reach the bottom of this pit.

After he falls, after he recovers, after he gets back to his feet, he's consumed by a rage he's never felt before. He lunges for the rope, grabbing a sharp rock on the way. And, with a roar, he starts cutting. He slashes at that rope, again and again and again, until the rope is in shreds around him, as ruined as his chances of ever escaping.

Then he slumps back, satisfaction and pain and grief warring inside him, and, for the first time, accepts his fate.

He may have once been a prince. He may once have lived free. But no longer.

He's never leaving this pit.

There's not much to say about the days that follow. The once-prince explores the area he's fallen to, discovering that there are endless chambers and countless rooms to explore. They're filled with curiosities, marvels and wonders of their own, but they mean nothing to him. He knew the outside world once - what interest do the secrets of a pit hold for him?

Time passes in a meaningless drudge. Another cave explored, another cavern passed through. And slowly, as he walks, the need he thought he'd buried kindles again.

He is a prince. He doesn't belong in this pit.

He needs to find a way out.

And so he returns to the place he fell, scans the floor for the tattered remnants of

his rope. He finds a piece of the cord, a second, a third, starts tying them together. It's hard work - searching for the scraps, tying them together, searching again. He tries to stay excited through the process, but there are times he can't keep the despair at bay.

And, during one of his darker moments, as he scans the cave floor dejectedly for the next scrap of rope, a thought occurs to him:

It's dark in this pit.

How is he finding the scraps of rope?

He lifts his head up, slowly, his neck and spine creaking in protest - has it been so long, he wonders, since I last looked up? He's not certain himself what he expects to see. It's night out there, the dark thick and absolute, and for a moment it's hard to

•Continued on page 12

## The Mud Hole



A wealthy businessman and his coachman arrived in a city one Friday afternoon. The rich businessman was settled at the best hotel in town, and the coachman went off to his humble lodgings.

Both washed and dressed for Shabbat, and then set out early for the synagogue for the evening prayers. On his way to shul, the businessman came across a wagon which had swerved off the road and was stuck in a ditch. Rushing to help a fellow in need, the businessman climbed down into the ditch and, together with its hapless driver, began pushing and pulling the wagon. But for all his finesse at handling the most challenging of business deals, when it came to extracting a wagon and horse from a muddy ditch our businessman was hopelessly out of his depth. After struggling for an hour in the knee-deep mud, he succeeded only in ruining his best suit of Shabbat clothes, amassing a most impressive collection of cuts and bruises - and getting the wagon even more impossibly embedded in the mud. Finally, the businessman dragged his limping body to the synagogue, arriving a scant minute before the start of Shabbat.

Meanwhile, the coachman had arrived early at the synagogue and sat down to recite a few chapters of Psalms. At the synagogue he found a group of wandering paupers and, being blessed with a most generous nature, the coachman invited them all to share his Shabbat meal. When the synagogue sexton approached the poor and homeless to arrange meal placements for them with the town's residents - as is customary in Jewish communities - he received the same reply from them all: "Thank you, but I have already been invited for the Shabbat meal."

Unfortunately, however, the coachman's budget was hardly equal to his generous heart. It would be most difficult to believe that his dozen guests left his table with more than a shadow of a meal in their hungry stomachs.

Thus the coachman, with his twenty years of experience in pulling wagons out of mud holes, took it upon himself to feed a small army, while the wealthy businessman, whose Shabbat meal could easily have fed every hungry man within a 10-mile radius, sat alone with his bruises and ruined suit...

❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch told this story, and explained its lesson: "Every soul is entrusted with a mission unique to her alone, and is granted the specific aptitudes, talents and resources necessary to excel in her ordained role. One must take care not to become one of those "lost" souls who wander through life, trying their hand at every field of endeavor except for what is truly and inherently their own."

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# The Pharaoh Syndrome

by Tzvi Freeman

People knock pop-psychologists and their euphemisms, but I often wonder if we wouldn't be better off borrowing some of their political correctness when dealing with Torah issues.

The four sons, for example, might be better understood as the Gifted Child, the Difficult Child, the Well-Balanced Child and the Inquisitively Challenged Child.

There are also some major aspects of the Exodus story that could be better understood if we would just apply the right nomenclature.

Take Pharaoh and his incredible stubbornness. He sees open miracles, yet like a madman chooses to ignore their message.

One might be tempted to describe Pharaoh in this situation as a little lacking up there, to be polite. But here is a case where one of those pc terminologies comes in useful. You see, Pharaoh was actually quite intellectually capable. It was just that he was monotheistically challenged.

To be more specific, Pharaoh belonged to a subset of the monotheistically challenged that have a fixation with a so-called natural order. It's called "Ma'at" in Ancient Egyptian. Similar to the Buddhist concept of karma. In modernese, "deterministic, materialist reductionism" - which some people still believe physics is all about.

The pathology works like this: When a conflict arises between the natural order and the reality of a miracle, the subject experiences anxiety. Whereas this anxiety could be

easily resolved through the assumption of an Omnipotent Force behind and beyond nature, our subject prefers to simply ignore the obvious reality before his eyes in favor of the world-concept of natural order that he has previously integrated into his perception and personality.

This has been known to result in violent death by drowning under the crashing waves of the Red Sea.

As you can immediately recognize, now that I've provided a more sympathetic view of Pharaoh's personal difficulties, he becomes so much easier to relate to. We're all somewhere on the spectrum. After all, we all do the same thing all the time. It's called "worry".

Worry is a state where we ignore the obvious reality of the Hand of G-d in favor of how we imagine the natural order to be. We imagine our life as a struggle between our own competency and the laws of physics, commerce and social acceptance. And if that were the true reality, we really would have a lot to worry about.

The obvious reality is that our daily life is full of miracles straight from Above. We have very little control over where we end up and what we have to do there.

Physics doesn't have much say, either. That's just the mode of transport. We only need to do our best with whatever we are given and have confidence in the Director Of It All that He knows what He's doing. And if we mess up, say sorry, have confidence that He's good and cares for us, and get on

with things.

But instead, we worry.

Why do we worry? Because we don't perceive the miracles. Why don't we perceive the miracles? Because we see this natural order going on all around us, and if there is a natural order, then miracles could not have happened, right? After all, don't miracles mean that nature's laws are temporarily suspended, that life becomes totally weird, and G-d's voice is heard bellowing, "Tzvi Freeman, take note! This is a miracle!"?

Wrong. That's just the Pharaoh inside us all over again. Perhaps somewhat more subtle, but Pharaoh nonetheless.

Monotheism means believing that the natural order is not an absolute set of rules to either play by or break by. Believing there is One Infinite Force behind all things means acknowledging that He can be found doing His thing anywhere - by the rules or not by the rules. Nothing stops Him from getting His way - no supervising committee, no appeal board, no shareholders, no in-laws.

Not even The Natural Order. That's just a façade. It's really all just Him.

The prognosis? According to the prophets, we eventually grow out of this.

That's what the prophet Micah was hinting at when he said, "As the days when you left Egypt, so I will make you see miracles." We can open our minds and try to start seeing reality that way right now. And stop worrying.



# Planning To Not Rely On A Plan

by Elana Mizrahi

I'm used to having to change my plans. Between being a doula and being a mother, I know what it is to have a plan for the day and then to have to cancel it, change it. It's my life. I'm used to it.

I'm used to cooking for the Shabbat meals on Thursday, just in case I'm not home Friday. I'm used to picking up the phone in the middle of the night and running out of my house. I try to prepare dinner at breakfast time just in case I have to leave. I have to set everything up for the unexpected.

That is until the pandemic! Talk about no plans whatsoever. Lockdown, no lockdown. School, no school. Quarantine, not allowed to work, allowed to work - complete and total confusion. It was truly a time of relinquishing control, of planning to have no plans because every day was unknown. It was a period of "I have no control." A period of being humbled.

Everything is in G-d's hands, and as much as we thought we knew, we simply did not and do not know.

And here we are once again preparing for Passover. I think about matzahs and the Haggadah's explanation:

*"This matzah that we eat, for what reason [do we eat it]? Because the dough of our fathers did not have time to become leavened before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He revealed Himself to them and redeemed them."*

We are eating the matzah to remind us that our forefathers left in haste with no time to allow their bread to rise.

It seems a bit strange. What does that mean, no time? The plagues transpired over a period of 10 months. There were plenty of announcements. We knew that we were leaving; it wasn't a surprise. When the Nation of Israel left Egypt, we all left together - with riches, with sheep and goats. We knew that we were going. It was the plan.

And yet, with all of our planning and knowing that

information, we still had to leave in a hurry - not according to our plan, but to G-d's. The matzah that we eat on this night, Seder night, is to remind us that our redemption, our liberation and our formation as a people happened when we, with faith, followed G-d's plan and just went when and where He told us to go. Faith in G-d was the key.

So here we are with our matzah - described in the Zohar as "bread of faith" and "bread of healing" - on Seder night.

Why are we commanded to eat it specifically at night?

King David writes: "To declare in the morning Your kindness, and Your faith at night (Psalms 92:2)."

In the daytime, we see as far as we can see. What we see is revealed, and our plans go according to what we expect. But at night, in the darkness, we see nothing. However, in truth, in the darkness we are not limited to the boundaries of what we can see. So actually, we can see farther! A person who believes and clings to their faith has a vision more than what they can tangibly see.

So, on Seder night, the night when we left in a haste, we were liberated from Pharaoh and his control. We were given the freedom to see beyond what our eyes can see, and with this, we began our process of becoming fully healed.

On this night of Seder, wherever we are, with whom ever we are, let's thank G-d that we made it to this night. As we eat the matzah - the bread of our faith, the bread of our healing - let it truly bring us healing. Let us fully embrace the lesson that with all of our tools, technology, medicine and information, the only power we truly have is to put our trust in G-d and to go when and where He has us go.



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# Passover Guide 5782 - 2022



## 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 5782 - 2022

*Times shown are for the Rochester Area*

Date	Activity	Time
April 14	Formal search for chametz .....	after 8:22 p.m.
April 15	Stop Eating Chametz .....	before 10:50 a.m.
	Burn left-over Chametz .....	before 11:52 a.m.
	Light Shabbat & Yom Tov candles and say blessings # 2 & 3.....	at 7:34 p.m.
	Start the Seder. Eat at least 1 oz. of Matzah within 4 minutes .....	after 8:38 p.m.
April 16	Light Yom Tov candles from a pre-existing flame* and say blessings # 1 & 3.....	after 8:38 p.m.
	Start the Seder. Eat the Matzah again	
April 21	Make an Eruv Tavshilin	
	Light Yom Tov candles and say blessing # 1 .....	at 7:41 p.m.
April 22	Light Yom Tov candles from a pre-existing flame* and say blessing # 2 .....	at 7:42 p.m.
April 23	Yizkor	
	Pesach ends .....	at 8:47 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-sher 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-sher Ki-de-sho-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Vi-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Shabbos v'shel Yom Tov.
- Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom She-heh-che-yoh-nu Vi-ki-ye-mo-nu Ve-he-ge-o-nu Lizman Hazeh. Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom A-sher Ki-de-sho-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Vi-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Shabbos Ve-Shel Yom-Tov.



### 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 from ascending a spiral staircase - we pass over the sea.

To enhance your Seder, we highlighted its 15 steps, divided into “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 that make up the Seder. Its three matzahs and the six other items are arranged by their mystical significance and relationship vis-a-vis each other.

Here’s how you set it up:

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

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

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

Matzah is unleavened bread. It’s made from flour (from one of the five grains) and water only - absolutely nothing else - that are swiftly combined, kneaded and begin to rise. It looks something like a large, round flat cracker.

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

Shemurah matzah (“guarded matzah”) is made from grain that has not been in contact with even the merest hint of water or moisture. It is baked by hand and used as a vehicle of G-dly connection - to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah.

### 4. YACHATZ – BREAKING THE MATZAH

**BODY** Remove the middle Matzah. We need the top Matzah to recite the Haggadah later on. (Blessings are said on whole things.) Break it in two different places. The piece you put back is the “poor man’s bread” over which the poor man can only eat a small portion of their bread - saving the rest in case of need.

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

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

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

**SOUL** Why is so much broken in this world? Why did the Creator break the vessels? Because a whole vessel can only contain its measure, while a broken one can contain more. The bread. He is low and broken. And it is this being broken that allows us to grow. Perfectly 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 achieved. *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 to the story. (As for the other meat & potatoes, you can probably smell them cooking.)

**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 Haggadah: the “wicked” child - the “wicked” child. This is the cup the story is told over. The “wicked” child - the one who can really appreciate it. Children ask the story most, and the one who can really appreciate it. Children ask the story most. No children at your Seder? Let an adult ask. There’s just one more. Father. While you’re at it, ask Him a few other difficult questions like “Why was I born?”

Continue recounting the Passover story in the Haggadah. Hey, you’ve written so that everybody would have something to say. But now it’s your turn. Every story you know about the Exodus. Examine the Haggadah and see what you can learn.

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

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

**SOUL** The Exodus is not simply an event that happened to us. It is a part of us, occurring again and again, in our wrestling match with the world. We are in a constant mode of escape. Perhaps that is why Jews have a special affinity for the story.

The experience of leaving Egypt left such an indelible mark on our souls that we cannot allow his soul to breathe. The story brings our essential selves back to life.

**Personal Application**

**Bondage Mentality:** I’m free already. I live in a land of freedom. I’m 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 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 the chance to get creative. In addition to the Haggadah text, tell nd get into its deeper meaning. Keep it real - make it profound.

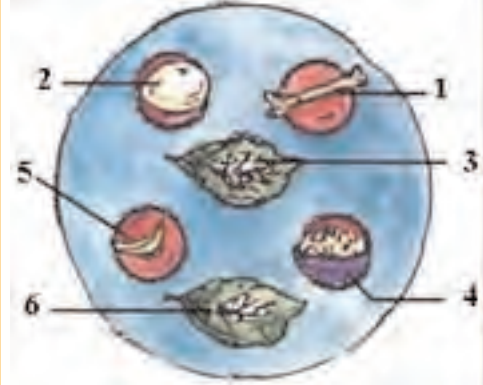
. Start with Abraham and Sarah and work your way through the t in the first person, in the now. Instead of, "Long ago, the ancient stem crushed our sense of self." Everything that happened in Egypt ly examining our own lives in the dress of ancient Egypt. 4. It's all The splitting of the sea. These miracles 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*







Throughout the course of my life, I'd often felt stuck - desperately wanting to move forward, but feeling trapped in a never-ending waiting room. Things never seemed to be moving forward the way I'd envisioned.

I would then desperately scramble and push, trying to get out of that room. I usually felt like I was hitting a wall; nothing materialized the way I wanted it to. Not too long ago, I felt very stuck at a job I didn't enjoy. I knew I wanted more. I desperately tried to find a better job, but with no success. I lacked direction or clarity. I was stuck.

Then these words jumped out at me: "There's no such thing as being stuck." I was in the middle of reading "Positivity Bias" by Mendel Kalmenson, a book highlighting the Rebbe's perspectives. I had recently received the book as a gift from a friend just a few hours after I'd been at the Ohel (the Rebbe's grave in Queens NY) for the first time.

One of the stories in the book tells of a group of women who were stuck at the airport due to their flight being weather delayed. They called up the Rebbe's office to inform him of their plight, to which he replied: "There is no such thing as being stuck." The Rebbe continued to explain that a Jew is never stuck - there is a reason and a purpose for everything. The women understood the mes-

sage, and after thinking about it realized that they had an opportunity to give out Shabbat candles to the people at the airport. There are now multiple houses lighting Shabbat candles because these women had been "stuck."

Reading this, I realized I was exactly where I needed to be. There was a purpose for everything in my life. Even when life didn't always go my way, it was going the *right* way. I wasn't actually stuck! There must be something for me to do in the waiting room.

As I continued reading the book, I realized that I had to apply this to life!

I also read about the importance of seeking and surrounding oneself with good news. Here I was, working for a news agency, where so many of the messages weren't very positive. I realized this was the perfect opportunity. I could spread positive news through this platform.

I approached my boss and requested to take on a project. I pivoted from design and started spreading positive news stories, highlighting the goodness of humanity. I spoke to people who made a difference, and I was able to spread good news in a place that until then was mainly about the opposite.

It felt so rewarding!

I now see that sometimes, it's in the waiting room that the best opportunities show

up. When a person feels stuck, they don't have to struggle or find an escape. All they have to do is realize they are in that situation for a reason. By doing so, infinite doors can open.

This realization ultimately led me to quit my job. But this time, it wasn't a decision made out of desperation, but because it was time to do more.

Towards the end of the book, Rabbi Kalmenson highlights the importance of doing what one loves for a living.

What a relief! I was always told (or at least I told myself) that as long as I liked it enough and was good at it, it was worth pushing myself to do something I didn't really like. However, deep down, I also knew that I really wanted to coach others, but I couldn't figure out how I'd do that. I now finally had the push to quit my job and start my own business. In my new career I get to spread positive messages, coach others to live life to its fullest, and do what they love as well. Life is an opportunity to do what you love, and, most importantly, to enjoy the process.

Now, I don't want to say that life always goes magically the way we envision it. I still feel stuck sometimes. But now I know that "stuck" is just an indicator. It means that there is more - there has to be an opportunity, a reason why I am where I am.

Most importantly, the single most certain opportunity one has when feeling stuck is to pray. Looking back, I now realize that this is exactly what I did at the Ohel that day, just a few hours before my outlook on life was transformed.

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## Would You Give Your Car To A Stranger?

by Shlomo Horwitz

The Shlesinger family from Alon Shvut was vacationing in Northern Israel. Their 28-year old son, Elisha, was driving up to be with them for Shabbat. He needed to refuel, but kept missing the turn offs as he sped toward his destination. After passing five gas stations, he finally decided to pull into the next one. He looked at his watch. It was three hours before Shabbat, and he was an hour from his destination. All in all, the timing was good.

As he filled his car, he noticed a woman with children standing next to their car, noticeably upset. He approached her and asked if he could help.

"I accidentally filled my car with diesel fuel instead of regular, and now it won't start!"

Elisha listened to her predicament, and furrowed his brow. There was no way to remove the fuel. It needed professional attention and there were no mechanics on duty at the station.

"Where were you headed?" he asked the woman.

"To Alei Zahav in the Shomron," she said, anxiety filling her voice.

Elisha knew exactly where that was... almost three hours away, and there were only three hours till Shabbat! She clearly needed to get there, but how? No wonder she was frantic. It seemed impossible.

But not to Elisha. He didn't think twice, he held out his car keys to the astounded woman.

"Here, take my keys and start driving to Alei Zahav! I filled up so you have plenty of gas. You'll just make it in time! Here's my cell phone number. Let's be in touch after Shabbat and we can figure out how to get the car

back to me."

The woman was flabbergasted. A young man, a total stranger, giving her his car?!

She thanked him profusely and took off for Alei Zahav. Meanwhile, Elisha called his father and explained the situation. His father promptly came to pick him up, and everyone made it to their respective destinations in time for Shabbat.

On Sunday, the woman returned with the car. She met Elisha's mother and told her how amazed she was by Elisha's kindness and generosity. Elisha's mother beamed with pride in her son's gracious nature.

"How can I thank him? What present can I give him?" asked the woman.

"He doesn't need presents; he needs help with finding a wife!" Elisha's mother exclaimed.

When the woman got home she wrote up the encounter and posted it on Facebook, adding that Elisha was looking to date with marriage in mind. Ideas came pouring in. One of the first suggestions was a woman named Naomi and, with G-d's help, Naomi and Elisha recently married!

Think about it: Two people taking a trip on an ordinary Friday afternoon happen to bump into each other at a random gas station in the north of Israel. Both display great acts of kindness - Elisha's selflessness to help a woman in distress results in her tremendous act of kindness in helping him find a life partner.

Not an ordinary Friday afternoon after all. Someone Above is watching, helping, and moving the pieces on the chessboard...



The wedding of Elisha and Naomi Shlesinger

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THE PRINCE & THE PIT  
*Continued from page 5*

tell where the pit ends and the world outside begins.

And then he sees it: a flicker of motion, so small, so subtle, he could almost believe he'd imagined it.

There's a flashlight at the lip of the cave, shining all the way down to where he stands.

And though he cannot see anything beyond that flashlight, he knows with absolute certainty Who's holding it.

He stares up, mouth dry, the pit around him forgotten. His mouth feels suddenly full of questions, and it's all he can do not to scream them out. "Father!" he yearns to scream, "Why have you abandoned me? When will you take me back?"

But he swallows those screams, because he knows that at this distance any words would get lost long before they reach the top of the pit. And because they're not the question he really wants to ask. The question that eats at him; the question that keeps his back bent and his head fixed down.

So instead, he stares up at his unseen Father and silently wills Him to hear the question he can't hold back any longer.

Why? He asks silently, a single tear slipping from his eye. Why haven't You left? Why do You still hold out hope for me? Whatever it is You want from me, I've failed, again and again and again. I turned my back on You. I cut the only rope that still connected us. What do You see in me that I don't?

And it's strange, but even though he doesn't utter a single word, the question seems to hang in the air between them, somehow tangible, somehow real.

There is a moment of silence; two. And then the flashlight moves, very slightly, to the side.

And turning, the prince sees where it's shining.

On the next scrap of rope.

He studies it for a moment, lets a wry smile quirk his lips.

Then he reaches down, picks up that scrap, and ties.

THE EIGHTH DAY  
*Continued from page 3*

This innovation of the Rebbe Rashab exemplifies the comprehensive contribution of Chabad Chassidut to the legacy of the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov taught each Jew how to reveal his/her essential G-dly nature and thus rise above his/her personal identity. Chabad, an acronym for the Hebrew words *chochmah*, *binah* and *daat* ("wisdom, understanding and knowledge"), brings the Baal Shem Tov's teachings into the realm of the intellect, allowing them to be integrated and applied within each individual's personal framework.

Our generation has been charged with the responsibility of bringing the awareness of Moshiach to all Jews - and this includes the custom of conducting Moshiach's *Seudah*. This mission is particularly relevant in our day, for the Jewish people have completed all the divine service necessary to enable Moshiach to come. As the Previous Rebbe expressed it, "We have already polished the buttons." Moshiach is waiting: "Here he stands behind our wall, watching through the windows, peering through the crevices." The walls of exile are already crumbling, and now, in the immediate future, Moshiach will be revealed.

We are living in the time directly preceding the age of Moshiach. The world is changing, and people are willing, even anxious, to hear about Moshiach. It is thus our duty to reach out and involve as many people as possible in the preparations for his coming.

These endeavors will escalate the fulfillment of the prophecies of the *haftorah* recited on the eighth day of Pesach with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

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IN A SLUMP  
*Continued from page 4*

What to do? How do you drag yourself out of the abyss?

*"Gather empty containers, and let them be filled with the little bit of oil you do have."*

Trust The Mechanics

Like the slumping player, you must trust your "mechanics." You really do have it. You really are someone excited about praying and keeping Shabbat. You really do have a passionate marriage and love your spouse deeply. You really are changing the world by fixing broken sinks. You gotta believe it.

Ah, but it's not producing results? You're still spacing out while you pray, still arguing with your spouse, and you still hate the sight of leaking pipes?

Keep at it. Trust the process. Keep adding those containers - I don't care if they're empty; just keep piling zeros on the scoreboard. Eventually, you're gonna break out. You're on the cusp. If you stick with the process

and believe in yourself, the oil will come spilling out with abundance.

Keep praying, trying to put intention into what you're saying. Keep your eyes closed and stick to your regular Shabbat candle-lighting routine, even though you no longer feel that the heavens are opening.

Keep bringing flowers home for the weekend, and saying things like, "I see something's bothering you, would you like to talk about it right now, or should we dedicate some time later tonight to discuss it in earnest?" You don't mean it? Say it anyway (and do it, too!).

Go to work, and fix yet another broken sink. Remind yourself that an entire family is now happy that they can eat with clean dishes again. You don't care anymore? All those grumpy clients burned you out? You're too cynical to believe it anymore? Say it to yourself anyway, and do whatever it takes to convince yourself that somehow, somewhere, you still believe it.

Eventually, you'll hit a home run.

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# Braveheart or Wiseheart?

by Yossy Goldmān

I think Jack Benny was quoting Mark Twain when he said, "Age is mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

In Jewish thought, however, we seem to focus more on 'mind over heart' than 'mind over matter.'

In 1812, Napoleon and his French army invaded Russia. Despite his promises of liberty and equality for the Jews, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was opposed to Napoleon. Rabbi Schneur Zalman understood that Napoleon's way would lead to assimilation, and, despite highly prevalent Czarist anti-semitism, he supported the Russian campaign against France.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman even sent one of his senior Chassidim, Reb Moshe Meisels, to work as an interpreter at French military headquarters so he could pass on vital military secrets to the Russians. One day, Napoleon himself burst into the military command and spotted Meisels. Immediately, he accused him of being a spy and put his hand on his chest to see if his heart was beating furiously, which would reveal his fear and expose the truth. But Moshe Meisels remained completely calm and replied to Napoleon that he was simply serving as a translator since he was fluent in both Russian and French. The danger passed.

Reb Moshe would later say that the fundamental Chassidic principle - the mind rules the heart - literally saved his life.

In his foundational treatise, the Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman insists that all humans have the innate natural capacity to control their feelings and desires if they make a genuine attempt.

Indeed, this seems to be a fundamental principle of our faith, as we believe that, ultimately, we will all face accountability for our decisions. But how can we be held accountable if we are overcome by the desire for wrongdoing?

As hard as it may be in the moment, we always ultimately have the freedom to choose how we will respond. The mind has the strength to control the heart and its desires.

This can help us understand a phrase repeated throughout the Torah's description of the building of the Tabernacle, the very first House of G-d: The phrase *chacham lev* - wise hearted. "Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything which G-d

has commanded." We are also told that the wise-hearted women spun the goats' hair needed for the Sanctuary in their own uniquely talented way. The phrase wise-hearted recurs again and again.

But wise-hearted sounds contradictory. Wisdom is a faculty of the rational mind, our intellect. The heart, on the other hand, is the seat of our emotions, which are often anything but rational. In life, mind and heart can be at loggerheads. G-d gave intellect to be able to discern good from bad, right from wrong. The heart, though, makes us creatures of habit, unable or unwilling to exercise rational judgment when making decisions.

Aren't we all too familiar with our own constant inner struggles between mind and heart? The heart pushes us to schmooze with our neighbor in synagogue. The mind interrupts and tells us the rabbi is speaking. The heart says, "That's a nice smartphone." The head says, "It's not yours." The heart says, "That looks delicious." The mind tells us, "It's not Kosher."

Isn't that why every Yom Kippur we *klop "Al Cher"* by beating our chests over our hearts when recounting and confessing our sins of the past year? We pound our hearts because it was most likely the heart that got us into trouble in the first place. Had we followed our rational minds instead, we would have been far less likely to make those mistakes and commit those very sins.

So how are we to understand the paradoxical phrase, wise-hearted?

We all know the famous "wise son" from the Pesach Seder night. He's the clever child, the sharp one, the ever-favorite. The world admires smart people. They are respected and revered in academia; they command hefty salaries in the corporate world.

But doctorates, degrees, dissertations, and scholarly papers don't guarantee that one is honest, decent, upright, or caring. For that we need, not a good brain, but a good heart! We need people who are not only clever, but kind. The wise ones must have heart too.

The "wise son" may be very smart, but does that guarantee that he won't also be shrewdly spiteful, manipulative, and downright dangerous? Do we really think that tyrants are idiots? They may look like ridiculous cartoon characters, but typically they are nobody's fool. We need truly wise men and women, not mischievous 'wise guys.'

So, I would submit that wise-hearted is an exceptionally good turn of phrase after all. A mind without a heart may be cold, sterile, and could even be evil. And a heart needs a mind to guide and direct it correctly. The wise-hearted have both intelligence and empathy, a truly admirable combination.



## Jewish Pride: Thousands of Teens Converge on Times Square

TIMES SQUARE, NEW YORK  
FEBRUARY 26, 2022

On double-decker buses and packed subway cars, 2,500 exuberant Jewish teens from 650 chapters of the Chabad-Lubavitch teen network, CTeen, converged on Manhattan's Times Square for a concert and musical havdalah ceremony marking the end of Shabbat. Saturday night's mass display of Jewish pride was the culmination of the annual CTeen weekend retreat when thousands of teens - from 26 countries and 400 cities, from Paris to Rio de Janeiro - soak up Jewish inspiration, learning and camaraderie with friends new and old.

In a cacophony of languages, the teens wound their way down the city streets, singing refrains of Jewish pride and connection, as they made their way to the fenced-off area of Times Square. The night's theme, "Whenever, wherever," kicked off with a diverse group of teens each sharing their story of 'doing Jewish' in whatever environments they find themselves, whether for Eli Rosin from San Antonio TX, on the tennis court with his kippah or Jac Copeland from Skokie IL, an aspiring chef adapting his fare to only cook kosher, whenever, wherever.

As the teens thronged into the square, they were transformed into a dazzling blur of color as they danced shoulder to shoulder - boys on one side, girls on another - with Chassidic music star Beri Weber's energy, blending the multitude of national flags into one cohesive mass of international Jewish pride. The crowd was also regaled with words of Torah and inspiration from Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky.

The impact the CTeen convention has on teens lasts far longer than a weekend. For some, it begins even before they set foot in New York. A Houston teen gave up his position on the lacrosse team after his coach told him he'd either have to skip the CTeen convention or lose his spot on the team. For many, the ener-

gy, inspiration and unity they experience over the weekend are catalysts for long-term Jewish commitment.

"What I'm taking home with me, what I've decided, is that the night before my marriage I want to go to the mikvah," Elliana Tesler, 15, from St. Johns FL, said of her resolve to create a Jewish home for the next generation. Tesler added that her highlight of the weekend was "meeting different people from different backgrounds and having one thing in common, that we're all Jewish and connecting with them on a religious level." Her friend, 16-year-old Auriel Henderson, another teen from the St. Johns chapter, said she'd like to bring the Shabbat spirit she experienced in New York back home to her family. "In my household, we don't always do Shabbat and Shabbat candles. I'd like to bring that home and start doing it with my family and celebrating our Judaism more."

Over the din and screams of excited girls yelling the refrain, "I'm proud to be a Jew!" Gabby Vainshelboim, 15, also from St. Johns, said that what struck her was "seeing so many Jews, all together in one place. It's something you never see, especially coming from a small community like I do. It really brought the Jewish community to me."

Shane Goldstein, from Charlotte NC, said he left his hometown "kind of apprehensive to wear a kippah in public. And now, I'm going back and I have no such feelings." Goldstein said he loved every moment of the weekend. "It was jam-packed. We went from place to place, walking with your friends is the best thing. We were never bored. We got to meet all these awesome people. It was pretty great." What he enjoyed most, though, was the Times Square concert. "We took over the middle of one of the biggest cities in the world and just partied."

Heading back by subway to the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, where the program continued, Shai Kaszynski, 16, and Walter Belenkiy, 15, both of Deerfield IL, shared their experience. "I'm having so much fun," Kaszynski laughed, as he stood in the crowded subway car filled with teens. "It was crazy; there were so many teens there all sharing the same experience." He said he'll take that "outward pride of being Jewish" home with him by wearing a kippah at school.

"I really liked the whole Shabbos experience, hearing all the speakers; it was really inspirational," Belenkiy said. "I've come away more committed than ever, - commitment to doing mitzvahs."

**HAND MADE  
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SEE PAGE 6**

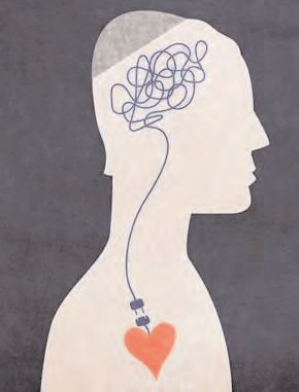
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# THE SILENT CUP

by Israel Rubin

Rich with symbolism, Passover overflows with meaning and significance. But while the whole Seder hums with talk and activity, the "Cup of Elijah" stands alone by itself, without any apparent function. We pay individual tribute with a blessing over each of the other our cups, but not a word about this one. The wine poured into this cup remains untouched to the end – we pour it right back into the bottle after the Seder is over. Is this fifth cup like the proverbial fifth wheel, an unneeded appendage tagging along?

Of course, there's a bit of drama around this cup. When opening the door for Elijah, the children gather round to watch the quivering liquid ripple, hoping to detect some sign of its sampling by the visiting prophet. But surely there's more meaning to this cup than a child's imagination?

It is quite thoughtful of some people to offer Elijah a drink while visiting, but thank you, he doesn't need sips to keep him going. This cup has real purpose and meaning. Let us learn more about Elijah's historic role in Judaism, and we'll realize that this special cup is here even more for our own sake than for his, to inspire us and to give our Seder focus and direction.

Originally, this fifth cup appears in the Talmud as a question as to whether an optional pleasure drink is permitted after the mandatory four cups. Only Rabbi Tarfon's minority opinion suggests a specific fifth cup for each participant as part of the Seder routine. Centuries later, the Code of Jewish Law mentions the custom of placing a fifth cup on the table, calling it "Elijah's Cup."

So while the original obligatory four cups remain nameless (it's just "the first cup," "the second cup," etc.)



Jewish tradition has given this fifth cup a most prestigious name after one of the greatest prophets. How ironic that the namesake of this silent and passive cup is none other than the fiery, bold and outspoken Elijah!

The commentaries relate the four cups to the "Four Expressions of Redemption" in G-d's promise to Moses (Exodus 6:2-8): "I will take you out," "I will deliver you," "I will redeem you," and "I will acquire you." These are not merely four synonyms, for each represents a distinct stage and level of Redemption. "I will take you out" refers to the physical exit from the land of Egypt. "I will deliver you from their bondage" means delivery from servitude and "I will redeem you" is the Divine

guarantee that we remain a free people. "I will acquire you as My nation" means to be G-d's chosen at Mount Sinai – the goal of the Exodus.

In addition to these four expressions, the Torah also uses a fifth expression of Redemption: "I will bring you into the land." This alludes to Moshiach's Ingathering of the Exiles which is yet to be fulfilled.

So no fifth cup is drunk on Passover eve nowadays. Yet this special cup remained symbolically on the Seder table, expressing our prayers and hopes to be gathered to the Land of Israel with the long awaited Redemption.

Elijah's Cup demonstrates that "Redemption" is not an abstract concept, an old

wives' tale, a wishful fantasy, or a vague notion. Our belief in Moshiach and the Redemption is real and relevant, being a pillar of the Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith. Elijah's Cup takes the mystical concept of Redemption and Moshiach out of the closet, and places the issue right on the table for all to see and realize.

Presently, this cup is unfortunately beyond our reach; we cannot actually drink it. But we are all ready and waiting. We are on standby, eagerly anticipating Elijah's long awaited heralding of the Redemption. Unlike the other cups that come and go, this special cup represents our staying power and perseverance.

This follows Maimonides' teaching that belief in Moshiach shouldn't just be passive. It is not enough to merely sit back and wait. Moshiach should be on our daily agenda. We must actively demand and look forward to Moshiach's coming. Indeed, the Redemption process is accelerated by our prayers, actions and yearning.

Elijah's cup is not there just to grace our table. It is not served merely as an hon-

orary toast to a great prophet. It is rather here to give our whole Seder a new focus and direction.

There is a common misconception that the Seder is all over after eating the Afikoman. Once they've closed the door on Elijah, some people tend to doze off or clear away the table, assuming that the rest is just winding down with optional chants.

On the contrary! At this point the Seder rises to a crescendo, as it approaches the grand finale of the future Redemption. It is here that the context changes course from the past, and turns the corner to the future. Judaism sees the Exodus from Egypt as the beginning of a process to be completed by our redemption through Moshiach.

The Seder doesn't just look back to the past, to the Pharaohs and the pyramids; we also look forward to our redemption in the future. As much as we relive the Exodus from Egypt through Moses, let us not lose sight of our ultimate goal, our own redemption now from exile through Moshiach, speedily in our days.



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