

Seder Ideas and Stories –

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I. SEDER Plate

Israeli Mementos: Ask participants to bring souvenirs and mementos from Israel, then retell stories of one's relationship to Israel.

Symbols of Personal Jewish Memory . What heirlooms represent your family's Jewish identity. For example, one rabbi uses his grandmother's Pesach ladle

II. CHOOSING A Haggadah

Maxwell House Hagaddah: Good to the Last Page by Joan Alpert

In 1923, when Maxwell House Coffee signed on with the Joseph Jacobs Advertising agency in New York, it was already a legend. Theodore Roosevelt supposedly drank a cup in 1907 at the Nashville hotel for which it was named, proclaiming it "good to the last drop." Fortune smiled even more on the brand when Jacobs conceived a plan to entice American Jews to serve the coffee at their Seders. First, he lined up a prominent rabbi to assure Jews that coffee beans were not forbidden legumes but fruit. Then he convinced his client to underwrite America's first mass-marketed Haggadah. When it appeared in 1934, free with the purchase of a can of coffee, the Maxwell House Haggadah swiftly revolutionized how American Jews celebrated Passover.

Until the coffee company moved into publishing, Haggadahs were fluid in text and format. "Local custom ruled liturgy," says Rabbi Burton L. Visotsky, a Jewish Theological Seminary professor. "Maxwell House did more to codify Jewish liturgy than any force in history."

The new Haggadah was widely accepted, in part due to the quality of its Hebrew, says Rabbi Robert Harris, an associate professor at the Seminary. The Hebrew is based on the work of Wolf Heidenheim, famous Hebrew liturgical scholar and author of an acclaimed 1800 Hebrew-German prayerbook.

The Haggadah's English translation was also a draw because second and third-generation American Jews were losing their ability to read Hebrew, says Rabbi Carole Balin, Jewish history professor at Hebrew Union College. The Haggadah's format, with parallel columns of Hebrew and English, made it easy to follow. Carole Balin points out another reason for its longevity: It's innocuous without "controversial commentaries," she says.

American consumers also liked the Maxwell House Haggadah because it was readily available at groceries, lightweight and small enough for a child to hold and simple to store. But its popularity was not exclusive to the American market: Copies made their way to secular Israeli kibbutzim and far-flung military bases and were smuggled during the 1970s to Soviet refuseniks, who cherished them, sometimes as their only Jewish possession.

Kraft, the most recent in a line of conglomerates to own Maxwell House, continues to publish the Haggadah. Little, other than the graphics, has changed over the decades. In the 1960s, the English translation was modernized and a Hebrew transliteration added. In the 1990s, the words “Next Year in Jerusalem” were moved from before the fourth cup of wine to the end of the Haggadah.

Today more than 4,000 different Haggadahs are in print and many more are self-published. Still, one million copies of the Maxwell House version were printed in 2009 for distribution to chains such as Shop Rite in New York, Albertsons on the west coast and Publix in south Florida, according to Elie Rosenfeld, chief operating officer of Joseph Jacobs. Approximately 50 million copies have been printed over the past 75 years, he adds.

“It seems a bit odd today that a religious text bears the name of a commercial concern,” says Jenna Weissman Joselit, author of *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950*, but back in the '30s, it was exciting that a “big corporate entity, not one owned by a Jewish family, literally put its name to a Haggadah.” It affirmed the “possibility of being Jewish in America.”(Joan Alpert)

III. Dipping , Saltwater, Haroset and Matza

Kadesh urhatz

The rhymed order of ritual activities of the seder may be associated with hand motions. Each one receives a card with on ritual and invents a hand signal, then all sing and make hand motions.

Icebreaker: What part of my body do I bring to the seder?

I bring my ears to hear Moses' Let My People Go.

I bring my legs to run free.

I bring my fingernails caked with clay t recall my enslavement as brickmaker

I bring my arms to carry my infant through the desert into freedom etc

Back to the Salt Mines: Seder Dipping and the Holocaust

Here is something that we do at my Seders every year to bring the reality of my mother's Holocaust experience into the Seder in a tangible way and to emphasize the sense that many tyrants have attempted to destroy us, but that HaShem has saved us repeatedly as a people. Here is the story they goes along with that salt:

During the Holocaust one of my mother's seven camps was Beendorf. This was a salt mine that was 1200 feet below ground and was used to build the guidance systems for the V-1 & V-2 rockets shot over at Britain. By the time my mother was working in this camp, she was suffering from malnutrition. Old wounds on her leg from years before, which had long since scarred over, suddenly reopened due to vitamin deficiency. Walking through the mine, the kicked up salt dust would get into the wounds and sting terribly. Yet, the salt also acted as a disinfectant , keeping the wounds from getting infected.

In approximately 1987, before the East Germans flooded that mine with nuclear waste, they invited survivors back for a final visit. My mother went down into the mine and while there, an engineer guide broke off some of the salt crystals for her from the wall of the mine to take as a memento.

My mother brought the salt crystals back to the United States. Every Passover we scrape a little bit of that salt (along with a larger amount of table salt) into

the bowl for our saltwater - now truly the tears of slavery! *Bekhol dor vador l'kahlosteinu* - (Jonathan Lyon, Berkeley)¹

Drinking from the Handwashing Cup

Seders have strict and surprising protocols and yet participation in a Passover meal is open to all whether or not they have expertise in the special table manners of the Seder. Those with less traditional knowledge often make unintentional mistakes and those more knowledgeable must find ways to handle such breaches of halakhic etiquette without shaming the guest who errs.

Daniel, a psychologist who specializes in trauma treatment in Jerusalem, reports the tale told of his grandfather a modern Orthodox rabbi in Lucern in Switzerland. Once he invites Christian minister to his home. Before dipping karpas in salt water the custom is to pass around at the table a cup of water used as a pitcher to wash one's hands ceremonially. The pitcher was first offered to the guest who took it in his hands and brought it to his mouth to drink the water instead of washing his hands. The rabbi who was his host refrained from correcting this error lest it embarrass the guest. Instead he too took the cup in his turn and drank from it as did all the Jews at the table. As the Rabbis say: "Better to be cast into an oven than to shame one's fellow in public" (TB Ketubot 67b)²

¹ Jonathan's mother could had no sense of smell, as he recalls, and she traced it back to Auschwitz where she puked for three days due to the stench of death. Then she adjusted when she lost her sense of smell. In Auschwitz she worked in Canada where clothes of the dead were sorted until the liquidation of the camp when she was loaded on a truck for the gas chambers. But the Polish driver told her he would leave the backdoor open and so she jumped, hid in a ravine and escaped. Upon her return to Auschwitz 40 years later with her husband, she found the ravine and in it were marigolds. She gathered a bunch and remarked to her husband that there was strange smell. He remarked - it is either my after shave or the flowers. Her sense of smell had returned.

² In 2013 the descendants of the Daniel Brom's grandfather are gathering in Israel for a reunion after 50 years since his death. Over 600 direct descendants will attend many of them anti-modern Orthodox Jews (Haredim). Each branch will be asked to tell stories about the distinguished rabbinic grandfather. However the Haredim have been clear that they will not attend unless there is separate seating for men and women if anyone mentions that the grandfather was a modern Orthodox rabbi who attended the university where he receive a degree in physics or that he invited. Christians to his Seder, because that would set a bad

Jewish Vengeance: Starving the Egyptians

Daniel Moses, director of Seeds for Peace, invited his friend Fatima from Egypt to his uncle's religious seder in Jerusalem. He told her that it would be long and she ought to eat before coming but she dismissed his warning. As seder began at 8.00 when it was dark and developed with many discussions she began to get quite hungry and nudged Daniel asking when they would eat. The parsley was no great treat with salt water. Finally, finally they got to the meal and everyone ate matza. Ugh! She was so disappointed and hungry.

Later when his uncle learned she was Egyptian he apologized profusely and hoped you would not take personally anything said about the Egyptians at the seder.

The Symbolism of Matza in US Army in World War Two

"Matzah" - Across Europe, even in the darkest days of World War II, enlisted men observed Passover and attended Seders. In many ways, the themes of Passover resonated with servicemen of all types, Jew and non-Jew alike. Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, Commander of the United States Fifth Army, addressed Jewish soldiers attending a Seder in Naples, Italy, in April of 1944 with the following message drawn from the festival's Bread of affliction':

"Tonight you are eating unleavened bread just as your forebears ate unleavened bread. Because the Exodus came so quickly the dough had no time to rise. There was a time of unleavened bread in this war. The time when it looked as though we might not have time to rise—time to raise an army and equip it, time to stop the onrush of a Germany that has already risen. But the bread has begun to rise. It started at Alamein [a battle fought in the deserts of North Africa, seen as one of the decisive victories of the war]. It was rising higher when the Fifth Army invaded Italy. It is reaching the top of the pan and soon the time will come when it will spread out and into a finished product."

(Carole Balin in *My People's Passover Haggadah* edited by Lawrence Hoffman)

educational example for their children. Avoiding family conflict and embarrassment often involves suppressing the truth for the sake of social peace.

Charoset Around the World - Compiled by Susan Klingman

There are Many Different Kinds of Charoset - Try a new one this year...

Israeli:

Finely chop or put into a blender. 1 peeled and cored apple

5 sliced bananas 10 pitted dates 1/2 cup nuts

juice and grated rind of 1/2 lemon juice and grated rind of 1/2 orange add 1/2 cup dry red wine

and 1 teaspoon cinnamon.

Mixture will be loose - add enough matzah meal to achieve desired consistency. Add sugar or honey to taste.

Moroccan:

2 cups walnut pieces

1 cup blanched slivered almonds , 25 pitted dates

10 large brown dried figs (calimyra) 20 large apricots

1/2 cup shelled pistachios 1/4 cup sweet red wine ground cinnamon

Put nuts and dried fruit in a food processor or blender and finely grind together. Mix in just enough wine to make a soft paste that is malleable. Form into 1 inch balls and sprinkle lightly with cinnamon. Store in refrigerator' for up to two weeks. Serve at room temperature. (Makes 6 dozen balls)

Askenazi Eastern European/American:

1/2 cup mixed almonds and walnuts - chopped

1 large chopped dessert apple 1 generous teaspoon cinnamon enough wine to bind ingredients

mix all together

Spicy Charoset

3 stalks celery, diced,

2 large apples, peeled and diced 1 can crushed pineapple

1 cup walnuts, large chunks 1/2 cup mayonaise

2 tablespoons each lemon juice, sugar

2 tbs white prepared horseradish (or red)

Yemenite:

6 large brown (calimyra) figs 6 pitted dates

2 tablespoons sesame seeds

1 teaspoon honey (or to taste) 1/2 teaspoon ginger

1/8 teaspoon ground coriander seeds pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)

Finely grind figs and dates in a food processor, blender, or grinder to make a firm, sticky paste. Mix in sesame seeds, honey, and spices to taste.

Turkish;

Chop 1 jaffa orange and 1/2 pound pitted dates. Add 1/2 cup sugar Cook 20 minutes over a low heat. stirring occasionally.

Stir in 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon and 2 tablespoons wine or brandy. Refrigerate 4 hours or overnight. Serve at room temperature.

Egyptian:

16 ounces raisins

8 ounces pitted dates

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans Place fruit in a bowl with water to cover. Let stand for 1 hour.

Add the sugar and whirl in a blender or processor, a few spoonfuls at a time with a little of the soaking liquid. Transfer to a heavy saucepan and simmer over a low heat until fruits are cooked and liquid absorbed, (about 20 minutes.) Remove from heat. cool and sprinkle with nuts.

Spanish or Portugese: 1/2 cup of pitted dates 2 cups sliced apples

1/2 cup dried apricots or raisins

1/2 cup chopped walnuts or almonds 2/3 tablespoon sweet red wine

Put apples, dates, and apricots or raisins in a pot with enough water to cover. Cook until tender enough to mash. Mix together until well blended. Add nuts and wine. Refrigerate.

Fig: Puree:

1 8 ounce package dried figs
1 8 ounce package dried apricots 1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup water
1 1/2 teaspoons grated orange rind 1/3 cup orange juice
Cook over medium-low heat. stirring. until thick Cool.

Middle Eastern

1/2 cup pinenuts
2 hard-boiled mashed egg yolks 1/4 cup chopped almonds
1/3 cup sugar 1 apple
juice and grated rind of 1 lemon 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon allspice 1/2 cup raisins
sweet wine to moisten

Chop fruit together, add seasonings, yolks and wine. This charoset is traditionally shaped into small balls. Add matzah meal to thicken if necessary.

Sephardic

5/4 cup dark Muscat raisins 1 pound pitted dates
1 orange peeled and pitted 1 apple peeled and cored sweet wine to moisten mix all together

Greek Charoset

20 large dates, chopped 3/4 cup walnuts, ground 1 cup raisins, chopped
1/2 cup almonds, chopped trace of grated lemon peel
Combine fruit and nuts. Add wine to make desired consistency.
mix all together and refrigerate

IV. *Ha Lahma Anya* – This is the bread of affliction

Sharing despite Suffering

This is a strange invitation: 'This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all that are hungry come and eat.' What hospitality is it to offer the hungry the taste of suffering? In fact, though, this is a profound insight into the nature of slavery and freedom. As noted above, *matzah* represents two things: it is the food of slaves, and also the bread eaten by the Israelites as they left Egypt in liberty. What transforms the bread of affliction into the bread of freedom is *the willingness to share it with others*.

Primo Levi was a survivor of Auschwitz. In his book, *If This Is a Man*, he describes his experiences there. According to Levi, the worst time of all was when the Nazis left in January 1945, fearing the Russian advance. All prisoners who could walk were taken on the brutal 'death marches'. The only people left in the camp were those who were too ill to move. For ten days they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. Levi describes how he worked to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them dying. He then writes:

'When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three, typhus) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working. And so it was agreed.

'Only a day before a similar event would have been inconceivable. The law of the Lager said: "eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbour," and left no room for gratitude. It really meant that the law of the Lager was dead.

'It was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from *Haftlinge* [prisoners] to men again.'

Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the seder by inviting others to join us. Bread shared is no longer the bread of affliction. Reaching out to others, giving help to the needy and companionship to those who are alone, we bring freedom into the world, and with freedom, God. . (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's Haggadah)

The Bread of Deception – Athens, Greece 1944

Oppression always involves deception so that those persecuted will not rise in resistance. Thus Pharaoh proposed to “outsmart the children of Israel” (Exodus 1: 10) by placing taskmasters over them as if they were being called to work for the state to build store cities, when the true goal was to deplete their population by hard labor. Later Pharaoh commanded that the midwives pretend to come to help deliver Hebrew babies but actually to kill all the Hebrew boys by subterfuge so that the Hebrews would not know and resist. The midrash explains that Pharaoh oppressed them *be-feh-rakh*, meaning not merely “harshly,” but with a “soft mouth” – deceptively.

Similarly the Nazis hid the true destination of the Jews being deported and met them at the extermination camps with musicians and signs encouraging people to work: *Arbeit Macht Frei* / Work Makes for Freedom. In 1944 the German SS commandant Stroop who had systematically deported and then burned out the Warsaw Ghetto arrived in Athens. The Jews of Athens having heard of the deportation of Salonika resisted Nazi deportation. When the Nazis demanded that the chief rabbi hand over the communal records of all Jews, a mysterious fire broke out and they were all burned. When asked to assemble a new list, the rabbi cut off his beard and took on a Christian identity and obtained an identity card from the Greek police. The Archbishop of Athens himself opposed the Nazi policies toward the Jews. The Stroop used an old Greek trick, a Trojan Horse, to lure the Jews to show up voluntarily at the synagogue. He offered free Shabbat meals but only 50 Jews took the bait. Then before Passover he baked matzot and announced their distribution. This time 750 Jews were fooled and they showed up at the synagogue where Stroop had them deported. The matza of liberation became the bread of affliction and of deception. Nevertheless the majority of Athenian Jewry were hidden successfully by the Christian population

The Lesson of Cold Air: Giving begins with Empathy

An Eastern European story shows how to raise moral consciousness through empathy derived from the suffering of the potential donor that opens hearts to the needs of others in comparable situations:

There is a famous story about **Rabbi Israel Salanter**, who founded the Musar movement in the nineteenth century to raise moral sensitivity in the Orthodox world. During one of Lithuania’s freezing winters, his yeshiva had no money to buy fuel and the students had to study in the numbing cold. Early one morning, dressed in a warm fur coat, Rabbi Yisrael went to the home of a wealthy, but not very philanthropic, householder. Still in his dressing gown, the man invited the rabbi in, but the rabbi remained in the doorway and seemingly unaware that the householder

was shivering from the cold, began a lengthy Talmudic discourse. The host's teeth were chattering and before long his lips had turned blue.

Thinking he was about to faint, the man finally interrupted the rabbi and persuaded him to come in. As they warmed themselves before the stove, Rabbi Yisrael continued, "I am sure that you are wondering about my strange conduct. The students are freezing; we need money for fuel. If I had asked you to help while you were warm and comfortable, you would not have even begun to understand what it means to study in an unheated room in subzero weather. Now that you feel what they feel, I am sure that you will help me." And indeed, the wealthy man provided the fuel for the *beit midrash* as long as he lived.

The Governor Called her “A Woman of Valor” –

“She opens her hands to the poor” (Proverbs 31:20)

by Maya Bernstein

My grandmother, Freda Miriam Appleman Aranoff still has traces of her southern accent. It's very faint now, but she's fond of telling us the story of when she was a teenager, a few years after she moved to Brooklyn with her family, from Evarts Kentucky, in Harlan County, thick in the heart of mining country.

Harlan County, 1920. Mining territory, with two opposing camps: the coal miners, and the mine owners. The miners were basically enslaved to the owners of the mines. They worked hard physical labor, day in, day out, and were paid in Scrip – the mine owner's version of money, a cheap paper certificate that could be exchanged for food only in the Company Store, owned, of course, by the mine-owners (Recall the song “Sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and deeper and in debt”). The coal company had its own police force, which was used to keep union organizers out of the coal camps, and to intimidate the miners who tried to join the union.

It was 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression, and the miners in Evarts went on strike. They wanted to be unionized, and they refused to work until they were granted that right. The owners of the mine, like the Bible's Pharaoh, had hearts as hard as stone, that hardened at each request made by the miners– they would let the miners starve to death rather than allow them to join the union, and gain their freedom. The town was basically at war. Bullets flying in the streets, riots and vandalism.

By this time, Savta, my great-grandmother, and her husband had four children, and they had opened a clothing store, and were making a living. Savta baked her own bread each week, and the family ate fruits and vegetables and grains – they still kept strictly kosher. Twice a year, they could afford a chicken, which was ritually slaughtered according to Jewish law, and sent to them from Cincinnati, Ohio. They were extremely well respected in Evarts. Savta's husband was famous throughout the county for his honesty and kindness, and had even been asked to be a member of the town court. He refused – he didn't want to make decisions that would affect people's personal lives – but the judge said to him, “Mr. Appleman, if you were to be tried, wouldn't you want a fair trial?” “Yes, of course,” he answered, “Then you will sit on this court,” the judge said, “for you are a

fair and honest man.” And he did. (Recall the verse in Eishet Hayil – “Her husband is well-known, sitting in the city’s courts of judgment” (Proverbs 31:23))

A Car Load of Flour.

The couple had been saving up money over the years to buy a car, and finally had saved enough - \$5000 dollars – a fortune. But people around them were starving. Children did not have shoes on their feet. They were not political people, but they could not live surrounded by such poverty, without doing what they could to help. And so in the spring of 1932, they opened a soup kitchen, and put an ad in the paper, which read: “**LOOK!** In accordance with the Jewish custom to remember the needy during the **Passover Season**, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Appleman will give away, on Friday, April 17, at the Evarts depot, **A Car Load of Flour**. The flour will be given away as long as it will last. A 24-pound bag to a family. All needy from Evarts and surroundings are welcome, regardless of **Color and Creed**.”

They spent every last penny on flour – flour! And they gave out bag after bag after bag. There was such joy in the town. The joy of giving and receiving with honor – the joy that transcends color and creed, that transcends the particular, and enters the realm of the universal – the realm of the human. This had such an impact on the people of the town, that years later, when my grandmother visited the town with her siblings, she was amazed to find that young boys in Evarts, Kentucky were named “Harry Appleman,” after her father.

The coal company wasn’t happy, though. They bombed the soup kitchen in the middle of the night, sent bullets flying through the windows of the house, and then came to indict my grandfather for criminal syndicalism – supporting the miners and aiding their strike against the Company. Savta went to court the next day, to defend her husband. Savta explained, “The Jews have a holiday that is Passover. And on that holiday, whoever is hungry must be fed, even if he is a stranger. We were taking no sides, this way or that, in the strike, but when people are hungry, should it be said to them: no you are strikers, and we can give you nothing to eat? There were so many children that had no bread...” The case made its way all the way to Governor Chandler of Kentucky, who called Savta a “woman of valor,” and said that hers was the testimony of “a good and truthful woman.” But at the time, the Company Store owners continued to shoot through their windows, and the entire family escaped to West Virginia in the middle of the night, eventually making their way north to Brooklyn.

V. QUESTIONS – *Ma Nishtana*

Activity: Hide four questions under each plate or hide tasks like lead song, charade of plague etc

Ask someone to uncover the question and pose that question to the group.

Slavery: A Land with No Questions

It is forbidden to work a Hebrew slave harshly (*befarech*). What is the definition of “harsh labor”?

(1) work without end [without a pre-assigned time limit] (2) work without purpose [useless work] whose only purpose is the master’s desire to keep the slave working and prevent idleness. For example, the master should not say: rake under these vines until I come back,” for that is a task without a set quota [in time or product]. For example, the master should not say: “dig here,” when the master has no need of this labor, nor even “heat up this cup of food or cool it off,” when there is no need for it. (Maimonides, Laws of Slaves, Chapter 1:6)

Primo Levi’s Question

Driven by thirst, I eyed a fine icicle outside the window, within a hand's reach. I opened the window and broke off the icicle, but at once a large, heavy guard prowling outside brutally snatched it away from me.

"Warum?" I asked him in my poor German.

"Hier ist kein warum!" (Here is no place to ask " why."), he replied, pushing me inside with a shove." (Primo Levi, *Survival at Auschwitz* (1943 or 1944)

Bulgaria???

Provoking Questions:

One should make some change in procedure (*seder*) on this night of the fifteenth of Nisan, in order that one’s children should notice it and ask, “What makes this night different from other nights?” to which one would reply, “this

and this is what happened, and this and this is what took place” [in the story of the Exodus].

In what way might the procedure (*seder*) be changed? By distributing parched grain or nuts to the children [distributing desert at the beginning of the meal], by having the table removed before the meal begins [clearing the table before anyone has eaten], by each trying to snatch away the other’s unleavened bread [playing games with the food like the stealing of the afikoman] and so on. (Maimonides, Laws of Chametz and Matza, Chapter 7:3)

Cracker Jacks: Illicit Advertising or Laudable Pedagogy

R. Judah said: a shopkeeper must not distribute parched corn or nuts to children, because he thereby accustoms them to come to him; the sages permit it.

Nor may he reduce the price; but the sages say, he is to be remembered for good.

(MISHNAH Bava Metzia 4: 12)

Education for Adulthood: Making Mistakes and Asking Questioning

The Hebrew Bible tells the long and often tense story of the childhood of humanity under the parenthood of God. But God does not want humankind to remain in childhood. He wants them to become adults, exercising responsibility in freedom. ...A weak parent seeks to control his children. A true parent seeks to relinquish control, which is why God never intervenes to protect us from ourselves. That means that we will stumble and fall, but truly by so doing does a child learn to walk. **God does not ask his children not to make mistakes.** To the contrary, he accepts that, in the Bible's own words, *There is none on earth so righteous as to do only good and never a sin* (Eccl. 7:20). God asks us only to acknowledge our mistakes and learn from them. Forgiveness is written into the structure of the universe.

The connection between the two halves of the chapter lies in an utterly Jew’s understanding of what it is to be a parent. Abraham, about to become father to the first child of the covenant, is being taught by God what it means to raise a child. **To be a father - implies the Bible - is to teach a child to**

question, to challenge, confront, dispute. God invites Abraham to do these things because he wants him to be the parent of a nation that will do these things. He does not want the people of the covenant to be one that accepts the evils and injustices of the world as the will of God. God wants the people of the covenant to be human, neither more nor less, God wants them to hear the cry of the oppressed, the pain of the afflicted and the plaint of the lonely. He wants them not to accept the world that as is, because it is not the world that ought to be. He is giving Abraham a tutorial in what it is to teach a child to grow by challenging the existing scheme of things. Only through such challenges does a child learn to accept responsibility; only by accepting responsibility does a child grow to become an adult; and only an adult can understand the parenthood of God. (Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, p. 25)

Nelson Mandela on a Traditional Society without Questions

“Like all [African tribal] Xhosa children, I acquired knowledge mainly through observation. We were meant to learn through imitation and emulation, not through questions. When I first visited the homes of whites, I was often dumbfounded by the number and nature of questions that children asked of their parents - and their parents' unfailing willingness to answer them. In my household, questions were considered a nuisance; adults imparted information as they considered necessary. My life, and that of most Xhosas at the time, was shaped by custom, ritual, and taboo. This was the alpha and omega of our existence, and went unquestioned. Men followed the path laid out for them by their fathers; women led the same lives as their mothers had before them. Without being told, I soon assimilated the elaborate rules that governed the relations between men and women.” (Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, about Mandela's 27 years of imprisonment for his struggle for democracy in South Africa. 11)

Provoking Questions before Giving Answers

“Some of the [white Afrikan prison] warders [on Robben Island] began to engage us in conversation. I never initiated conversations with warders, but if they addressed a question to me, I tried to answer. **It is easier to educate a man when he wants to learn.** Usually, these questions were posed with a kind of exasperation: "All right, Mandela, what is it you really want?" Or, "Look, you

have a roof over your head and enough food, why are you causing so much trouble?" I would then calmly explain our policies to the warders. I wanted to demystify the African National Congress for them, to peel away their prejudices." (Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, about Mandela's 27 years of imprisonment for his struggle for democracy in South Africa, 457)

Defective Schoolroom Questions

Teachers ask questions and students answer them. That is the social order of all so-called liberal schooling. It is not about lecturing which means, literally, "reading" from the accepted knowledge as was typical of medieval universities whose canon was Aristotle's encyclopaedic books. In theory the teacher's questions are meant to model for the student's questions. First the teacher is meant to challenge and interrogate the tradition seeking reason in place of arbitrary opinion and social custom. Then the student is invited to join that critical questioning. However often the questions are merely tests to see if the student recalls and can reproduce what the teacher or the book has already taught – "lectured." School researchers report that in American schools in a thirty minute period of "instruction" an average of 20 questions are asked but almost all are by the teacher who supposedly already knows the answers. One or two questions are raised by students about the material and a few seek the teacher's permission to go to the bathroom or inquire whether the material discussed will be included in the test.

For One who does not know how to ask:

Rav S. R. Hirsch argues that all children are naturally inquisitive, so one who does not ask is one who has been silenced by parents who ignore their questions or worse.

In the SR Hirsch Horev school in Jerusalem, Avigail appeared after Purim with her hair still in braids from her Purim costume. The principal ordered her to remove the braids immediately. She answered back: Why? So he sent her home with a stern warning letter to her parents that she would be expelled if she continued to ask why. Her mother queried the principal: But how will she learn if a school will not answer her questions?

Of Questions, Faith and Freedom: A Personal Exodus By Rabbi John Crites-Borak

Long before I became a Jew and a rabbi, when I was still a Roman Catholic, I achieved a bit of infamy in my parish for asking difficult questions. Why does God value what we believe more than what we do? Why would a loving God create a Hell? If God is all-powerful, why doesn't God defeat Satan and do away with evil? My priest's answer to all of them was uniquely frustrating and unsatisfactory: it's a matter of faith, which I clearly didn't have. I asked the priest how to get it. "Pray," he said. I told him I prayed and all I ever got were questions. "Pray harder." I did. I got harder ones. One morning after Mass I asked about a particularly difficult religious issue. He glared at me in a furious silence, then pointed his index finger at my heart. "You," he finally uttered through clenched teeth, "you ... are going ... to burn ... for this one." Then he turned and walked away. It was the last time I ever saw him.

As it happened, I was scheduled for a haircut the next day. My barber, a long-time friend, was Jewish. She listened as I told the story. "I don't know why you put up with all that *mishigass*," she exclaimed. "You keep trying to be a Christian, but you're the most Jewish man I know. You think like a Jew. You act like a Jew. You treat others like a Jew. You even think about God like a Jew!"

The only things I really knew about Jews were they wore odd little hats, didn't eat pork and didn't believe in Jesus. Moreover, my family and I viewed all of them with vague suspicion. I didn't believe I'd ever met a Jew before I moved to Los Angeles. Was she sure? "I haven't been inside a synagogue in 20 years," she laughed, "but I know a Jew when I see one."

That afternoon I called five local synagogues at random. "My name is John," I said. "I'm a Catholic, but someone said Judaism might be a better fit for me. What can you tell me about it?" For the record, this is one of the fastest ways to be put through to a rabbi's voice mail. I left five messages.

Only one person, Rabbi Stewart Vogel of Temple Aliyah in Woodland Hills, California, returned my call. He asked me to tell him my story. I did. When I finished he said, "I have bad news for you. We don't have the answer." Then he laughed and added, "Don't get me wrong - we have answers. More than you can count. But we don't have The Answer. On the other hand," he continued, "if you're looking for a place where you can ask life's most profound, difficult and meaningful questions- be willing to accept whatever responses you get to them -

then do a bit of studying, thinking and talking about them with others to formulate new questions - and have that be a way of living-- maybe you'll find a home with us." Then he recommended the Introduction to Judaism Program at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. I enrolled out of curiosity. Studying Judaism began as an adventure in learning. I soon realized it was also a homecoming. My questions were welcomed and encouraged as a road to faith that led both outward and inward. They became my exodus from the narrow straights of dogmatic religious conformity to a rich and fascinating world of unbridled curiosity about God and life. In them I found God, and faith. They led me to Judaism and the rabbinate. They set me free.³

Four Questions for Social Justice Today (Michael Lerner, Nevei Kodesh)

Discuss as a group or in pairs at the Seder table:

1. **Egypt, "mitzrayim"** in Hebrew, comes from the word "*tzar*": the "narrow place," the constricted place. In what way are you personally still constricted? Are you able to see yourself as part of the unity of all being, a manifestation of God's love on earth? Are you able to overcome the ego issues that separate us from each other? Can you see the big picture, or do you get so caught in the narrow places and limited struggles of your own life that it's hard to see the big picture? What concrete steps could you take to change that?

2. **Faith in Change and Skepticism.** Do you believe that we can eventually eradicate wars, poverty, and starvation? Or do you believe that no one really cares about anyone but themselves, and that we will always be stuck in some version of the current mess? Or do you think that such a belief is, itself, part of what keeps us in this mess? If so, how would you suggest we spread a more hopeful message and deal with the cynicism and self-doubt that always accompanies us when we start talking about changing the world?

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3. **Stories of Hope.** What experiences have you had that give you hope? Tell about some struggle to change something — a struggle that you personally were involved in — that worked. What did you learn from that?

4. **Taking the Initiative.** When the Israelites approached the Sea of Reeds, the waters did not split. It took a few brave souls to jump into the water. Even then, the waters rose up to their very noses, and only then when these brave souls showed that they really believed in God as the Force of Healing and Transformation did the waters split and the Israelites walked through. Have you known someone with that courage? When have you taken such a first step – did it open up the situation?

Games: Twenty questions; Jewpardy with Jewish trivia questions

VI. We were Slaves - Retelling the Exodus Then and Now

Even if we are. all wise

There is a fundamental difference between knowing and telling the story. We do not tell the need the exodus to know what happened in the past. We do so because each telling engraves that event more thoroughly in the memory, and because each year adds its own insights and interpretations. Judaism is a constant dialogue between past and present, and since the present always changes, there is always a new juxtaposition, a new facet of the story. The sages said, 'There is no house of study without *hiddush*, some new interpretation.' The story of Pesach never grows old, because the struggle for freedom never ends, and therefore each generation adds its own commentary to the old-new story. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's Haggadah)

Exodus Dress-up and Games

- Children appear in pajamas as if awakened in middle of night for the Exodus.
- What would you pack if you had five minutes to abandon your home and only room for two items of sentimental value?
- Charades for Pesach objects or Exodus character or Haggadah phrases

The Storytelling Seder: The Art of Enhancing Personal and Familial Identity - *V higadta L'vinkha- You shall tell your children*

"In every generation one is obligated to *see oneself as if you went out of Egypt!*"

(Ashkenazi Haggadah)

"One is obligated to *show oneself as if you went out of Egypt!*"

(Maimonidean Haggadah)

Souvenirs of the Egyptian Experience: The Edible Symbols of Memory

"Pesach (bone) for what? Matza for what? Maror for What?"

Benching Gomet: Passover as Thanksgiving. Retell story of being endangered or imprisoned and how one was rescued and what one learned about life.

Spiritual Liberation: Abraham and Sarah, Jews by Choice – recounting your Jewish identity journey.

Let's hear it for Lake Wobegon! By Garrison Keillor

"When I was a boy the storyteller in our family was Uncle Lew who died a couple of years ago at 93. In a family that tended to be withdrawn, Uncle Lew was the friendliest. He had been a salesman and he liked to drive around and dropped in on people. He would ask us kids how we were doing in school and then there was point when he would launch in and start telling stories about the family, generation upon generation.

My parents would be in the living room and we would be eating popcorn. As it got later I remember lying on the floor so my mother wouldn't see me and send me to bed. I just wanted him to tell more and more. I wanted to know everything. What it looked like and what it smelled like, what they ate and what they wore.

As I got older I looked to those stories about family as giving us some sense of place, that is some way we were meant to be here and had a history. That we had standing.

- ❖ The universe is made up of stories, not of atoms. - Muriel Rukeyser
- ❖ When a day passes, it is no longer there. What remains of it? Nothing more than a story. If stories weren't told or books weren't written, man would live like the beasts, only for the day. Today we live, but by tomorrow today will be a story. The whole world, all human life, is one long story. - Isaac Bashevis Singer

- ❖ All human beings have an innate need to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by ... religion, whatever else it has done, has provided one of the main ways of meeting this abiding need. - -Harvey Cox

- ❖ I am still learning the art of writing from the Book of Genesis ... Whenever I take the Bible down from my bookcase and I begin to read it, I cannot put it down. I always find new aspects, new facts, new tensions, new information in it. I sometimes imagine that, while I sleep or walk, some hidden scribe invades my house and puts new passages, new names, new events into this wonderful book ... It is God's greatest gift to humanity. - -Isaac Bashevis Singer

- ❖ Approached the story in the spirit of the great theologian Martin Buber, who urged people "to read the Bible as if they had never seen it." Even the most faithful believers kept themselves open to surprise; the admission of not knowing exactly what the passage means made possible an unexpected visitation, a revelation. - Bill Moyers

A Passover Story - Abebe: One Boy's Journey from Ethiopia to Israel by Micha Feldmann

And so it began...

In the 1980's, the Jews of Ethiopia, who had long dreamed of *aliyah*, felt their chance had come. Unable, however, to travel directly to Israel, they were forced to trek by foot hundreds of miles to neighboring Sudan, where they might stand a chance to leave for the *Zion* of their imagination. Travel mostly took place during the night, as people were forced to hide during daylight hours from government forces and bandits.

After weeks of enduring hardships and treacherous conditions, those who did manage to survive hunger, thirst, and the sheer distance might hope to finally reach overcrowded refugee camps in Sudan. There they would remain for months and sometimes years before being permitted to leave for Israel. Over the years, only when it was deemed safe, Israeli operatives managed to smuggle small groups of Ethiopian Jews out of the refugee camps and bring them safely to Israel.

In 1990, Ethiopia and Israel came to an agreement under which Ethiopian Jews would be allowed to leave the country under the auspices of family reunification. As word spread, thousands began leaving Gondar in Ethiopia for the capital city of Addis Ababa. This is the story of Abebe, one boy's journey from Ethiopia to his delivery to the "Promised Land" -- *Eretz Yisrael*.

The narrator ...

My name is Micha Feldmann. I am a native Israeli. In the 1980's I was in charge of absorption of the Ethiopian Jews who had just arrived in Israel via Sudan. I met Abebe one day when we were interviewing families who had just arrived from the refugee camps. Interviews took place in a large hall with a clearly marked entrance and exit to make it easy. I remember one Shabbat, after nightfall, when we thought that we had completed all the interviews, we discovered in one of the corners of the hall, a young boy whom we thought to be approximately 12-13 years-old.

I approached him and asked his name. He said, "My name is Abebe," which in Amharic means flower. When I asked him why he wasn't with his parents, he responded that he was on his own, that his family was still in Ethiopia. Unable to

fathom the situation, I assumed that he must have made the journey with an uncle, an older brother, or another relative. He repeated that he was on his own. Both concerned and intrigued, I asked this boy to tell me his story.

Abebe's story begins...

“In Ethiopia, my father was the most important man in our village. Every Shabbat we had guests. But whenever guests come to an Ethiopian home, the children are sent out. Of course, we children wanted to hear what the adults were saying, so we listened to their conversations from outside of the hut. What did they talk about? They talked about the fact that we Jews were not part of Ethiopia. They said that our country is Jerusalem. We heard them describe Jerusalem as a city of gold, a city of ‘milk and honey.’ I imagined that around Jerusalem, two rivers flowed, one of milk, and the other of honey. We all thought that in Jerusalem you spent your days praying to G-d and that should you need some milk or some honey you would just go to one of the rivers and help yourself.”

“From one Shabbat to the next my love for Jerusalem grew, and I knew that one day I would go there. Suddenly, family after family left our village and the word ‘Sudan’ was heard everywhere. I figured out that Sudan was the gateway to Jerusalem. So I went to my parents and I said to them, ‘All the families here are leaving for Sudan, the gateway to Jerusalem, please let us do the same.’ My mother and father took me aside and said to me, ‘We have old parents of our own to take care of and your younger siblings will not be able to make the long journey. We must remain here.’”

“I so wanted to be in Jerusalem that I decided to observe the events going on in my village to see how I could make this happen. Every afternoon I would sit on a hilltop and look down at my village. One afternoon I saw a group of young men and women, collecting food and water, and I *knew* that that very night they would leave for Sudan. Instead of going to bed I remained on my hill, waiting for the moment when they would leave the village. Then, without getting my parents’ blessing, I left my home, and began to follow the group, staying far enough behind so as not to be discovered, yet close enough not to lose sight of them.”

“We walked for hours without stopping for food or drink. Then at sunrise, I saw the group hide in a cave. They seemed to know what they were doing, so I did the same. As I had left without making any preparations, I was already very

hungry and thirsty. Even so, I didn't want to reveal myself to the group because we were still too close to our village and I did not want to be sent back. So I hid in another nearby cave waiting like the others for the night to come. Under cover of the darkness, when the group resumed their journey, I again followed them, keeping the right amount of distance between us. Only after that second night's journey, thoroughly exhausted and desperate for refreshment, did I dare to approach the group. They took me in, gave me some food and water, and for the next three weeks, we traveled together in this same way towards Sudan."

"When we reached Sudan, something terrible happened to me. The group fell apart; everyone went his or her own way. Some reunited with their families; others discovered long-lost friends. Only, I was standing alone -- a young boy, in a strange country, not knowing the language or even another person. I so wanted to return to my village but didn't know how. I was only 12. Looking about, I saw a young Sudanese boy, close to my age, selling bananas from a bunch slung over his shoulder, as was the custom there. When he finished selling one bunch, he went to a nearby merchant to buy more."

The narrator interjects ... I gave Abebe a chance to catch his breath. I was very touched by his story and I asked how he managed to survive. For reasons I would soon discover, it was suddenly hard for him to go on with his narrative. He cast his eyes down...

Abebe continues...

"I am ashamed of what I am going to tell you now. But sometimes things that you are ashamed of can help you. Before leaving the village, knowing where my parents hid their money, I stole some of it -- not all of it, but some of it. Once in Sudan, this money helped me a lot. What did I do with it? I went to the same merchant as the boy I saw and bought a bunch of bananas. For the next six months I survived as a banana seller."

"Then, a few days ago before I came here (to the hall), I was walking through a section of the refugee camp where I believed the Jews were living. Passing by one of the tents, I overheard someone telling the inhabitants to gather that very evening in the market place at 10:00 p.m. I thought to myself that it wouldn't hurt me to be there as well. Once I arrived, I found about 300 other Jews had also come. Suddenly, two huge trucks pulled up, and all of the people ran into them. I did too, and here I am."

The Narrator ...

After hearing Abebe's remarkable story, I asked myself what should be done for this boy once we brought him to Israel. Should I take him into my home and raise him as my son? Should he be living with a foster family? What should I do? In the end, despite the fact that Abebe, a shepherd boy, had never set foot inside a classroom, it was decided to send him to a boarding school near Akko in the North of Israel. The year was 1984.

I would visit Abebe at the school from time to time. Our first meetings were very warm and full of conversation about how he was getting along. About half a year after his arrival, Abebe started asking about his parents. Every time we met I tried to assure him that I would help bring his family to Israel. Such conversations continued for one, two, and three years. At some point, he stopped believing me.

And then, five years after his arrival, I was sent back to Ethiopia to take care of bringing the rest of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel. At that time, my office was a small room in the Israeli Embassy in Addis Ababa. Every afternoon, hundreds of Jews would line up in front of the Embassy. Since my room was very small, we interviewed family after family under the trees in the Embassy compound. We sat at makeshift desks asking people to recount their backgrounds. One day, a family of eight - including two parents and six children - sat before me. Upon hearing their family name and that of their village, I jumped up out of my chair and kissed the father and mother. Seeing the expressions on their faces, I understood that they had no idea why this fat white man was embracing them so enthusiastically. I explained in Amharic that I knew their son, Abebe.

I took the parents back inside the Embassy building and I am sure you know which phone number I dialed. When I reached the boarding school on the other end of the line, I asked the principal to put Abebe on the phone. Since his mother, had never before used a telephone, I held it to her ear. For the next five minutes she couldn't stop crying. Since until this moment she had not known if her son was dead or alive, she couldn't understand how she could now hear his voice on this strange device.

In May of 1991, rebel troops closed in on Addis Ababa and "Operation Solomon" began. Time, as they say, was of the essence. In one weekend, we airlifted 14,310 Ethiopian Jews and brought them safely to Israel. As you may know, we didn't go by the book. Planes that usually held 80 people were packed with 190 people. Breaking a world record, we fit more than 1,000 on a Boeing 747, a plane that normally accommodated some 400 people. On one flight, we left

Ethiopia with 1,086 passengers and arrived in Israel with 1,087 passengers. The first child of “Operation Solomon” had been born midair as the pilot announced to one and all, *Mazal Tov*. In total, 44 flights left Ethiopia in less than 24 hours. Abebe’s family was on one of those flights.

Epilogue...

Abebe was reunited with his parents in Israel but continued his studies at the boarding school. After graduating, he joined the Israel Defense Forces, and following his release from the army he studied at a college in Israel. Abebe is now married and the father of two children.

The Ethiopian Matza of the Exodus from Ethiopia and Passover in Sudan

Operation Moshe from Sudan 1983-1984⁴

From Micha Feldmann, *On the Wings of Eagles*, 10- 15

Micha's Diary: APRIL 16, 1983, YOM HAZIKARON (Israeli Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers)

Four weeks ago, sixty-three immigrants arrived in another clandestine naval operation from Sudan, and today another seventy-seven came. This has been the final maritime initiative. Among those who arrived was one extended family of seventeen people - the elderly parents, their children and grandchildren. For them, it is the end of an exodus that has lasted over four years, starting in a small village called Gamo in the north of Ethiopia and ending today in Israel, at last. I paid particular attention to a young woman called Agerie Akale. She gave birth in Sudan only a week ago and looks very sick, but her eyes captivated me: such wisdom with such impishness, as though proclaiming, "Don't worry, I'll live. And how!"

AGERIE'S STORY

⁴ The Terrors of Sudanese Refugee Camps

Zimna the Ethiopian aliyah activist who made it to Israel and who volunteered to go back to Sudan to organize the clandestine aliyah explained to Micha the situation in Sudan:

"It's good that you're not stationed in Sudan. Two hours there would break you. You just can't imagine what suffering the people endure there. You wouldn't be able to stand it. You would either run away or go crazy."

It was not possible to save everyone. On one of his journeys, Zimna encountered a woman who had not yet buried her son, who had died four days earlier, because she had neither the tools to dig a grave nor anyone to assist her.

During the course of time, Zimna grasped the local problems and then he gave instructions that the Jews must conceal their identity as Jews. He said that they should cook on the Sabbath, eat meat that had not been slaughtered by the kessoch. The young people accepted this, but the elders would not agree to carry out these orders. Aliyah was not yet organized at that time; however, by the end of 1983, a system was in place and was working well."

(41)

When my father decided to make aliyah to Eretz Yisrael [from Ethiopia during the persecution under the communist dictatorship of Daniel Mengistu], I was thirteen years old. One day, he gathered the whole family together and announced that we were setting out for Jerusalem. We could not all leave together, which might make our neighbors suspicious. There were those who might have reported us to the authorities. So Father moved his children one at a time, walking for three days with each one, always in the direction of a village he knew of on the Sudanese border. It took him a whole year to transfer the whole family.

The Ethiopian Matza

At last we were all together, and the uncles and aunts also joined us. We organized provisions for a journey that would take at least seven days. The women baked *dabo kolo*, a sort of dried bread, while

the men prepared furs to rest on at night, as well as several waterskins. Being a poor family, we couldn't buy donkeys or mules. We all had to walk the whole way on foot carrying all our goods. The luckier children were the ones wearing sandals made of old tires. I didn't have any shoes and, believe me, I felt every stone and every thorn all along the way.

Armed guides escorted us. They charged per head. Most of the guides were highwaymen, brigands who were not afraid of passing through dangerous areas. But the way went on and on and on. After one week, our food ran out and the waterskins were empty. And of all times, it was just then that we had to pass through a region that was burning hot. My little brothers wanted to go back home, but father encouraged us, saying, "You have to get to Eretz Yisrael. That's where you'll study and make something of yourselves." Because they were so terribly thirsty, the children started digging into the ground with their hands until they reached a soft sandy layer. They started to eat the moist dirt and to smear it on their faces.

The guides left us totally destitute in a small town on the Sudanese border. We were lucky that we ran into kind people who gave us food and drink. The next day father went out to search for Jews who would assist us. This proved difficult and it took half a year before we managed to make contact with Jews employed

by the Israeli emissaries to give Jews financial support while awaiting their turn to make aliyah.

A Wicked Jew

In the course of time, it became clear to us that those employees usually gave preference to their own relatives, both in giving out the money and in deciding who had priority to make aliyah. We even heard of cases where those same employees separated wives from their husbands, forcing them to divorce because they desired the women for themselves. It was hard for us to believe that Jews could behave like that to other Jews.

A Righteous Gentile

A short time after we arrived in Sudan, when I was fourteen years old, I set out to look for work. Quite by chance, I met a rich Sudanese who was looking for a young woman for housework. I presented myself as being a Muslim and from that day on I became the ironing maid. That house became like home to me. The Sudanese man also taught me to pray. When I came to my own home every few days, my brothers would poke around in the plastic bag that I had brought back, looking for the leftovers that I'd had taken from my master's table.

When I reached the age of sixteen, my father decided that I must be married, as he was worried that otherwise I might catch the fancy of a Sudanese man. He chose a young Jewish man as my bridegroom.

I accepted my father's ruling and soon after the wedding I became pregnant. My Sudanese master ordered me to immediately stop working but continued to pay me my wages.

The Last Passover in Sudan

We celebrated our last Passover in Sudan with the feeling that our own redemption was close. After all, we had been in the camp over three years and whatever way you worked it out, we were next in line to make aliyah. The day after the festival, when they were all busy baking the first bread after having only eaten matza throughout Passover, I gave birth to my son. As is our custom, my own mother was my midwife and instructed me how to care for the baby. But on the very next day, they told us we would be departing on the following Monday. My child would then be only five days old and I didn't know how I would

carry him. My mother calmed my anxiety, making a special fabric bag - an *enkalwa* - for the baby.

The Children of Israel Left Egypt in Great Haste

One of the activists arrived disguised as an Arab. He told us to set out immediately for the assembly point, which was an hour's walk away from our house. We packed up our few possessions and my father warned the little ones not to be noisy, reminding them that the Children of Israel had also left Egypt in great haste. It was toward the end of the Hebrew month of Nissan, when moonlight is very faint and the nights are very dark. I could see other families arriving at the meeting point. Altogether, when everyone had gathered, we were seventy-seven people.

Even before we'd managed to put down the children and our belongings, three vehicles approached with headlights unlit. They were pickup trucks with canvas coverings over the cargo compartments. An Israeli emissary sat behind the wheel of each one. The people were then quickly lifted into the back of the trucks. When the trucks reached the main road, their headlights were switched on. The drivers drove at a crazy speed.

***Tsafun*: The Hidden Hebrew Baby**

Underneath the canvas the conditions were ghastly. Twenty-five people were jammed into each compartment and the heat mounted. Then the first one threw up and the stench was awful. I felt I was about to lose consciousness. I barely managed to stretch out my hand toward the burning canvas overhead. I wanted to rip it open with my fingernails, but my hand lacked the strength and fell back. The heat was overpowering. I didn't know who should be my first concern. My baby? My parents? Myself? I felt I should be suckling the baby, but it was impossible to unstrap him from my mother's back. Every few minutes, I stretched my hand out to his mouth to check that he was breathing. At midday, my hand suddenly felt wet when I touched him. There was saliva on his face, but he wasn't breathing. I tried to shout, but my voice couldn't be heard. My mouth was open wide, but no sound came out of it. Only my eyes were crying. My mother saw my torment and she felt that the body on her back had ceased to move. She tried to calm me down and, stretching out her hand with difficulty, she stroked my head, saying, "Agerie, my daughter, don't be sad, with God's help we will reach Jerusalem."

All kinds of thoughts were chasing around in my head. Where would we bury the baby? In Sudan? Perhaps it would be better to wait and bury him in Jerusalem? I blamed myself - if I hadn't given birth to him before our departure, I'd have given birth in Jerusalem. What wrong had the child done that God had decided to take him back before he'd been circumcised?

On one of the bends, when all the passengers were thrown to one side, a baby's whimpering was suddenly heard. I heard my mother say, "The child is alive!" Then, when the truck stopped because a flat tire had to be repaired, I put him to my breast and could feel him feeding. A wave of joy swept through my whole body.

At the overnight rest stop, for the very first time in our lives, we ate food from cans - weird things like carrots and peas that were already cooked. But to us they were delicious because they came from Jerusalem. The next day, we left the main highway and traveled for ten battering hours on pitted dirt roads, in order to bypass the Sudanese army's checkpoints. Again we feared that we would not reach Jerusalem. What terrible death was awaiting us in this trap? But after night had fallen, we reached an open area and were told to get down from the truck.

We saw dozens of soldiers and in the darkness they looked to us like Sudanese, but we quickly realized that they were Israelis. They put lifebelts on us and placed us in the boats that were waiting on the beach. We could see lights in the distance. I remembered the stories that the elders used to tell about how Jerusalem is filled with dazzling light and I truly thought that this must be Jerusalem. But when we got close to the lights, we saw it was a ship and realized that Jerusalem was still a long way away. The whole boat, with us in it, was lifted by a crane onto the deck. The children were in a state of shock as we hung between the sea and the sky, but from the deck Zimna [the Ethiopian Israeli] reassured us, saying, "You've reached an Israeli ship. You're safe here."

Refusing to Eat at the Feast of Liberation

We'll never forget the reception we had on board. In spite of the fact that we were covered with vomit and smelled foul, the Israelis hugged us. They gave us soap and towels and helped us to shower. Zimna took the baby from me and rushed him off to the clinic so that the doctor could check him right away. After we had showered, they showed us to small cabins that had beds in three tiers. But even before we finished gaping at them, we were invited to go to the dining

room. The tables there were covered with white cloths and laden with strange foods. It all looked glorious and so attractive, but when we drew nearer to the tables many of us felt they had to refuse the meal. I heard my mother say, "Don't touch the food. That's not Jewish food. They want to test us to see if we're Jews who keep kosher." In the end, not one of us touched the food, all just making do with the fresh apples that were on the tables.

When we got back to the cabin, I was attacked by anxiety about my baby - perhaps after all he was no longer among the living - many hours had gone by since he'd been taken from me and I hadn't seen him since. My breasts were sore from retaining so much milk. Again I fell into my mother's arms and sobbed, "My child is dead, he's dead:" Once again she tried to soothe me but in vain. It was only around noon that Zimna came and took me to a room that was completely white. It was the ship's sick bay. My baby was lying motionless in a glass container with a sort of rubber stopper in his mouth. I burst out crying and shouted, "I knew he'd die, I knew he'd die!" The Israeli doctor explained to me that the baby was a little weak and so had been placed in an incubator, but that I could soon nurse him. He also explained that the stopper in his mouth was a pacifier, a temporary substitute for the mother's breast. He understood what was going through my mind and gave orders that I should be brought to the clinic every half hour to see that my son was alive.

The City of Lights

Throughout the two days that we sailed, they took us out in couples onto the deck, but all we could see was water. Then, on Saturday night they took us all out onto the deck - lights could be seen from afar, the lights of the city of Eilat. "It's Jerusalem," they said to us, "It's Eretz Yisrael." And we all knelt down on the deck and kissed it. In the plane that flew us from Eilat, my mother rolled up the window blind. The sunlight burst into the plane and my mother said, "You see, it's all just like we told you. Eretz Yisrael is alight with glory. This is our land, the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." I could swear that I saw my week-old baby smiling.

"One who saves one life is as if they saved the whole world"

That evening, after we finished our work for the day with the new immigrants, Zimna told me, over a cup of coffee, about a similar incident that had happened over a year before on the deck of the Israeli ship Bat Galim. On January 27,

1982, the second naval operation had taken place, the biggest ever, bringing in 350 immigrants. Among them was a family with a daughter about six years old who was very sick.

Zimna picked up the child in his own arms and within one minute she was in the hands of one of the doctors. The doctors agreed that the child had meningitis and they rushed to the bridge to speak to the captain: "We must have a helicopter to evacuate a child. Her life is in danger."

"It's out of the question. We're sailing between Sudan and Saudi Arabia."

"I couldn't care less. We've got to have a helicopter."

"We're in hostile territory and I will not request a helicopter."

"The life of a six-year-old girl will be on your conscience. I demand that you send a cable to naval headquarters or else give me a letter in which you take full responsibility for what happens to the child."

The cable was sent.

Zimna had been in Sudan several months prior to this incident. He had seen the dying in the camps and knew how little a person's life was worth in that same place where this child had been until the day before. The doctor's persistence amazed him.

Sure enough, within a short time a reply was received in the wireless room: "Wait. The matter is now under discussion among the chief of staff, the minister of defense, and the prime minister." In the end the prime minister, Menachem Begin, authorized the departure of a helicopter escorted by two Phantom airplanes and a refueling plane. And Zimna thought, not for the first time:

"What a crazy country that's about to put itself into danger and spend thousands of dollars just in order to save one little Falasha girl. What a nation!"

Postscript; Two Kinds of Human Traffickers

In Israel, the government decided last month - that was March, 1983, that this would be the last naval operation from Sudan. Several days before that decision, Aleph [from the Mossad] reported on an accidental encounter between one of his staff [running the scuba diving resort in the Red Sea in Sudan as a cover for smuggling out Jews] with and a Sudanese fisherman. It happened one evening on the beach. The Sudanese said, "I know what you're doing here at night. I've seen

how you load people onto boats and take them far out to sea. Don't worry. I won't hand you over to the authorities. What's more, I'm ready to make a deal with you. I'll pay you \$2,000 for each person that you supply to me. I'm in the same line of business, but I have to put chains on the people in order to get them into a boat, so I usually only manage to get older ones. But you get young people and pretty girls into your boats and they don't even put up any resistance - in fact they're happy about it. How do you manage it?"

That was when our man in Sudan realized that the guy was trading in slaves, transporting them to Saudi Arabia. In Jerusalem, this chance meeting switched on a red "stop" light; it was clear the

sea route had to be abandoned. The next few months were spent industriously developing an alternative route, by air.

VII. Profiles in Courage, Empathy, and Resistance: Moses and those who have Followed in His Footsteps

Prophetic Pathos.

Sympathy is an act in which a person is open to the presence of another person. Prophetic sympathy is no delight; unlike ecstasy it is not a goal but a sense of challenge and a commitment..... The unique feature of religious sympathy is not self-conquest but **self-dedication**; not the suppression of emotion but its redirection; not silent subordination, but active cooperation with God.

Authentic utterance derives from a moment of identification of a person and a word. ...He is one not only with what he says; he is involved with his people in what his words foreshadow. This is the secret of the prophet's style: **his life and soul are at stake in what he says and in what is going to happen to what he says..** What is more, both theme and identification are seen in **three dimensions**. Not only the prophet and the people, but God Himself is involved in what the words convey.(Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, 6)

Moses Went Out

"*And Moshe grew up and went out to his brother and saw their burdens.*" (Exodus 2:11)

אִישׁ מִקֵּה מִצְרַי אִישׁ נִרְאָה בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אֶחָיו אֶל נִיֶּצֵא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּגְדֵּל הֵם בְּיָמָיו וַיְהִי
(יא פסוק ב פרק שמות): מֵאֶחָיו עֲבָרֵי

Rashi glosses as "giving his eyes and his heart so as to suffer with them."

"What is meant by "he saw"? He looked upon their burdens and cried, saying, 'I grieve for you! Would that I might give my life for you!' There is no labor more difficult than laboring with the loam.' But Moshe placed his shoulders [to their burdens], and he helped each one of them."(Exodus Rabbah 1:32)

"The Holy One said, 'You neglected your own affairs, while you went to observe the affliction of Israel, and you treated them as brothers. I will neglect both angels and earthdwellers, and I will speak with you.' Hence, it says, *And the Adonai saw that he turned to look.* The Almighty saw that Moshe had turned away from his own affairs to

take heed of their burdens; therefore, *G-d called out to him out of the midst of the bush.*" (Exodus Rabbah 1:32)

Adonai saw that Moshe "turned (*sa'ar*) to look" at the burning bush (Exodus 3:4). "The Holy One said: This individual [Moshe] is grieved (*sa'ar*) and troubled to behold the anguish of Israel in Egypt. Therefore is he worthy of becoming their shepherd." (Exodus Rabbah on Exodus 2:11-15).

"The Master of the World said to Moshe: Are you not aware that I am in distress, just as Israel is in distress? Know this, then, by the place from which I am speaking to you - from amidst the thorns. I am, as it were, a "partner" in their distress." (Exodus Rabbah 2:7)ⁱ

"I dwell in the high and holy place, yet I am with those who are oppressed and downtrodden in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly ones and to revive the heart of the oppressed."(Isaiah 57:15 cited in TB Megillah 31a in reference to gifts to the poor)

Sisterly Compassion

My wife Marcelle Zion is a social worker working with Holocaust survivors in Jerusalem and herself the daughter of Dutch survivors. For that reason she has vowed never to set foot in Germany. One day one of her favorite participants in her cultural meetings apologized in advance that she would not be able to attend the next session because she must visit her granddaughter who is married to a German nonJew with whom she lives in Berlin. Marcelle looked bewildered and the women explained that this was very special marriage. Back in 1938 in Germany I became pregnant with my first child in an era when it was so dangerous and so difficult to get a visa to leave Nazi Germany. Jews were beginning to go underground. My sympathetic German neighbor decided to help. She began to fill her blouse with pillows and to accompany to the maternity hospital as if she too were pregnant. In 1939 when my time to give birth arrived so did hers, so-to-speak. We both entered the same maternity ward and soon she came out with a baby – mine – and I left the country the next day with visa. Only after the war seven years later was I able to return and to reclaim my baby daughter whom she had raised as her own throughout

the difficult war years. Now my granddaughter is married to my compassionate neighbor's grandson.

The Rainbow Haggadah: US Army April, 1945

The term "Haggadah" comes from the Torah - *V'higad'ta livincha* -- "Tell your child." Our seder retells what my father told me about the liberation of our people.

In 1945 my father, Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen published the *Rainbow Haggadah* for the soldiers of the 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Division of the U. S. Army who were then fighting the Nazis in Germany. The soldiers who did the actual printing reported that when they had to clean the press before printing the Haggadah, the only rags available were some Nazi flags which, in my father's words, "for once served a useful purpose." The Haggadah was used at the Rainbow Division's Seder in Dahn, Germany in April, 1945.

The *Rainbow Haggadah* contains a letter from the Division's General (no doubt ghost-written by my father):

To my Jewish soldiers:

...Like your ancestors of old, you too are now engaged in a battle for freedom against a modern Pharaoh.... God grant that victory for us will make it possible for you to celebrate the next Passover with your loved ones at home, in a world you helped make free.

One month later, the Rainbow Division participated in the liberation of the death camp at Dachau. (Michael Bohnen)

The Burning Bush in Birmingham: African- Americans and Rabbis (1963)

"There is still one problem of racial misfortune unsolved. **The depths of that problem, in all their horror, only a Jew can fathom.** I mean the Negro problem ... Think of the hair-raising horrors of the slave trade. Human beings, because their skins are black, are stolen, carried off, and sold. Their descendants grow up in alien surroundings despised and hated because their skin is differently pigmented. I am not ashamed to say, though I be thought ridiculous, now that I have lived to see the restora-

tion of the Jews, I should like to pave the way for the restoration of the Negroes.” (Herzl, *Altneuland*, 169)

"Raging" Bull: Hell in Birmingham by Marc Schneier (*Shared Dreams: MLK and the Jews*, 85-91)

M.L. King's "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail" (April 1963) chastising the eight clergy of Birmingham including the local rabbi who told the negroes to stop their civil disobedience:

"[I had anticipated] that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed."

Released from prison on April 20, King faced a depleted campaign: few volunteers, no money, and another court appointment. As one participant, lawyer William Kunstler, later explained:

"Bull Connor had carried out his threat to arrest all demonstrators, and as a result, there simply were not enough adults remaining in the community to march. Spirits were low, perhaps the lowest they had been since the Birmingham crusade had begun only weeks earlier. Suddenly, ... James Bevel, a small man with a bald pate and fiery eyes, spoke up.

'Why don't we ask the schoolchildren to start marching? Let's keep them out of school and have them fill the ranks;' Bevel suggested. Initially, most of the people in the room were not in favor of this radical idea. It would be too dangerous; children should not be exposed to arrests and beatings, they said. But Bevel persisted. 'We're doing what we're doing for the next generation, so why shouldn't the kids join the struggle?' 'Children marching might draw more attention to our protest;' I added. Gradually, everyone agreed to Bevel's plan."

On May 2, more than a thousand children marched. Over nine hundred were arrested. The next day, twenty-five hundred children marched. On this day, the name of "Bull" Connor would be enshrined in the halls of infamy. As police dogs strained against their leashes and firemen unrolled hose lines, newspaper reporters and TV cameras recorded what happened next. At Connor's command, the dogs were let loose and the high-pressure fire hoses were opened. The children were flung everywhere as dogs bit and maimed them. A stunned world reacted in outrage. The next day, the carnage continued: children marching and singing, dogs attacking, water hoses pummeling them. On May 5, three thousand children marched. But the police and firefighters could not continue. They stood there - frozen. As King later said, "It was one of the most fantastic events of the Birmingham story. I saw there, I felt here, for the first time, the pride and the power of nonviolence."

As King searched for witnesses in his Birmingham battle, twenty rabbis [including Rabbi Moses Sachs] left the sixty-third annual convention of the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly to fly to Birmingham and join King. At the convention, Rabbi Bernard Mandelbaum had challenged his colleagues to answer whether they only concern themselves with Nazi cruelty "when acts of injustice to fellow human beings were taking place in our country."

Many Jews in Birmingham feared the presence of rabbis would only spur criticism of the local Jewish population, and maybe even provoke violence against it, they asked the would be demonstrators to leave. "Two of the rabbis [who had just arrived in Birmingham] met with the group until dawn. What they heard was the story of a Jewish community in panic. For months, King had led an economic boycott on the downtown which had all but destroyed the Jewish store owners.... In addition, several sticks of dynamite with a faulty fuse had been discovered on the steps of ... [a] synagogue, and ... [local Jewish leaders were] asking the rabbis to return home before they involved the Jewish community any deeper in turmoil."

After settling in their motel, the rabbis met with King. As one rabbi who was there remembered:

"When he came in, we saw a very tired young man. At arm's-length he looked younger, leaner, shorter, much more vulnerable than at some distance or in his public image. There was great weariness and something close to physical pain on

his lips. But his smile was warm and wholly sincere all the same. As though he had no other worry in the world, he contemplated and answered our questions,.. We must have spent about one hour with Dr. King ... He spoke of his disappointment in so-called white liberals and their temporizing, also in the failure of most of the clergy to take an unequivocal stand on the side of racial equality and integration.... [H]e quoted Martin Buber and the Hebrew Bible; and when, at our request, he led us in a parting prayer, there was a sacred stillness in the air."

That night the rabbis participated in services at local black churches. Remarked one, "When we entered their churches, we were greeted as 'our rabbis' We marched the aisles amid standing ovation and cheering congregations."

Rabbi Richard Rubenstein recalled:

"The Negro community saw the rabbis in a way in which they had seldom seen Jews. By our very presence we were handing down a kind of 'apostolic' succession to them. **We were saying that the flesh and blood children of Israel were behind them in their struggle, that we had gone from slavery to freedom, and we knew they would.** The convention behind the symbolism of solidarity was heightened by our willingness to incur risks of physical harm to bear witness to our convictions."

As early as 1948, James Baldwin had written in an essay entitled "The Harlem Ghetto," which appeared in *Commentary* published by the American Jewish Committee:

"The Negro identifies himself almost wholly with the Jew. The more devout Negro considers that he is a Jew, in bondage to a hard taskmaster and waiting for a Moses to lead him out of Egypt. The hymns, the texts, and the most favored legends of the devout Negro are all Old Testament and therefore Jewish in origin: the flight from Egypt, the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, the terrible jubilee songs of deliverance.... The covenant God made in the beginning with Abraham and which was to extend to his children and to his children's children forever is a covenant made with these latter-day exiles also: as Israel was chosen, so are they."

As plans were broadcast for a march that Friday, a panicked group of local Jewish leaders met again with some of the rabbis. "Attorney Karl Freedman started the meeting off with a determined plea to the rabbis that ended with, "You'll kill my wife and daughters"; at one point, a participant remembered that

one of the rabbis said, "The Jews have too long been passive; we know the risks; we may be shot at, but it is time!" [One of the Birmingham participants] Dora Roth remembers telling them, "You will go back on the plane heroes and leave us to gather the wrath. I hope your convictions are strong enough to carry the blood of my children on your hands."

Rabbi Jack Bloom said:

"Reverend Ralph Abernathy at a rally held in a church.... told how Moses avoided looking at the [burning] bush. God finally forced Moses to look at the bush, and Moses looked at it until the fire of that bush burned within him. With that fire within, Moses took the first steps towards redeeming his people. I think that many of us felt that way about our 'Birmingham' experience. Something about those days transformed our brothers' burning desire for freedom and equality into a flame burning within us."⁵

Esther and the Jewish Beanies: The Voter Registration Marches in Selma, Alabama, 1965

Upon returning to Selma, M. L. King learned that Sheriff Clark and his henchmen had used cattle prods on a group of marching students. As King's voter registration campaign branched out into neighboring counties, Lingo's troopers were quick to put marchers to flight, shooting one, Jimmy Lee Jackson. While in his hospital bed, Jackson was charged with assaulting a police officer. On February 26, Jackson died. James Bevel delivered a sermon that night at Selma's Brown Chapel, expounding "on Esther 4:8, in which Mordecai warned Esther of an order to destroy the Jews, and charged her to go to the king and `make request before him for her people.' ["I shall go to the king in spite of the law; and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:17).] He preached that the king now was Governor Wallace, who ran the state troopers and kept Negroes from voting. `I must go see the king!' [Esther 4:16] he cried, and soon brought the whole church to its feet vowing to go on foot..... Be prepared to walk to Montgomery!' shouted Bevel."

⁵ Marc Schneier, *Shared Dreams: MLK and the Jews*, 85-91

On March 3, King approved Bevel's call for a fifty-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, the capital in Montgomery, the homeland of the Confederacy, to petition Governor Wallace to end "police brutality and grant Alabama Negroes the elective franchise." At the press conference, **Bevel wore a yarmulke**, something he'd been doing since his Freedom Riding days. He sometimes explained this affectation as an outgrowth of "**his affection for the Hebrew prophets and other times as a protective device to keep himself out of jail, saying Mississippi sheriffs were so mystified by the sight of a Negro preacher in a `Jewish beanie' they preferred to let him alone.**"

Rabbi Friedlander recalled a second march on Pettus Bridge (March 21, 1965):

"Some images stand out in my mind: Professor Abraham Heschel marching in front of me, firm and erect, the wind catching his white beard and hair. ... A Negro lady (Mrs. Foster), walking next to me, pointed out the exact spot on that highway where Alabama troopers had beaten her to the ground. 'Going all the way this time,' she smiled, and waved to some friends along the road....If nothing else, we had finally felt the living essence of the words of Amos: *Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?*"

As the march progressed, skullcaps became a symbol of the movement. James Bevel, as mentioned before, had worn one for several years, but now the marchers called for "**freedom caps**" of their own. The demand for yarmulkes was so great that an order was wired for delivery of a thousand caps when the marchers would arrive in Montgomery and demonstrate at the state capitol. When the group finally reached Montgomery days later, having surged to some twenty-five thousand people, the event was heralded as the greatest day ever for the civil rights.

King led a march across the Pettus Bridge, the gateway to Montgomery. Together with John Lewis, Williams led the group directly toward a phalanx of state troopers, who had their clubs and tear gas ready. Moments later, the troopers charged the group. After that, Clark's men attacked with whips and with rubber tubing wrapped in barbed wire.⁶

The Button "I believe in human dignity"

⁶ Marc Schneier, *Shared Dreams: MLK and the Jews*, 151-156

by Rabbi Moses Sachs, Birmingham, AL, 1963

I BELIEVE that the decent American remembers the wrong thing about Birmingham. He remembers the pictures of the dogs and the fire hoses and he continues to respond to the name of that city with a sense of national disgrace.

I BELIEVE the memory of Birmingham should evoke great national pride. I saw the injustice in Birmingham but I also saw a great populace in the process of moral education and elevation. I saw expressions of the nobility of the human soul that renewed my faith in America.

The exhausted young men and women who met us at the airport who wore a button with this message, "I believe in human dignity." I coveted that button. I wanted to buy several for my children.

The next day I was chatting with a group of Negro high school seniors in front of the Gaston Motel in which we were quartered, the now bombed out motel. I said, "Where can I get the buttons?"

"Mister, do you believe in human dignity?" I teased, "Maybe."

He looked into my eye and said "Then you are not entitled to the button, Mister, not to the button that says 'I believe in human dignity'."

I am a philosopher--amateur, of course. I listen for "value" words. There are four value words which summarized for me the Negro position. These words are not civil rights and not desegregation for though the Negro of the South talks about civil rights and desegregation these are not his ultimate ideals. The four value words are freedom, justice, love and human dignity. If you know the history of philosophy, you know these words stem from two sources - - the Bible and the American Democratic tradition. How are they expressed? The Negroes call the thing that is going on in Birmingham, in Nashville, in Oxford and in Albany and we should call it "The Freedom Movement."

From the old spirituals they keep creating new freedom songs like this (listen for the value terms):

We've got a job to do

*we can't get freedom 'til we get through
'cause the Constitution of the United States says
we are due freedom, freedom.*

(alternate verse)

*'cause the Constitution of the United States says:
we are due justice, justice.*

(or)

*It is a great day for me
I'm so happy I am going to be free
in Birmingham.*

You have got to see the glint in the eye and hear the joy in the voice and the other devotion in the song (what we Jews in Hasidic and Musar call Hitlahavaut and Simchah shel Mitzvah in words and nigun).

You have to feel the surging response of the audience as you yourself utter these holy words, "Freedom", "Justice", "Love", and "Human Dignity" and they respond, "Amen, Brother." My button is the most precious material symbol I brought back from Birmingham.

II

But ideals are not enough. You must have method. If the ideals could be summarized in four great words - about the method, one could write a book but this much must be said. The Negroes in Birmingham did

not parade without a permit -- not in their eyes. They used their Constitutional right of peaceful assembly to demonstrate for freedom.

Here's how it worked. I entered the 16th Street Baptist Church across from the Park at 1210. The kids have been gathered there since 9:00 A.M. waiting, waiting, waiting for orders to march -- orders that did not come that day. All day they sang and cheered and milled around in and out of the Church. Here is the kind of instruction they received, "Today if we go we are going to have a snake march in line with Dr. Martin Luther King at our head, we are going to twist across the Park. Now remember, we don't want a riot -- we want freedom."

"We believe in non-violence. Those Negroes who throw rocks are our enemies. Non-violence starts with the idea that 'every man white, black, purple, pink, green or orange - every man is a temple of God and will not desecrate the temple of God, will we?'"

"If the police stop us and they will block our way, kneel and pray all day, sing hymns, pray that God will change the heart of the policemen."

"If you don't believe in God and you don't believe in prayer, don't join our demonstration." That is what the youngsters were teaching one another, in Birmingham.

Later in the evening, one of the young leaders, a boy of nineteen, was telling me how he trains a group. He explained the films on non-violence, the lectures and he told how before a group goes out everyone empties his pockets of whatever could be considered a weapon leaving these possessions on a table to be reclaimed when the demonstration is over or when he gets back from jail.

In what context was this accomplished? Reverend Andrew Young, a young man who joined Dr. Martin Luther King's staff early in the struggle, told us that when he first came to Birmingham he visited home after home where young people and their parents proudly displayed their guns and their knives - their arsenals.

I met one former Marine who explained "When I was in the service I fought - that was my job fighting and I fought the officers and the other fellows as well but that's over; I don't believe in fighting no war." What I was hearing and what I heard time and time again were reports of moral conversion experiences and of the spiritual beating of swords into plowshares.

Were they scared?

Sure, they were. Dogs bite.

But in Birmingham every obstacle was converted psychologically into an advantage, into a challenge to elevate the morale of the people. The community preached and sang itself into a fervor of courage.

Here is one song that says this best:

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round,

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round

*Keep on a walkin', keep on a talking,'
marchin' onto freedom land.*

It had infinite variations:

Ain't gonna let no bulldog turn me 'round,

Ain't gonna let no water turn me 'round,

Ain't gonna let no policeman turn me 'round,

Ain't gonna let no mamma turn me 'round

(Mammas you understand are afraid)

Ain't gonna let no Bull Connor⁷ turn me 'round

⁷ **"Bull" Connor Makes His Last Stand In Streets Of Birmingham** - The New York Post, *Birmingham*.

The reporters who have flocked into this Southern steel town don't want to see Martin Luther King. They want to see Bull Connor, this town's one true relic. You can find bright young Negroes articulating their hunger for justice in any community in the nation, but there aren't many places left where you can hear a public servant reply with the quaint antebellum logic of Bull Connor.

Bull has not been hard to find these past two weeks, and the visiting press hasn't been disappointed by his performance. There he is chuckling on the sidelines as the firehoses tumble Negro men and billow up the skirts of Negro women: **"Look at those niggers run! Look, look, look at 'em!"** -

There he is calling up the street to a subordinate at the barricades: "Sergeant, let some of those white folks through. I want 'em to see these dogs work."

There he is at the corner of the square chatting happily with reporters: **"Those rabbis better' not lead these niggers in any march or they'll get their tails squirted like everybody else. I hear they only gave the niggers \$1,500 for `the cause." Now ain't that just like those cheap Jews?"**

Connor, the Police Commissioner of Birmingham, is almost totally responsible for the ruling which ripped the city during the past two weeks. Yet in many ways Bull Connor is just another Southern politician riding the weary segregation horse in the hope that it might still win one more race. Actually, two years ago, when the Freedom Riders first came through Birmingham, Connor, a racist for the full 24 years of his political career,

And the whole church of kids rises and demonstrates, swinging and singing in Hakafot, the best the best Simhat Torah I have ever seen.

"I'm gonna walk, walk, walk, I'm gonna walk, walk, walk marchin' onto freedom land

I'm gonna shout, shout, shout I'm gonna shout, shout, shout march' onto freedom land

I'm gonna kneel, kneel, kneel I'm gonna kneel, kneel, kneel march' onto freedom land."

Jail?

I set in on a press conference where 14, 15 and 16 year olds described the sweat boxes in the prison. They told how they were crammed Together, much like Jews in the cattle cars of Nazi Europe for four, five and six hours. I heard of many other excesses. The jail was no ultimate threat to those youngsters. A boy wasn't a man if he hadn't been part of the two or three thousand who were in and out of the city, county and state jails and the fairgrounds turned into temporary incarceration centers. "What's the difference?" one said, "Birmingham is one big jail and the prisons are little jails. We want to get rid of both jails." One father told me proudly about his fifteen year old son who upon coming out of the jail had this to say: "Dad, I am glad I participated. Now I know what you have been griping about all these years." Reverend Young reported "We transformed the jails into churches serving in jail for many was a religious experience with worship of our food three times a day. Once we had people on a hunger strike for three meals until they were permitted to pray over their food."

Jail removes the emotion that maintains segregation - fear. Who were the rabbis who had status in Birmingham - not me, I was nobody but those rabbis who been to jail in Albany, Rabbi Ungar who been expelled from South Africa for integration activities, they counted. It so happened that there were no demonstrations when our delegation was in Birmingham. Negotiations reached their climax during those days and on Thursday afternoon, Dr. King, himself, told us that we had done our duty and we could return to our homes. Do you know how we felt?

candidly told a friend: **"This integration business is inevitable. You can't stop it. It's gonna come."**

Embarrassed, lest someone might think we were chickening out; not prepared to go to jail for freedom, justice, love, and human dignity. Juvenile emotions perhaps but that's the spirit Birmingham engendered.

Five thousand people taunted the police "Jail us" and Bull Connor gave up arresting.

III - LEADERSHIP

Back in Minneapolis people have asked me a question that I never anticipated. "Is the Negro leadership genuine?" It's like the Halutzic leadership of our people, like the Rabinnic Zionist leadership, like the heroes of the siege of Jerusalem but it is thoroughly Christian in style. It is an evangelizing leadership preaching the Bible and reaching for souls. The Reverend Abernathy held the story of Moses at the burning bush in this midrashic way. **The bush kept on burning until it caught on fire inside Moses.** The bush is burning now in the hearts of the people of Birmingham, "Do I know my lesson, man, do I listen?"

I wanted to understand the grass and roots leadership. I asked searching questions like, "Where do you get the money to eat? You can't demonstrate and hold a job even with a benevolent employer." One said, 'Dad works. I am nineteen, my brother is seventeen, my younger brother is ten and my mother - the four of us demonstrate.'" Then he said, "I was in school but you can't study now." Some explained, "We live on unemployment compensation" and another said "My wife is a teacher. The school board told her to teach or she would be fired but she told the kids in her segregated school "'I'm not coming'." Those who must go to work give their nights. Real leaders were falling from their feet with exhaustion.

But the most amazing are the Southern Negroes who have decided to take off one or two full years of their lives to travel the South in freedom work. At the moment we met them' they were concentrating on Birmingham but from Birmingham they would go to the Mississippi Delta or wherever needed for no salary whatsoever just their subsistence for the voter registration campaign, for the work, the sit-ins, the kneel-ins and the jail-ins. They have a little disdain for the Negro youth who goes North and say, "We have got to teach our people here non-violence and teach our people here the importance of education and political action and self-respect, plus the brotherhood of all men."

One beautiful girl from the Delta told us the story of her life and ended "Someone must do something, why not me?" She had been talking about the

suffering of the "white trash" of the South. Someone asked, "Are you prepared to lay down your life for the whites as well as the Negroes?" "Yes," she answered. "I'm not a racist."

The leadership structure is quite complex but at the apex of the whole movement in Birmingham was a group of Negro ministers like a Dr. Harding and Dr. Martin Luther King who for education, culture, sensitivity and dedication stand among the true intelligentsia of America. They are men who are not only deeply Christian and deeply moral but who with assurance and the at-homeness of a professor use the lingo of modern theology, philosophy, psychology and sociology and do it elegantly: Governor Wallace should seek out the privilege, as the rabbis would say, of sitting at the dust of his feet and learning from Dr. Martin Luther King.

But for me the high point of my visit was not the interview with Dr. Martin Luther King. It was a moment in a Negro church at the end of a youth meeting. I was giving the priestly benediction in Hebrew and the choir behind me and the whole assembly of about one thousand young people before me were singing "*We shall overcome*." The minister improvised another verse - "***The rabbis are with us***"; he sang, "*the rabbis are with us*." This, I do believe, we shall overcome some day, and I felt to myself "**We have arrived and what a privilege to be so warmly and generously and completely included in this noble and in this holy assembly of the suffering servants of God.**"

"From Slavery to Freedom: A Woman's Journey during the Pinochet Years"

by Deborah Delavegas⁸

In 1974 when I was living in exile and thirty-three years old, my mother told me we were Jewish. My ancestors had escaped the Spanish inquisition and settled in England. For a time they felt safe, but Jews were also persecuted there. So in the late 1800s, they fled to a new land across the sea. Latin

⁸ Deborah Delavegas, the pen-name, is the author's ancestors' family name from Spain. This account of the prison is an extract the forthcoming book, *From Slavery to Freedom, a Woman's Journey during the Pinochet Years*.

America seemed far from pain, uncertainty and death. But when they settled in Catholic Chile, they had to live as crypto-Jews. They changed their last names and hid their true identities. My mother gave me my great grandparents' haggadah; their old and tattered pages have wine stains of ancient Pesach celebrations. They are a treasure to me, witnesses of a long heritage of struggle, survival and love for life.

Their story explained to me my yearning for identity and for social justice. I too was an exile, a political refugee from Pinochet's fascist military dictatorship. I had been tortured, imprisoned and thrown out of my country. Nevertheless, in 1984, after ten years in exile, I chose to go back to Chile to continue the struggle for freedom. Again I was arrested and tortured. This is the dramatic account of my imprisonment:

The room was dark, filled with silent cries of other women, prisoners like me. We took care of each other through our agony and pain. Once the woman torturer asked me to make her a silver ring like the one I had worn when they took me in for questioning. Now, it was no longer on my finger. I looked at her through my swollen eyes. They had beaten me brutally. I said I would do what she wanted only if she would let me make something very special for myself. 'You are not going to make some political symbol,' she shouted. 'No,' I said softly, 'I want to make a Star of David; I am Jewish.'

I worked on the Magen David with enthusiasm; the hours went by in a kind of tranquil dream, my soul felt lighter. The physical pain didn't bother me anymore, even though my fingers were swollen; with their boots the soldiers had stepped on my hands and with her stick, the torturer had beaten them. Now I didn't feel any pain. The Magen David took form in front of my eyes, slowly and beautifully. I worked passionately, and after five days it was finished. It shone like a powerful star. Making the Magen David helped my physical healing and gave me the spiritual strength to carry on and survive. The next day I was released. Though naked and abandoned on a solitary road, I still held the Magen David in my clenched left hand. It felt warm; it gave me a sense of meaning and security."

This persecution happened to me because I thought differently, because I struggled for the oppressed and the poor, because I believed in a world where injustice, discrimination and prejudices should not exist. They tried to make me a slave. But I had learned that:

Freedom is the strength and knowledge that enables us to survive the most difficult trials and be able to love life no matter the sufferings and heartaches.

Freedom is internal peace in the midst of external turmoil.

Freedom is our sense of true identity and belonging.

Freedom is to fight for and demand the inalienable respect for our rights as individuals and as a people.

This is why I tell my story, so that my children and grandchildren do not forget who we are and the high price paid for freedom and redemption by many generations of our people all over the world.

Henry George, The Single-Taxer, and his visionary book, *Moses*

It was not an empire such as had reached full development in Egypt that Moses aimed to found. It was a commonwealth based upon the individual - a commonwealth whose ideal it was that every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree. with no one to vex him and make him afraid: a commonwealth in which none should be condemned to ceaseless toil: in which, for even the bond slave, there should be hope; in which, for even the beast of burden, there should be rest. A commonwealth in which, in the absence of deep poverty, the manly virtues that spring from personal independence should harden into a national character - a commonwealth in which the family affections might knit their tendrils each together, binding them with links stronger than steel the various parts into the living whole.

It is not the protection of property, but the protection of humanity, that is the aim of the Mosaic code. Its attributes were not directed to securing the strong in heaping up wealth as much as preventing the weak from being crowded to the wall. At every point it interposes its ban against greed that, if left unchecked, will surely differentiate men into landlord and serf, capitalist and worker, millionaire and tramp, ruler and ruled. Its Sabbath day and Sabbath year secure even to the lowliest - rest and leisure. With the blast of the Jubilee trumpets the slave goes free, the debt that cannot be paid is cancelled, and land is returned, for the poorest his fair share of the bounty of the common Creator. ... Everywhere the dominant idea is that of our homely phrase - -'Live and let live!'

And the religion with which this civil policy is so closely intertwined exhibits kindred features - from the idea of the brotherhood of man springs the idea of the fatherhood of God.

The great concern of Moses was with the duty that lay plainly before him: the effort to lay the foundations of a social state in which deep poverty and degrading want should be unknown - where men released from the meaner struggles that wane human energy should have opportunity for intellectual and moral development.

VIII.Four Children

Four Children: Rebellious and Simple

"Education is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world." - Hannah Arendt, 1968

The Jew is a Dispute Incarnate by Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock*;

"Why couldn't the Jews be one people? Why must Jews be in conflict with one another? Why must they be in conflict with themselves? Because divisiveness is not just between Jew and Jew – it is within the individual Jew. Is there a more manifold personality in all the world? I don't say divided. Divided is nothing... But inside every Jew there is a *mob* of Jews. The good Jew, the bad Jew. The new Jew, the old Jew. The lover of Jews, the hater of Jews. The friend of the goy, the enemy of the goy. The arrogant Jew, the wounded Jew. The pious Jew, the rascal Jew. The coarse Jew, the gentle Jew. The defiant Jew, the rascal Jew. The coarse Jew, the gentle Jew. The defiant Jew, the appeasing Jew. The Jewish Jew, the de-Jewed Jew. Shall I go on? So I have to expound upon the Jew as a three-thousand-year amassment of mirrored fragments... Is it any wonder that a Jew is always disputing? He *is* a dispute, incarnate."

Speaking To Each Person: A Multivocal Torah

“*All the people saw the voices*’ (Exodus 20:15) – רָאִים הָעָם וְכָל (יד, כ שמוח)

How many voices were there? ...The Torah was meant to be heard in voices according to the strength of each human listener as it says in Psalms ‘*The voice of God is in the power*’ – the power of each human being.”

In the same way God appeared to each generation in a different way and the manna tasted differently to each age bracket.

Mechilta dRabbi Yishmael (see also Shemot Rabbah 29,1 and Pesikta Drabbati on Exodus 20:15)

The Most Versatile Food: Manna from Heaven

"When the manna fell for Israel, each and everyone tasted it according to his/her capacity: the children according to their capacity, the youths according to their capacity, and the elderly according to their capacity. For the children, it tasted like the mother's milk from the breast as it says: *its taste was like the breast, like rich oil* (Numbers 11:8); והיה (ח, יא במדבר) השמן לשד כטעם טעמו והיה; for the youths according to their capacity, as it says *my bread that I gave you with oil and honey I fed you* (Ezekiel 15:19); והאכלתיך ודבש ושמן סלת לך נתתי אשר ולחמי;

and for the elderly according to their capacity, as it says *its taste was like honeycombs* (Exodus 16:31) וטעמו (לא, טו שמות): בדבש כצפיחת וטעמו (Midrash Psikta dRav Kahana, "On the Third Month")

Human Variety: God's Magic Coin Trick

"God created all humanity from one human being to teach us God's greatness. A human ruler mints all the coins in the same image [with the image of the sovereign imprinted on them identically as a sign of the sovereign's power]. However the Sovereign of Sovereigns, God created each human being in the image of the first human being no one is identical with any other." (Mishna Sanhedrin Chapter 4: 5)

ומלך לזה זה דומין וכולן אחד בחותם מטבעות כמה טובע שאדם הוא ברוך הקדוש של גדולתו ולהגיד לחבירו דומה מהן אחד ואין הראשון אדם של בחותמו אדם כל טבע הוא ברוך הקדוש המלכים מלכי (ה,ד סנהדרין משנה)

Viva La Difference

"The halacha is that when one sees a large mass of people then one makes a blessing: *Baruch Hacham Razim!* Blessed is the God of Secrets. For just as none of the faces are the same, so too none of the intellects are identical, rather each and every person has their own independent intellect (*daat*)." (based on Bemidbar Rabbah Pinchas 21,2)

Franz Kafka's Letter to His father: Who is the "wicked" son? Father?

"I could not understand how, with the insignificant scrap of Judaism you yourself possessed, you could reproach me for not making an effort ...to cling to

a similar, insignificant scrap. It was...a mere nothing, a joke-not even a joke ...at home it was...confined to the first Seder, which more and more developed into a farce, with fits of hysterical laughter.... How one could do anything better with that material than get rid of it as fast as possible ... precisely the getting rid of it seemed to me to be the devoutest action."

In **James Joyce's *Ulysses***, Leopold Bloom is struck by a memory of Passover in Dublin:

"AND IT WAS THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER.... Poor papa with his haggadah book, reading backwards with his finger to me. Pesach. 'Next year in Jerusalem.' Dear, O dear! All that long business about that brought us out of the land of Egypt and into the house of bondage *Alleluia. Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu*.... And then the lamb and the cat and the dog and the stick and the water and the butcher.... Sounds a bit silly till you come to look into it well."

The Rebellious Daughter and Granddaughter

My grandmother Teresa was born in Syria and immigrated to Argentina where she was married and lived in traditional community where women had no role in the synagogue or in Jewish learning. But after raising her children she became interested in Jewish learning and despite her husband's and the community's objections she went off to join the Conservative synagogue of Rabbi Marshall Meyer, a student of A.J. Heschel and a courageous activist for freedom in rightwing Argentina. She studied there and participated in the services where she was honored with an aliyah though she was not wealthy or male. She was so moved by being included that she cried when she had her first aliyah. At her Seder she would protest to her loving but traditional husband that she deserved to recite the kiddush because she had done all the housework preparing the Seder. Eventually they compromised and each one had their own cup. In later years her granddaughters davened in Bet El and she - and even her husband - would come to enjoy their Jewish involvement. Eventually her granddaughters, Silvina Chemen became one of the rabbis at Bet El.

ACTIVITY: Compose a description of Four Types of Grandparents

IX.Symposium on Slavery and Freedom

- *My Father was a Wandering Aramean*

God hardened Pharaoh's Heart - *Vaykhdet et lev Paro*

The Rabbis have debated how God could harden Pharaoh's heart and thus prevent him from acting freely in changing his mind and letting Israel leave his land. The heart is the site of courage and willpower as in the English phrase - "to take heart" and not to despair. In the Bible one who is hard-hearted is associated with one who is tough and unrelenting, while one who is afraid and flees in battle is described as one whose heart melts. In English heart is also the site of emotions so someone hard-hearted lacks compassion. In Hebrew the term for "hard" is *kaved* which actually means "heavy." In English one who is light-hearted is gay and one with a heavy heart is sad or depressed. But in ancient Egyptian Pharaoh's heavy heart would mean one borne down by heavy sins, by guilt. In ancient Egyptian mythology as one sees in tomb drawings of the afterlife each soul is weighed by the god of justice, Maat, and the god of the afterlife, Osiris. If Pharaoh's heart were heavy then it was sinful and he would be refused entrance to his paradise.

Prayer In Hell

In the Kovno ghetto in the early 1940s an extraordinary scene took place one morning in the makeshift synagogue. The Jews in the ghetto had begun to realise the fate that lay in store for them. They knew that none of them would escape, that the work camps to which they would be transported were in fact factories of death. And at the morning service, the leader of prayer, an old and pious Jew, could finally say the word no longer. He had come to the blessing in which we thank God for not having made us slaves. He turned the congregation and said: 'I cannot say this prayer. How can I thank God for my freedom when I am now prisoner facing death? Only a madman could say this prayer now.'

Some members of the congregation turned to the rabbi for advice. Could a Jew in the Kovno ghetto pronounce the blessing thanking God for not having made him a slave? The rabbi replied very simply. God forbid that we should abolish the blessing now. Our enemies wish to make us their slaves. But though they control our bodies they do not own our souls. By making this blessing we show that even here we still see ourselves as free men, temporarily in captivity, awaiting God's redemption.' The hardest question for faith today is: Where was God at Auschwitz? . (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's Haggadah)

We Are One

By Rabbi Dov Greenberg, Chabad House, Stanford University

“לְגוֹי שָׁם נִיהְיִי” — “There they became a nation.” (Pesach Haggadah)

The Jews became a people only in Egypt. Before the Jews came to Egypt, they were a fragmented group of individuals. However, as the midrash states, in Egypt the Jews were united by their shared suffering and came together to help each other. Our peoplehood was forged by our shared oppression.

A professor was teaching English grammar. After the first session, he asked the students to classify some common nouns as ‘singular’ or ‘plural’. He asked, ‘shirt?’ Students shouted ‘singular.’ He asked, ‘shoes?’ All shouted, ‘plural’. Then to stump the class he asked, “Is ‘pants’ singular or plural?” There was a silence. Then a student yelled out,

“Sir, mine are plural at the bottom and singular at the top.”

This is actually a delightful definition of the Jewish people. Our lowest moments are times when Jews are fragmented. But on the top, at higher moments, when we realize we share the same fate and destiny, Jews unite. That is what happened in Egypt.

The historian Shelby Foote pointed out a fascinating and similar trend in American history. Before The Civil War, the term ‘United States’ was referred to in the plural. For example, one might have said, “The United States are ready to sign the treaty.” Grammatically, it was spoken that way because the nation was still thought of as a collection of independent, fragmented, states. But after the tragic war that claimed over half a million lives, the United States became singular, as we say today. “The United States is ready to raise your taxes.”

That grammatical transformation took place in Egypt. The Jewish people moved from plural to singular. Our stay in Egypt settled forever this question of Jewish grammar. We are one people.

A few years ago, when the war in Gaza broke out, Sgt. Dvir Emanuel became the first Israeli casualty, losing his life to a Hamas rocket as he entered Gaza. Dvir’s mother, Dahlia, tells of a moving experience she had a year later.

She went to Jerusalem for a concert with her daughter. While waiting for it to begin, someone touched her shoulder. It was a little boy. Dahlia, a kindergarten

teacher, was immediately drawn to the boy and started speaking to him. When the boy's father saw what was happening, he called out to his son, "Eshel, why don't you come back and sit next to me and Dvir?"

Dahlia was surprised to hear that name and turned and saw that the father was holding a baby. "What did you say your baby's name is?" she asked the father.

The man responded, "Dvir."

She said, "I don't mean to be intrusive but why did you name him Dvir?"

And the father explained that the first soldier killed in Gaza was named Dvir, and so they decided to name their new baby son after him.

Almost unable to speak, Dahlia said, "I'm that Dvir's mother."

Soon after, Dahlia met with the whole family and the baby's mother. Observing the meeting of these two women, a reporter said to them,

"This is an Israeli story par excellence."

And both the women responded in unison, "No, it's a Jewish story!"

We are one people. We are one family. We are singular, not plural. We were brought together in Egypt, and three thousand years later, in good times and bad, our bonds sustain us and give us strength, hope and joy.

Dov Greenberg, "The United States Is"

The historian Shelby Foote pointed out that before The Civil War, the term 'United States' was referred to in the plural because the nation was still thought of as a collection of independent, fragmented, states. But after the tragic war that claimed over half a million lives, the United States became singular, as we say today. "The United States is ready to raise your taxes." For the Jewish people that grammatical transformation took place in Egypt. The Jewish people moved from plural to singular. Our stay in Egypt settled forever this question of Jewish grammar. We are one people.

X. Elijah and *Shfoch Hamatkha*: Pour out Your Wrath on those who Devour Jacob

Jimmy Carter, the Secret Service and Elijah

Opening the door on Seder night is related to the Biblical tradition that Seder night is the Night of Watching in which God watched over Israel as the angel of death struck the Egyptian firstborn, therefore the Rabbis thought it was day when Jews were protected. For that reason they could open their doors even at night even though nighttime is often dangerous.

In 1970 the advisor for Middle Eastern Affairs Stuart Eizenstadt invited President Jimmy Carter to his home for Seder. At the end of the Seder Stuart went to open the front door for Elijah, but the secret service agents stopped him because it would be breach of presidential security. Eventually Stuart convinced the secret service to allow him to open the backdoor for Elijah.

NEW BLOOD LIBEL IN IRAN (Feb, 2012)

The Iranian Fars news agency, which is owned by the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), offered a new twist on the blood libel devised often in the past to justify the persecution of Jewish communities. It carried report noting that Jews were wont to add the blood of Muslim children to the “Ears of Haman”, a pastry traditionally baked on the Purim festival which falls this year on March 20. This accusation, together with the putative “exposure” of “the real holocaust,” the massacre of Iranians and spy charges, are capable of unleashing a wholesale anti-Semitic rampage against the 20,000 Jews who are the last survivals of the 3,000-year old community.⁹

⁹ Our Iranian sources report that in recent weeks, Iranian Jews, fearing for their lives, have been fitting steel plates on the Magen David symbols outside synagogues and Jewish institutions. Sunday, they hastily covered the tombs of Esther and Mordechai in Hamedan after watching Iranian students rallying in demand for the government to stop protecting the tombs as sacred sites and allow them to be demolished. Iran downgrades tomb of Esther and Mordechai. (JTA) — Iranian authorities have downgraded the status of the tomb of Esther and Mordechai, while an official state news agency has publicized the Purim story as a Jewish massacre of Iranians. Officials recently removed the sign that identified the mausoleum of the biblical figures in the central Iranian city of Hamadan as

***Shfokh Ahavatkha* : Remember the Righteous Gentiles in Love**

The Midwives and Pharaoh's daughter were the first righteous gentiles but not the last: A Tale of Power and Ethics

Tom Sawicki of AIPAC told us that Israel not only honors righteous gentiles of the Holocaust who rescued Jews by planting a tree at Yad Vashem, but much more. Some righteous gentiles have made aliyah and receive state pensions. But the true test was the Hardaga family of Bosnian Muslims who saves Jewish families from the Serbs and the Nazis in World War Two. When in the 1990s Serbian nationalists began raping and killing Muslims in Bosnia, the family of righteous gentiles contacted the Israeli family that they had saved to ask for help. Soon the Mossad sent a team to extract them from the war zone and bring

an official pilgrimage site. The removal of the sign signifies that its status has been downgraded, according to reports.

The actions come about two weeks after a group of about 250 militant students surrounded the tomb and threatened to tear it down. Their threats were in response to alleged Israeli excavations under the Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem.

The biblical Queen Esther was the second wife of Persian King Ahasuerus, identified as Xerxes I; Mordechai was her uncle, who also raised her. The Iranian state news agency Fars has been reporting that Esther and Mordechai were responsible for the massacre of more than 75,000 Iranians, an event recorded in the Book of Esther, which is read on the Jewish festival of Purim.

The reports, according to the Simon Wiesenthal Center citing Fars, also call the tomb an arm of Israeli imperialism that impugns Iranian sovereignty; report that its name must be wiped away in order to teach Iranian children to “beware of the crimes of the Jews”; call for the shrine's return to the Iranian people; and say that the site must become “a Holocaust memorial” to the “Iranian victims of Esther and Mordechai” and be placed under the supervision of the state religious endowments authority.

Dr. Shimon Samuels, urged UNESCO to “call upon the Iranian authorities to take appropriate measures to terminate this campaign of racism and desecration.”

“It is perhaps time for UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee to establish instruments for the universal protection of holy sites,” Samuels concluded.

them to settle in Israel. Today their daughter works at Yad Vashem and their story is told there. The power Israel has developed may and must be a force for moral action. Without power, morality has no teeth.

Shfokh Hamatkha: Remember the Anti-Semites in Anger

Tom's mother and father were Polish Jewish physicians who survived during the Holocaust by buying a Polish Christian name and identity card and wandering from city to city posing as minstrels with the father playing violin at restaurants. The mother kept a fake diary in Polish expressing her Catholic faith under the persona of Elizebeta Sawicka. On April 19, 1943¹⁰, in Warsaw, she wrote of the coming Easter and her childhood identification with Christ on the cross. When stopped in 1944 as Jews by the Polish police who were collaborating with the Nazis, the diary convinced the police that she was Catholic though they suspected her of harboring a Jew – her husband who looked more Jewish than she. He warned them that the Soviet Army was on its way to liberate Poland and that the police would be punished for collaborating with the Nazis. In fright they let him go.

Tom's father was a Polish survivor of the Holocaust as well as later famous doctor was not forgiving toward the Germans or the Poles. His son Amitai recalls him speaking about the vengeful wish that cyanide be placed in the water to punish the German perpetrators and Polish collaborators in the Holocaust. His grandfather later suffered Polish anti-Semitism under the Communists and succeeded in leaving Poland only in 1968. However Amitai, a navigator in the Israeli Air Force, experienced the possibility of changing attitudes between Jews and Poles. On a mission of Israeli officers to Poland, they were hosted by the Polish army. The army musical corps appeared in uniform to sing traditional Polish folksongs. Then as a prearranged surprise for their Israeli guests, they removed their army outfits and revealed the costumes of the American Jewish musical *Fiddler on the Roof* which they performed in English, not really understanding the Jewish symbolism of the Polish hassidic characters. Amitai reflected on the ironies of their performance and on the possibility that Polish attitudes had so changed in 60 years.

¹⁰ Unknown to Tom's mother, that date was seder night and the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

A Righteous Gentile and a Good Samaritan

In 1970 Pini Nahmani's Israeli jet was shot down over Syria and he was imprisoned under very harsh conditions (See his tale of Pesach in a Syrian prison in our Haggadah, *A Night to Remember* p. 37). Many years after his release he was on vacation in France when his car broke down. A Good Samaritan stopped to help him change his tire. The man who was so kind had an accent that Pini recognized was not French but Middle Eastern, but he could not identify it. Finally the Good Samaritan looked Pini in the eye and said: Don't you remember me? I was the Syrian doctor who treated you in the Syrian prison.

The Story of the Midwives and the "Seder" of Righteous Gentiles:

A Family Commemoration of Liberation, The Netherlands, 1945

In *A Leaders' Guide to A Different Night*, Noam Zion

When Emperor Napoleon invaded Russia in the early 1800's, his military government forced all citizens to take last names. In it Augustova near Minsk, one Jewish family was called into the military office to pick a last name immediately after Tisha B'Av, the day when Jews remember the destruction of the First and Second Temples. The family had just been to the synagogue where prayed and wept as they remembered the destruction of "Zion," the poetic name for Jerusalem. So this family chose the name - "Zion."

In 1856, the Zion family left Russia and settled in Holland, in a village called Eibergen, where they ran a clothing store. In 1940, the Germans invaded Holland. In 1941, the Jews of Holland were ordered by the German Nazis to report for "resettlement." The Zion family had three brothers and three sisters who decided to go underground. Even though Jews had little social contact with their Calvinist Protestant neighbors, Jews were helped by the ministers of the Calvinist church (Puritans) who helped organize the underground movement.

Even before the war, one of the Dutch ministers would go across the border from Holland to Germany to try to convince German Calvinists to oppose the Nazis. Soon, the German ministers, who wanted to prove their loyalty to the Nazis, refused to allow him to speak at their services. After the Nazis invaded

Holland, this minister, who was called Fritz "de Zwerver" (Fritz the Wanderer), would go from church to church in Holland on his bicycle. Since all rubber had been confiscated by the Germans, his bike had wooden wheels.

One Sunday morning Fritz arrived in Eibergen and walked to podium of the Protestant church (the most important part of the Calvinist service was the sermon preached from the Bible). Even though there were pro-Nazi Dutch officials sitting in the front row, he opened his Bible to Exodus 1:15-22 and read the story of the midwives in Egypt who saved the Hebrew male children from drowning. Then he said to the congregation, "Who is the Pharaoh today? The Nazis! Who are the babies who have to be hidden? The Jews! Who are the midwives today? We are! It is our job to outsmart the Pharaohs, to have the courage of the midwives and to protect the Jews and all those being persecuted." Then he got on his bicycle and went to the next village.

The people were inspired by Fritz de Zwerver, who encouraged them to organize an underground. Many members of the church participated, and hid Jews in their houses. Dutch architecture emphasizes large roofs on houses, where Jews and other refugees who went into hiding were placed - under the roof (*ondergedoken*).

During this period, Sallie Zion was hidden for three years by these righteous gentiles in 40 different places. When the person protecting him would say, "I can't hide you anymore," he would have to find another hiding place. Sometimes he was told ahead of time that they would have to leave in a day or a week. Then someone would come from the underground, usually at night, on a bicycle, take them to a safe house and hide them under the roof.

The last place Sallie Zion and his brother stayed was at the home of the Wassink family, who lived in a kind of large farmhouse on the outskirts of town. They could see people coming across the fields to the house, and so could be alerted when danger approached. Sallie and his brother were hidden under the roof, a triangular space about three feet by six feet. (Sallie Zion carved a poem he wrote on one of the beams from the roof.)

Since they were on the outskirts of the town, they did not need to hide during the day. They were able to help with the household tasks, but always stayed indoors. When necessary they would go up a rope ladder, which could be folded and pulled up. The ladder was hidden behind a large embroidered wall hanging,

traditional in Calvinist homes. It was embroidered in Dutch with the Biblical words:

Blessed are You when you come in and when you go out!

Hidden with Sallie Zion and his brother were two Jewish girls, 16 and 18 years old, a Russian pilot, a Canadian pilot and a British pilot, who had been shot down and taken in by the family. Also hidden was the family's oldest son, and a first cousin who had been called to work in a German factory and did not want to go. All were hidden in one very narrow area.

A couple of days before the liberation of northeastern Holland from the Nazis in March, 1945, a lookout for the Wassinks reported that 13 Nazis and two Dutch collaborators were approaching. Quickly all the illegals hid under the roof. In order to remove all signs of the hidden illegals, Mrs. Wassink cleared away extra cutlery and dishes. She turned to her eldest daughter, gave her the stolen ration cards used to purchase extra food and told her to hide them in the barn in an old stove. Then she turned to her ten-year-old son, Wim, and told him to go visit relatives, but not to run lest he arouse suspicion.

As Wim nonchalantly twirled a stick in the air, the Nazis spotted him and told him to come with them into the house. Other Nazis were coming down a path where a large log had fallen. Each German had to step over the log, but one who had a big potbelly tripped and fell. Wim wanted to laugh, but had to keep it inside. When they brought the boy into the house, it was about 11 a.m. The Nazis searched the house. One of them came to the kitchen and saw a large, black pot on the stove. He turned to the mother and pointed to the big pot, saying "too much food." She stood up and held her two fingers forming "V" in a victory sign and said, "This big pot is enough for two days:" (Incidentally, the iron pot contained a carrot stew whose orange color is the national color of the Dutch Queen, symbol of the resistance to the Nazi occupation.)

While the Nazis continued to search, the Wassinks sat down for lunch. In a Calvinist household, everyone sits down for their big meal at lunch, a prayer is said and the Bible is read. The prayer Mrs. Wassink recited in Dutch was "May the evil Nazis be struck by blindness, just as the evil people of the Biblical city of Sodom were struck by blindness when they came to molest the guests taken in by Lot" (Genesis 19). The Nazis continued their search and even measured the inside and outside of the house to see if there was any unaccounted for space. However, they measured the length and not the width. The hiding place under

the attic was luckily, in the width of the house. The Nazis even went to the attic with a lantern. It shone on the hidden people, but when the Nazi held the lantern and tried to look through a crack, the light of the lantern blinded him, so in a way, Mrs. Wassink's prayer came true.

Then one of the Nazis took Wim to the pigsty. "We know there are people hiding here. If you don't tell us where, we will throw you in with the pigs." The boy thought, "Pigs are certainly better than Nazis." The soldier began beating him. He screamed. (His older brother, one of the people in hiding, got upset and wanted to run and help Wim. The Russian pilot, Alex, took a pillow and shoved it over the brother's head until he calmed down.) Wim did not reveal anything.

After the beating, Wim's mother turned to the officer and pointed to her son. "Look how you have beaten him! Look at his bloody nose!" The officer apologized and told the German who had beaten the child to go to the yard, pump some water and wash the child's face. Then the Nazi officer told the family they would have to leave their house. He put up a sign declaring the house off limits. At night the underground came to extricate the people hiding "under the roof" including Sallie Zion and several days later the Allies arrived and liberated Eibergen.

On Dutch liberation day May 5, the Wassink clan and all those they helped like to get together. They pull out the old iron pot and sometimes eat carrot stew. The embroidery of "Blessed are You as you enter" (which once covered the rope ladder leading to the hideaway) hangs on the wall next to the framed yellowing Nazi poster instructing everyone that this house is off limits. Though after the war the old house itself was razed, a scale model was constructed (like a dollhouse) showing the secret spaces. The family sits together on those occasions and the younger members ask the elders to retell the story in detail, so that it shall never be forgotten.

In a way this annual get-together is their personal Passover complete with symbolic foods, and stories of courage and Divine help. It is an interesting coincidence that the Torah reports that Lot served his guests in Sodom matza and so the Rabbis say that the rescue of Lot and his endangered guests (in fact, angels) occurred on Pesach.

In 2010 Sallie Zion's daughter, Marcelle gathered all the evidence and persuaded Yad Vashem to recognize the Wassinks as righteous gentiles. All their children,

grandchildren and great grandchildren attended the ceremony in Holland conducted by the Israeli embassy.

Rav Soloveitchik: God is Knocking on our Door: It is time for Redemption

The filth knock of the Beloved is perhaps the most important of' all. For the first time in the history of our exile, divine providence has surprised our enemies with the sensational discovery that *Jewish Blood is not free for the taking, it is not hefker!* If anti-Semites wish to describe this phenomenon as "*an eye for an eye,*" so be it; we will agree with them. If we wish to heroically defend our national-historical existence, we must, at times, interpret the verse "*an eye for an eye*" (Exodus 21:24) literally. How many eyes did we lose during the course of our bitter exile because we did not return blow for blow. The time has come for us to fulfill the law of "*an eye for an eye*" in its plain, simple sense. I am certain that everyone who knows me knows that I am a believer in the Oral Law and, consequently, that I do not doubt that the verse refers to monetary compensation, in accordance with the halakhic interpretation. However, with regard to Nasser or the Mufti I would demand that we interpret the phrase "*an eye for an eye*" in a strictly literal sense as referring to the removal of the concrete, actual eye. Pay no attention to the line phrases of' well-known Jewish assimilationists or socialists, who continue to adhere to their outworn ideologies and think that they are living in the Bialystok, Minsk, or Brisk of 1905, and who publicly declaim that it is forbidden for Jews to take revenge at any time, any place, and under all circumstances. Vanity of vanities! **Revenge is forbidden when it serves no purpose. However, if by taking revenge we raise ourselves up to the plane of self-defense, then it becomes the elementary right of man qua man to avenge the wrongs inflicted upon him.**

The Torah has always taught us that a person is permitted, indeed, that it is his sacred obligation, to defend himself. The Biblical law about the thief breaking into a house (Exodus 22:1-2) indicates that it is a firmly fixed halakhic principle that a person is permitted to defend not only his life but also his property.' If the thief' who comes to steal the money of the householder is capable of murdering the householder if he does not accede to his demands, then the householder is permitted to rise up against the lawbreaker and kill him. It is not for naught that the Torah informs us that its two great heroes, Abraham and

Moses, both took up arms in order to defend their brethren - "*and he (Abraham) armed his trained men*" (Genesis 14:14 and cf. Rashi ad loc.); "*and he [Moses] smote the Egyptian*" (Exodus 2:12). Such behavior does not contradict the principles of mercy and lovingkindness. On the contrary, **a passive attitude, renouncing self-defense, is likely, at times, to give rise to the worst types of cruelty.** "*And I will get Me honor through Pharaoh and through all his hosts; and the Egyptians shall know that t am the Lord*" (Exodus 14:4). **God did not seek honor and fame; He wanted Pharaoh, Moses' contemporary, to know that he would have to pay a high price for the decree, "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river"** (Exodus 1: a4). And now, as well, it is God's wish that the blood of the Jewish children who were murdered while reciting the Shemoneh Esre be avenged. **When God smote Egypt, He wished thereby to demonstrate that Jewish blood always has claimants.** Today, also, it is necessary to convince not only the current Egyptian tyrant but also the self-declared saint, Nehru, the British Foreign. Office, .and the "moralists" in the United Nations that Jewish blood is not ownerless. Therefore, how grotesque is the attempt to convince us that we ought to rely on the declaration of the three great powers guaranteeing the status quo. We all know from experience how much value there is to the promises of the British Foreign Office and to the "friendship" of certain well-known officials in our own State Department. And, in general, **how absurd it is to demand of a people that it be completely dependent upon the good, graces of others and that it relinquish the ability to defend itself. The honor of every community, like the honor of 'every individual, resides in the ability to defend its existence and honor.** A people that cannot ensure its own freedom and security is not truly independent. The third phrase in God's promise of redemption is: "*And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with judgments*" (Exodus 6:7). **Blessed be He Who has granted us life and brought us to this era when Jews have the power, with the help of God, to defend themselves!**

Let us not forget that the venom of Hitlerian anti-Semitism, which made the Jews like the fish of the-sea to be preyed upon by all, still infects many in our generation who viewed the horrific spectacle of the gassing of millions with indifference, as an ordinary event not requiring a moment's thought. The antidote to this deadly poison that evenomed minds and benumbed hearts is the readiness of the State of Israel to defend the lives of its sons, its builders. It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh! J. B. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek* , 73- 75

XII. *Had Gadya* and Seder Songs

The Old MacDonald Rendition: Delegating the task of adding a sound to seder participants to each character in Had Gadya and when repeating that name each time add the sound. So for example, bow wow for the dog or pour water from pitcher into glass for the water. Sounds for more abstract characters like the angel of death are a challenge. My mother would draw her finger across her neck as if cutting her throat and make the sound of cutting.

A New Goat: In Boulder CO which is well-known for ecological conservation and back to nature movements, several rabbis and congregants have formed a Jewish Farm Coop with chickens and goats on the land of the future JCC. In 2012 when I visited the rabbi for Shabbat Hagadol before Pesach he told me he was on pregnancy-watch call for their pregnant goat between 12 and 2 am. One of the Jewish midwives had studied birthing a goat and she was called for the birth who was born just before Pesach. The timing fits the Torah reading of Shabbat HaHodesh when Exodus 12 is read describing the taking of a goat or lamb to be prepared for the Paschal lamb in Egypt. The kid of Boulder might well have been named Had Gadya and taken from door to door on Seder night to enter when the door is opened for Elijah.

Finger Puppets: Each character of had Gadya may be enacted with stuffed animals. My wife Marcelle bought finger puppets in Peru that represent each character.

***Chad Gadya [One Kid]" Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* (1988)**

"For vegetarians and ... everyone concerned with unbridled cruelty." Complete with recipes for vegetarian liver and a "Seder roast," it suggests replacing the *z'ro'a* with olives, grapes, and grains, which "symbolize the commandments of compassion for the oppressed found in the Bible."² It maintains that God chose Moses to lead the Israelites because of his heroic behavior toward animals, as in the midrash where Moses returns a strayed lamb to its flock."

(Carole Balin in *My People's Passover Haggadah* edited by Lawrence Hoffman, Vol. II 215)

Who Knows One – *Ekhad Mi Yodia*

The American Jewish Historical Society's Bicentennial Haggadah

"One is the good ship Peartree which in 1654 brought the first Jewish settlers to these shores. Two are the early settlers Jacob Barsimon and Asser Levy who demanded the right to serve in the defense of their country.... Five are the synagogues of Philadelphia, Newport, Charleston, Richmond and Savannah praised by George Washington on his ascendancy to the presidency [saying]: May the same Deity who long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian Oppressors ... whose providential agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States continue to water them with the dews of heaven and to make the inhabitants of every denomination to participate in the blessings of that people whose God is Jehovah.... Eight are the words "*And thou shalt proclaim liberty throughout the land!*" taken from our Bible [Lev. 25:17] by the founders of our Republic and fashioned by them into a ring for the Liberty Bell.... Twelve and more are the American Nobel laureates [of Jewish descent] who have from this land broadened the horizons of health, science and peace."

(cited by Carole Balin in *My People's Passover Haggadah* edited by Lawrence Hoffman, Vol. II 215)

Chava Alberstein's *Had Gadya* in Response to Palestinian Intifada

And why are you singing *Had Gadya*?

Spring isn't here yet and Passover hasn't arrived.

And what has changed for you,

what has changed?" [*mah nishtanah*]

I have changed this year.

For on all the nights, all the nights [*she bekhoh halelot*]

I asked only four questions [*arbah kushiot*].

This night I have another question:

How long will the cycle of horror last

the pursuer and the pursued

the striker and the stricken

When will this madness end?

And what has changed for you, what has changed?

"Dayyenu" in the Seder of the Children of Abraham,

The traditional *Dayyenu* where a long list of God's glorious deeds are typically recounted—is replaced with a litany of past failures and then specific hopes for reconciliation vis-a-vis the divisive modern-day children of Abraham – Israelis and Palestinians.

If only there had not been mistrust	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only there had not been a holocaust	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only there had not been so many soldiers killed	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only there had not <i>been</i> so many made homeless	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only there had not been so many massacres	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only there had not been so many terrorist attacks	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only there had not been so many bombings	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only so many children had not died	<i>OyLanu</i>
If only both peoples would renounce violence	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only both peoples would talk to one another	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only both peoples would recognize each other's rights	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only they would appreciate each other's cultures	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only they would recognize their common origin and destiny	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael could live face to face	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only they could beat their swords into plowshares	<i>Dayyenu</i>
If only both peoples could share the land	<i>Dayyenu3</i>

(cited by Carole Balin in *My People's Passover Haggadah* edited by Lawrence Hoffman)

XIII. Next Year in Jerusalem

- Stand up and orient your self toward Jerusalem¹¹
- Prepare paper airplanes with logo of El Al and launch them
- Offer an Incentive Scholarship for Travel to Israel
-

Next Year and Last Year In Jerusalem: A Second Seder Plate of Personal mementos as a Trigger to Storytelling

Invite everyone with a connection to Israel to bring memento of a trip to Israel, a relative who lives or lived in Israel, a photograph, a story about the importance of Israel (1948, 1967, 1974 etc) to one's parents or grandparents. Offer a subsidy for the next trip to Israel. Ask for stories of one's favorite place in Jerusalem.

Next Year in Worms

Jews have sometimes felt so at home in the Diaspora such that they could not really say with sincerity “Next Year in Jerusalem” meaning aliyah to Israel and redemption, as Zionists do.. They might wish for the opportunity for a pilgrimage on the holiday or they might pray in a metaphoric sense for a messianic world that embodies the prophetic promises of a world of justice associated with Jerusalem.

¹¹ **Orientation of Prayer toward Jerusalem** The prayer of Solomon upon the consecration of Temple emphasizes that Jerusalem unites the prayers of all Israelites and all peoples:

O Lord God of Israel ... May Your eyes be open day and night toward this House, toward the place .. where your name shall abide there and may You hear the prayers of your people ... when they pray in the direction of the city which You have chosen and towards the House which I have built to Your name ... “ (I Kings 8:25-48).

The Talmud teaches that,

“If a person is standing [in prayer] outside the should direct his heart towards Eretz Israel as its says, and *they pray to You in the direction of their land*’: If he is standing in Eretz Israel, he should direct his heart towards Jerusalem; if he is standing within Jerusalem, he should direct his heart towards the Temple,” (II Chronicles 6:32).(TB Berakhot 30a).

German Jews in the 19th and early 20th C. were more than any Jewish community likely to insist that Germany was their permanent and only national home. For example, while the Jewish community of Worms fasted annually for eight hundred years on the anniversary of the German Crusader massacre of Jews in Worms in 1096, in 1815 the rabbi in Worm declared the fast null and irrelevant. In the 1920s under the democratic government of Weimar, loyal German Jewish patriot published an artistic Haggadah that replaced Next year in Jerusalem with “Next year in Worms-on-the Rhine River, our *Heimat* (our Home)!”

What meaning might “Next Year in Jerusalem” signify for you? Aliyah? Messianic hopes of Jeru-Salem (peace)? In Israel today many Jews say “Next year in a Rebuilt Israel” implying a land living in peace and prosperity.

Daniel Gordis, "Stories We are Obligated to Tell" (Pesach 2011)

It's that famous line from the Haggadah, which Jews around the world will recite in just a few days: "And even if we were all wise, filled with understanding, all elders and all learned in the Torah, we would still be obligated to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt."

Why, though? If we were all so deeply learned, what possible need would there be to tell a story? The message is clear - **there are truths that emerge from stories that cannot be gleaned from "mere" study.** There is knowledge to which the heart can lead us that the mind cannot. As much as Jews take the intellect seriously, we understand its limitations. There is a sort of knowing that can come only through telling - or hearing - a story.

It is the difference between great philosophy and profound literature. As critical and even world-changing as some of the great philosophers have been, for many of us, it is the broken heart and the soul laid bare that we encounter in great literature that touches us more deeply.

From there, we glean our most profound insights about what matters, to what we hope to dedicate our lives. The notion that we can create real allegiance only through minds and without touching hearts is foolish. That is why the Bible contains no rigorous philosophy, but many stories. And that is why the more we tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, the Haggadah tells us, the more we are to be praised.

Some American rabbinical students feel distanced from Zionism, some of whose critiques of Israel seem to me to have crossed red lines. Politically and religiously, they represent a broad spectrum. They are smart, sensitive and genuine. As I spoke with them, some shared their most basic worry - that **Israel would not be decent**. And I shared mine - that Israel would not survive.

Obviously Israel's decency is critical. But a country that does not exist cannot be decent. And as we spoke, memories began to emerge. I shared with some of these students my earliest memory about Israel. It was June 1967, and I was almost eight years old. We were in the kitchen, in Baltimore, having dinner. But this dinner was different from all other dinners.

My brothers and I ate, and our parents served us. As on almost every night, our little black-and-white television was tuned to Walter Cronkite. But on this night, my parents didn't eat - they didn't even sit at the table. All they did was feed us, watch TV - and pace across the kitchen.

The next evening, when that odd scene unfolded once again, I finally asked them, "Aren't you going to eat?" "We're not hungry," they said. I was dumbfounded. How could you not be hungry at dinner time? And two days in a row? When my own kids ask what it was that led us to move here, I say nothing about lectures I heard or books I was given to read. It was, I explain, the simple fact that with Israel seemingly on the very precipice of destruction, my parents simply couldn't eat.

Some of the students then shared their own earliest memories of Israel. One recalled the day that all the students in his Orthodox day school were summoned together for an assembly, and how the whole school watched as Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty. For another, it was the intifada, and the images (again, on television) of helmeted IDF soldiers with rifles chasing young boys who'd thrown rocks.

My formative memories were of Israel on the verge of extinction, while theirs were of Israel being recognized by its neighbor or of the seeming imbalance of Israeli-Palestinian power. And that makes all the difference.

None of us knows with certainty how widespread the alienation from Israel among these students is, but no one ought to deny that it is there. And it is obviously even more widespread among college students at large. What Pesah is designed to remind us is that a major part of our response has to be memory-creation.

What's shaping these students? It's fine to assign books on human rights and on the problematics of Israeli democracy.

But I'd have them read Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, too, so they can see the non-negotiable love for Zion with which a staunch leftist writes. I'd have them read Yehuda Avner's *The Prime Ministers*, and "visit" the offices of Eshkol, Meir, Rabin and Begin - "relive" moments when life here hung by a thread. True, they won't have actually lived through it - but the Seder night suggests to us that we can remember even things that we did not experience.

A student dropped me a line after one of these meetings. "It may sound strange," he said, "but for some of us, the most memorable idea to come out of the meeting is that Israel might actually not survive." For someone of my generation, what is shocking is that that was surprising.

But it's not a matter of anyone's "fault." It's a matter of what we remember, and what we don't. The Seder is the moment for reminding ourselves - and each other - that the next generation of Jewish leaders will join us not if we beat them into intellectual submission, but if we can bequeath to them new memories - and thus, at the same time, our aspirations, as well as our foreboding awareness of the fragility of freedom.

"Next Year in Lod" by Shelly Horowitz

"The author must be Ethiopian - He understands! Maybe God is also Ethiopian."

Several weeks ago I had the honor of leading a mock Passover seder and meal for a group of elementary school children and their parents in Lod. The majority of these people were Ethiopian, but not all of them. It was an open invitation - by word of mouth. I had no idea how many people would come. The evening started with 15 people - mostly children and a couple of parents. By the time we ended, nearly 3 hours later, there were 40 people. My first impression was that people came when they realized they would be fed a whole meal - and even that was worth the effort! ("Let all who are hungry come and eat!") - but the comments showed that what they took home from the evening was much more.

The idea started when Noam Zion gave me 40 copies of his and his son's Haggadah - *Halaila Hazeh: The Israeli Haggadah* for use with my students at the teacher's college. I knew it would have broad appeal for religious and nonreligious families. (My friend David, loves this Haggadah not only because his children finally pay attention but because his totally critical and judgmental

communist cousin is even willing to admit that this Haggadah is “in the right direction” – an incredible compliment!)

I started thinking. I have all these haggadot – why not do a pre-seder in Lod for pupils in a very lower-income immigrant-neighborhood at the school where my teaching students do their practice teaching of English.

So I made three turkeys and some side dishes and prepared a “traditional seder plate” (by my standards) and loaded up all the haggadot. 15 people were waiting, mostly Ethiopian Jews. We started and they were very polite and listened to me. Those who could read (mostly the children, not the adults) read what they could. We talked about the pictures and words – both traditional texts - "Everyone must see themselves as if they went out of Egypt" - and contemporary Israeli immigrant experiences – Ethiopian and Russian. Two adults left the room for a few minutes and then returned. After about 40 minutes, more and more people arrived. (I think that the adults that left the room telephoned to others that it was “safe” to come).

When we came to the part of "Let My People Go" there was incredible interest – and identification. We looked in the Haggadah at the photograph of Ethiopians walking to Addis Abba on their way to leave Ethiopia for Israel and at the Israeli stamp commemorating - in Russian - the Exodus of Soviet Jewry. The Ethiopian adults, whose Hebrew is minimal, understood the concept – eyes lit up and there were murmurs and nodding. The Russia Jews at the table also showed signs of recognition. One father told his father’s story -- from what I understood he was a refusenik – so I then told him the story of my father and of Noam's father, Rabbi Moshe Sachs, and the Soviet Jewry Action Committee in Minnesota in the early 1970s that spoke by telephone every week with Russian Jews refused permission to emigrate. I think everyone understood (there was someone trying to explain in Russian and someone trying to explain in Amharic!)

We proceeded through the seder with several stops to explain and tell stories. Each one had his own “exodus” story to tell and that took up a great deal of the “allotted” time (since we were in a school, we couldn’t stay all night – but we ended up staying longer than we originally agreed to because the school custodian (*av bayit*) decided to join the seder, too!) We went through the haggadah – some parts we skipped but there was a great deal for the Ethiopians to relate to. I think one of the most amazing things that happened was that the Russians and Ethiopians formed some sort of bond between them -- they realized that in many ways, language NOT being one of them, a common

experience united them. I told my story of “privileged” aliyah – I had a place to stay when I came to Israel (Moshe and Fran Sachs’ house!) and a program to participate in 3 months after my arrival (WUJS in Arad).

So the stories were told, and the food was eaten and then the guitar came out and I taught them "Who Knows One" (*Echad Mi Yodeia*). Everyone seemed happy (no one was in a particular rush to go home...) – but it was time to leave. I told everyone they could take their haggadah home as a gift and they were, literally, speechless, until one person (Ethiopian), hugging the haggadah, said, "Now I own my own book." This was a HUGE occasion. They were stunned not only that they were given something but even more, that they would OWN a book. It was truly a remarkable moment for books were not in the average Ethiopian's budget or culture, but it was mark of having arrived.

Here were a few of the comments that evening:

"This is my story – I too went out!"

"I do not know if this is true but they tell it so beautifully."

"I did not know a Haggadah could give explanations!"

"The illustrations are so very nice and comics too!"

"This is really NOT boring!"

"The author must be Ethiopian – He understands! Maybe God is also Ethiopian."

I think a tradition has just been created..... "Next year in Lod, again!"

"Next Year a Life of My Own" - Seder in the Battered Women's Shelter (2012)

by Shelly Horowitz

Several weeks ago I conducted a Pesach seder in a battered women's shelter in the center of the country. This shelter is open to anyone, but the majority of women are wives of professional people. I dropped by a week before Pesach with my weekly groceries in the car and casually suggested doing a pre-seder workshop. The response was so enthusiastic that I simply emptied my car and the women began cooking up a storm. Several hours later both these women

and their children attended the seder. In the back of my car I had multiple copies of the haggadah, *Halaila Hazeh: The Israeli Haggadah*. The traditional texts spoke to them very personally.

The women in this shelter, mainly victims of domestic violence, many in the process of obtaining a divorce, hold a very personal view of freedom – freedom from "the tyranny of spousal control" as one woman succinctly stated – the freedom to make difficult choices, the freedom to stand up and advocate for oneself and one's children. Many parts of this haggadah were "adapted" to fit personal experiences. The question of "Why this Night is Different?" melted into the question of what is the difference between work and slavery -- and one's obligation to home and family. Many women commented on feeling like slaves -- every aspect of their lives controlled by their husbands. When we read "everyone must see him or herself as if he or she personally left Egypt" there were cheers all around.

At the end of the seder as we read "Next year in Jerusalem" and each women thought of her "next year" hopes for a future, one of the most touching aspects was our reading of Anne Frank's diary about "I Still Believe." They reflected together the effort to maintain hope (and faith) in light of personal adversity.

Ownership of Jerusalem by All the Tribes and Each Individual Citizen

"In addition to uniting all Israel, Jerusalem also belongs to the entire people, and no tribe or segment of the population possesses any special rights of ownership over it. This principle is expressed in an instructive manner in the disagreement among the Sages regarding the question whether Jerusalem, like all the other areas in Eretz Israel, is divided among the tribes. According to one opinion, just as each part of the territory of Eretz Israel was allotted to a specific tribe, so too Jerusalem was divided between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin; while according to a second view, Jerusalem was not divided into tribal portions, but rather belongs to the people as a whole.. (TB Yoma 12a; Megillah 26a; Sotah 45b).

According to the latter opinion, a long list of laws which derive from ownership by a tribe, or by an individual from that tribe, do not apply to Jerusalem. Thus, **the law states that houses may not be rented out in Jerusalem, because they do not belong to the residents,"** i.e., householders may

not rent lodgings to pilgrims, rather they must be let for free. (Rashi on Megillah 26a).

The Shofar: Next year in Jerusalem is the Medieval Wish at the Conclusion of the Seder and of Yom Kippur

In the Torah the shofar is blown on Yom Kippur of the Jubilee 50th year to announce the liberation of slaves , so too on Yom Kippur it proclaims forgiveness for sins. But no shofar is blown on Pesach evening though it too is day of liberation and messianic hope. The shofar was blown informally when Gillad Schalit was released from 5 years of imprisonment by Hamas in Gaza.

A VISION OF BROTHERHOOD: A LEGEND of JERUSALEM

Jerusalem, **City of Peace**, is also a Rabbinic name and indeed it is this second interpretation that has passed down into tradition and has come to be associated with the city's name. Many stories connected with the idea of peace have been woven around Jerusalem.

An ancient Jewish legend explains the significance of the city. Long ago Jerusalem was a field tended by an old man and his two sons. When the old man died, his sons divided his property among themselves. One brother had a large family, which helped tend his field, so he became wealthy. The other son had not yet married and tilled his land by himself; he was poorer than his brother.

One day, the wealthy brother looked across the fence to see his brother working. He pitied him and thought to himself: "How can I help my brother? He works so hard but sees little profit. I would gladly share my grain with him, but he would never accept my tzedakah. At night, I will bring him some of my produce and he will never know that it came from me."

That same day the poorer brother looked into his brother's house and saw him feeding his children. 'My brother has such a large family, "he thought. "He surely cannot feed them all from his field. I would gladly share my grain with him, but he would never accept my tzedakah. At night, I will bring him some of my produce and he will never know that it came from me."

That night each brother brought several bags of grain to the other, but when they woke up the next morning they noticed that they had no less grain than the day before. For several nights they tried to give each other grain, but each morning they noticed that they were left with the same amount. Until finally, one night, they met in the middle of the field with their sacks of grain on their backs. When they realized what had been happening, they embraced each other and promised to share all that they had. And God, who was a witness to the brothers' deep love, swore that on that site he would make his home. (ZEV VILNAY, *THE LEGENDS OF JERUSALEM*)

Appendix: Jerusalem: The End to Holy Wars by David Hartman

Throughout history Jerusalem had unique significance for all the major religions which share the biblical tradition. This is where the Temple stood, where God's presence was felt in its full immediacy and concreteness. In contrast to the Greek philosophic notion of an ahistorical idea of divinity untouched by the imperfections of the human condition, **Jerusalem signified God's interest and involvement in human history.**

In addition, Jerusalem was an integral part of the **redemptive schemes** which the monotheistic faiths believed would ultimately vindicate their religious beliefs and ways of life. **Only one faith could be the carrier of truth and, therefore, only one faith community was worthy of inhabiting the holy city of Jerusalem.**

It is no wonder that the histories of monotheism in general, and of Jerusalem in particular, are histories of holy wars and conflicts rooted in exclusive claims to divine revelation and redemption.

Jewish homelessness and exile were understood by the Church fathers in terms of Divine rejection and the establishment of a New Covenant. Israel's suffering became a theological necessity; it confirmed the "good news" of the gospel announcing the arrival of a New Israel. Christianity's claim to be Judaism's successor was followed by Islam's own interpretation of why it superseded both Judaism and Christianity.

The claustrophobic geography of the Old City of Jerusalem is an apt metaphor for the cramped ideological space in which these religions interact. Buildings are built next to, or on top of, one another. Living quarters are jealously guarded and border disputes extend even inside of buildings.

Construction is always politically provocative. Placing the Mosque on the Temple ruins means: "I'm taking over now!" The basic problem is not space, but control.

The issue is: Who is the true inheritor of Abraham? Who is God's elect?

The biblical story in Genesis is informed throughout by the theme that **only one child is chosen**; Isaac or Ishmael, Jacob or Esau. Even today this motif continues to shape the either/or logic of religious faith. Either you are blessed or you are excluded. **We, therefore, cannot avoid asking whether religious rivalry and conflict are inevitable consequences of the biblical tradition.**

The holy wars of history were often nurtured by the belief that while only one faith community is God's elect, all the others are obstacles to redemption. This fundamental sense of election and redemption brought such pain and suffering into history. Is this the great legacy which the biblical tradition and the history of Jerusalem bequeathed to the modern world?

I believe that the rebirth of Israel and the return of our people to Jerusalem, if properly interpreted, can help heal this form of religious faith and culture. **Israel showed enormous restraint after the Six-Day War by resisting the prerogatives taken by past conquerors of the Holy City in not rebuilding the Temple on its original foundations. The mosques and churches were not desecrated or removed by the triumphant Jewish forces.**

The religious and theological implications of this restraint go far beyond its pragmatic political significance. It indicates that **Jewish peoplehood and history can bear witness to the ethical and religious significance of particularity.** The notion of the election of Israel need not imply exclusivity and universality. i.e., God chose this community to be the unique carrier of universal truth and hope. Instead the revelation at Sinai can point to a God who affirms the dignity of finitude and particularity as conditions for mediating divine meaning in human life.

The limitations of finitude and particularity are fundamental features of the human condition. The constraints of context, history and perspective inform human experience and knowledge.

We must abandon the age-old religious dogma that one particular historical story is the exclusive way to achieve human perfection and salvation. **Our return to**

Jerusalem does not make Palestinian Muslims and Christians into strangers in this city.

The importance of our return to Jerusalem can be understood from two perspectives: **visibility and particularity**. The message of our return for other faith communities is that we are not an abstract idea. Ideas belong in books. They don't take up space. They don't have bodies. They can be superseded and absorbed by other traditions. We, however, are a living people with compelling spiritual memories. We breathe, we eat, we have children whom we joyfully bring into the eternal covenant of Abraham and Torah. We make mistakes. **And it is our living presence in Jerusalem that is redemptive because it is our bodily presence and joyful celebration of our religious history that show that we are not a passing episode in the religious histories of Christianity and Islam.**

When Christianity and Islam will truly accept our coming home and understand that the rebirth of Israel represents the end of Jewish homelessness, only then will they undergo a **deep cognitive shift away from the traditional understanding of election and revelation.**

The moral vitality and credibility of our respective religious traditions depend to a great extent on **our willingness to rethink and offer viable interpretations of those canonical texts** and theological traditions which nurtured and continue to nurture the hideous notion of holy war and the practices that lead to fanaticism and violence in the name of God.

The Jewish people and Judaism's return to Jerusalem will have redemptive significance for all of humanity when Israel bears witness to a form of divine election which accepts human finitude and particularity and which proclaims: **"Let all people walk each in the name of its god and we in the name of the Lord our God ... "** (Micha 4:6)

Postscript: After the Seder: A Night at the Movies – American Seder Films

by Maxine Springer

Marjorie Morningstar, 1958

One of the first modern films to include a Seder scene was the 1958 classic *Marjorie Morningstar*, director Irving Rapper's exploration of women and love in the 1950s based on the novel by Herman Wouk. The beautiful Marjorie

Morgenstern (Natalie Wood) falls for Noel Airman (Gene Kelly), the social director at a summer resort. Talented but tortured, Noel is not suitable husband material for a girl from the Upper West Side. Determined to wed him nevertheless, Marjorie brings him home for Passover. The Seder at the Morgenstern apartment is quintessentially perfect and reflective of the era, down to the table decorated with candelabras and stylized floral arrangements. Her family is loving and traditional: Marjorie's father, draped in his white robe and donning a kippah, leads the family in prayer. Noel clearly doesn't fit in: He fidgets throughout the ritual dinner and fails to impress Marjorie's mother. Still, Marjorie refuses to give him up, even though all can see the relationship is doomed.

Crimes & Misdemeanors, 1989

Woody Allen employs the memory of a Seder in his 1989 psychological drama *Crimes & Misdemeanors*. Judah (Martin Landau) has had his blackmailing mistress (Anjelica Huston) killed. He is a man who long ago left God behind, but flashes of memory from his childhood begin torturing him, driving him to return to the home where he grew up and to ask the current owner if he can walk around the house. While standing in the doorway of the dining room, he remembers his father Saul—a man of faith—mother and aunts and uncles as they bickered around the Seder table. Saul's sister May wants him to hurry through the Seder. "Are you afraid if you don't follow the rules that God's going to punish you?" she asks, to which her brother replies, "He won't punish me, May. He punishes the wicked." She retorts: "Is that how Hitler got away with killing six million Jews?" The present-day Judah addresses his father and asks what happens to a man who kills. His father tells him that one way or another, that man will be punished. Other family members chime in to insist that a killer will not suffer as long as he is never caught or troubled by ethical considerations. Judah, however, can't escape his moral feelings.

The most over-the-top dysfunctional family Seder film of all time, however, is *When Do We Eat* (2005)? It tells the story of yet another family trying to make it through the obligatory holiday meal. Ira Stuckman (Michael Lerner) is a patriarch perpetually plagued by acid reflux, presiding over a group that includes his second wife and their four self-centered children, his gay daughter from his first marriage plus her girlfriend and his cantankerous father, played by the inimitable Jack Klugman. Ira's attempt to conduct the world's fastest Seder goes

awry when his teenage stoner son slips a tab of Ecstasy into his antacid. In his drugged state, Ira recounts to his family his wild visions of past and present Seders, including a heart-breaking meal with just him and his father eating from cartons of Chinese food: “It’s all here and now,” he rambles. “The Seder. Pop’s Seder. The sages’ Seder... Listen, we’re in the desert. We just left Egypt, we don’t know where we’re going, but we’re here now and God is near.” Ira’s oldest son, an overly pious recent convert to Orthodox Judaism, tries to find meaning in the situation and says, “Tonight...Dad is Moses, and he’s finally feeling God.” The family finally learns to get along. That doesn’t happen at every Seder, but it makes for a great conclusion to a super-schmaltzy holiday flick.—*Maxine Springer*

Appendix: The Urgency of Storytelling

Life as Storytelling: Exodus and the Power of a Novel by Mishael Zion

What matters in *life is not* what happens to you
but what you remember
and how you tell it.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Living to Tell the Tale

In the opening verses of this week’s Torah portion God makes a scandalous statement regarding the reason for the calamities of slavery, suffering, and plagues in Egypt:

God said to Moshe:
Go to Pharaoh; for I have **hardened his heart** and the heart of his officials,
in order that I may show these signs of mine among them,
and in order that you may tell your children and grandchildren
how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done
among them—**so that you may know that I am the Lord.** (Exodus
10)

The first chapter of Exodus posits that Pharaoh’s first sin was not remembering. He is the King who “did not know Joseph.” The inability of Egyptian culture to

hold onto its stories was the beginning of the slippery slope to an oppressive society. For the Torah, not remembering is original sin. As [Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Zachor*](#): put it: What matters in Judaism is not *history* – a word that doesn't even exist in Hebrew – but memory, *zikaron*. I would claim, following Gabriel Garcia Marquez: what matters in life is not history, but storytelling – “not what happened, but what you remember and how you tell it.”

As an antidote to Pharaoh's memory loss, the Exodus is framed first of all as an act of storytelling. Indeed, our *parasha* flips the usual order of things: Rather than claiming that history “happened”, and now we are faced with how to tell its story (most accurately and objectively?), the Torah claims that history happens *in order* that we have a story to tell: “I have **hardened his heart... in order that you may tell.**” **History happens for the story.**

It is becoming increasingly clear across academic fields that the stories we tell – to our friends, our children, ourselves – are the determining factor in our worldview, decision-making and happiness. Moral psychologist [Jonathan Haidt](#) argues that the basic narratives we tell (the “sacred stories”) explain our political and social instincts. Stories determine political choices, but also intensely personal ones: figuring out our own story, and the stories we tell of the world, are a crucial factor in the professional and intimate choices we make in life.

Nowhere is the need for storytelling felt more than in parenting. Storytelling is the central drama of the Exodus story, and it is brought to the fore at the Passover Seder, with its stress on the mitzvah of לבנך והגדת - *what story will we tell our children?* The Haggadah, like the act of storytelling – and like parenting – must be dynamic, never frozen. The Rabbinic authors of the Haggadah wanted parents to each write their own “Haggadah.” History has proven them right: the Haggadah is the book with the most editions in world history.

Storytelling is not only distinguished from objective history or passive memory, it is also distinguished from one-dimensional ideology. Stories are vessels for questions, not certainty. In the annals of Jerusalem intelligentsia it is told that Gershom Scholem would fume about the fact that SY Agnon, the Nobel prize-winning novelist, would never answer a question head on, especially questions regarding his religious belief.

“Whenever I would ask him about his faith, or any other pointed question for that matter, he would always evade giving a straight answer and instead smile and say: ‘Let me tell you a story!’

What does it mean when one answers a question only with a story? Milan Kundera, another great storyteller, suggests that the choice of genre –

story/novel, over assertion/manifesto - is an ideology in itself:

“A novel does not assert anything; a novel searches and poses questions. I invent stories, confront one with another, and by this means I ask questions. The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything... The novelist teaches the reader to comprehend the world as a question. There is wisdom and tolerance in that attitude. In a world built on sacrosanct certainties the novel is dead. The totalitarian world is a world of answers rather than questions. There, the novel has no place.

In any case, it seems to me that all over the world people nowadays prefer to judge rather than to understand, to answer rather than ask, so that the voice of the novel can hardly be heard over the noisy foolishness of human certainties.”
Milan Kundera, from *Afterword: A Talk with the Author* an interview by Philip Roth reprinted in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Penguin, 1981, page 237

The commandment of “תִּסְפֹּר לְחֵעָךְ” - “*In order that you may tell*” rings loud and clear in my ears. As we grapple with the questions of our own lives, and equip others with the tools to do the same, storytelling is in itself the most powerful answer. *Talmud Torah*, the central Jewish practice of learning, is in essence engaging in the act of constant storytelling – to ourselves and to others. The memories, the narrative schemes, the twists of plot and the conflicts through which questions are asked in stories, hold the key to redemption. It is through storytelling that the Promised Land is achieved.

You Shall Your Children:

“If we are not walking in our grandfathers shoes, then whose shoes are we walking in?

Our grandfathers and mothers lived and ugly and died to preserve a way of life that was important to them. They taught us everything we know to be true. Every conceivable act of life was mapped out and handed to us. We got the maps stored in the closet, we got them hidden under the bed. It has been years since we looked at them. Our children know nothing about them.”

August Wilson, , USA playwright. Died 2005.

The Pesach Seder: Making Meaning as Moral Identity

by Jonathan Sachs, *The Great Partnership* – (196 -199)

Meaning as moral identity is something I acquire by being born into a specific community with a distinctive history, when I recognise a duty of loyalty to a

past and responsibility for a future by living faith and handing it on to those who come after me. It is what Edmund Burke thought society was: 'a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born'. It is not meaning *discovered* or meaning *invented*, but meaning collectively *made and renewed* in the conscious presence of God — that is to say, an authority beyond ourselves and our merely human devices and desires.

Meaning is made, not just discovered. That is what religion for the most part is: the constant making and remaking of meaning, by the stories we tell, the rituals we perform and the prayers we say. The stories are sacred, the rituals divine commands, and prayer a genuine dialogue with the divine. Religion is an authentic response to a real Presence, but it is also a way of making that presence real by constantly living in response to it. It is truth translated into deed.

By the stories we tell: When I take part in a seder service on Passover, telling the story of the book of Exodus, I am not engaged in a cultural act like watching a film or reading a book about it. I am enacting it, making it part of me. On Passover the Exodus ceases to be mere history and becomes memory: not something that happened somewhere else to someone else long ago, but something that is happening to me, here, now. It defines me as part of that story, linking me to a community of others in different places and times. It changes me, for I now know what it feels and tastes like to be oppressed, and I can no longer walk by when others are oppressed. People who have lived the seder service are different for having done so, and the world is different because of them. It is why there were so many Jews (Joe Slovo, Albie Sachs, Joel Joffe, Helen Suzman, Nadine Gordimer and others) in the fight against apartheid, and why Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marched with Martin Luther King.

By the rituals we perform: The American anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport (1926-97) understood more than most that ritual is an act of meaning-making. Societies, like nature, suffer from entropy, a breakdown of order over time. Religion is the great counter-entropic force that prevents the decay or disintegration of order by performative acts that renew the collective order of the group. A ritual is an *enactment of meaning*. That is what makes a house of worship not a theatre, and a congregation something other than an audience. A congregation participates in a ritual; an audience merely watches and listens. A congregation lives the reality encoded by the ritual; an audience merely suspends its disbelief while the play is going on, knowing that what it is seeing is a fiction. A ritual is an act in the world; a drama is not, it is a mere imitation of one. Rappaport calls ritual 'the primary social act', because it makes meanings.

By the prayers we say: Prayer is a way of seeing. We hear the universe singing a song to its Creator. We join our ancestors as they sang psalms in the Temple, or lifted their voices in thanksgiving as they passed through the divided waters of the Red Sea.

But meaning-as-covenant never was seen; it is heard as the voice of God. It is not found, but made. It belongs to the intersubjective world of persons in relation to one another. Meanings are socially constructed. They exist in the form of words, stories, constitutive narratives. They belong to the shared life of communities. They involve a living connection to a past to which we feel ourselves to belong, and a future for which we hold ourselves responsible. They are always particular — to this group, that nation, this faith, that tradition. Science may be universal. Meaning never is. *Sacred* meanings are those we make when we covenant with God, listening to his voice, heeding his call.

The Loss of Religion is the Loss of Relationships

by Jonathan Sachs, *The Great Partnership* (166- 167, 180 - 181)

Once, while making a television documentary about the state of the family in Britain, I took Penelope Leach, Britain's leading childcare expert, to see what happens in a Jewish school on Friday morning. The children, as usual, were performing their 'mock Shabbat', role-playing what would happen that night at home. Penelope watched fascinated as the five-year-old parents blessed the five-year-old children and welcomed the five-year-old guests. When it was over, she asked one five-year-old boy what he liked most about the Sabbath. 'I like it', he said; 'because it's the only time *Daddy doesn't have to rush off.*' It was a revealing insight into how the Sabbath preserves time and space for the family against the pressures of the world outside. As we walked away from the school, Penelope turned to me and said, 'That Sabbath of yours is saving their parents' marriages.'

Of course you do not have to be religious to have a happy marriage or be a caring parent. No one would suggest otherwise. But marriage has ceased to be supported by the wider culture.

Religion is really about relationships. Therefore when religion declines, we would expect the effect to be visible in relationships. Subtract religion and culture from humanity, and you are left with biology. That will always remain.

But there is a dystopian nightmare that this is what we will indeed be left with: sex without love, promiscuity without limits, love without commitment, fatherhood without responsibility, predatory males, females often left to bear the burden of childcare alone; in short, the sexual habits of the higher primates.

Today in the West we have a series of societies in which almost half of children are born outside marriage, where people are marrying later or not at all, where close to half of marriages end in divorce, and where the chances of a child growing to maturity in a stable relationship with its biological parents are slimmer than they have been for a long while. Why should this matter? Because children pay the price. When stable marriages cease to be the norm, children are more

likely to live in poverty, and a significant minority to be abused, sexually assaulted, abandoned, intimidated or neglected.⁵ We can trace the impact. Within the space of two generations, against a background of steadily increasing affluence, there has been an increase of between 300 and 1,000 per cent in the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, stress-related syndromes, depression, violent crime, suicides and suicide attempts among the young.⁶

Children pay the price for the abdication of responsibility on the part of their parents, and it can be a high price. ... Today, in a sense, secular society *is* visiting the sins of the parents on the children.

Each of these can be further fragmented, so that even basic biological facts of parenthood become a complex set of options: genetic mother, host mother, commissioning mother, genetic father, mother's partner, same-sex partners and so on. The permutations are open-ended and bewildering. There is even a danger that children may become a commodity.

For me and most of my friends, family was our source of at-homeness in the world, the only place we could turn to for unconditional love. `Home', said Robert Frost, 'is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to let you in.' I believe that God lives in the grace of our dealings with others. Religion, for monotheism, is about relationships. If all faith did was show us how to sustain a marriage and a family in love and-loyalty, making space for one another, I would count it as God's great and sufficient gift. **Religion sacralises relationship, which is why those who care about relationship will seek ways of investing it with holiness. Faith, for the prophets, was a kind of marriage. Marriage is an act of faith.**