

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

QOL HA-QAHAL

קול הקהל



Issue 32: Pesah
DEDICATED IN HONOR OF
NORMA AND SOL BETESH
BY THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN



*Dedicated in Honor of
Norma and Sol Betesh
by their children and grandchildren*

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QOL HA-QAHAL MISSION

To promote Torah throughout our community
by providing a platform for our rabbis, lay members, students and institutions.

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Editor's Note

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךְ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה זֶה

“And when your son asks you one day: What is this?”

(Shemot 13:14)

Pesah is the holiday of Jewish continuity. It is an opportunity to perpetuate our values and engage in intergenerational dialogue. The Rabbis designed the entire *seder* on the idea of encouraging questions from the younger generations. This holiday, more than any other, challenges us to provide quality answers to instill our children with our values.

A recent UJA Federation study of the Jewish millennial generation noted “approximately 90% reported that religion was not a major focus of their lives at this time, and 47% reported that religion was not currently a focus of their life at all.” So far, our Community has done an excellent job defying statistics. How will we continue to overcome the trends of the greater Jewish experience in America? Perhaps even the practices of the greater Jewish community deserve scrutiny as we have seen the track record of high assimilation and intermarriage rates.

Our Purim issue brought the dilemma of acculturation to the forefront. As we continue to change, we need to discern what we accept and what we reject. Some of our authors took a more traditionalist approach, while other authors considered a more open and accommodating approach. Should Purim be a Jewish Halloween if it gets people engaged in Judaism, or should we adhere to a strict tradition? Many of our readers felt differently about this issue and responded accordingly.

What do we want the next generation to preserve? Will our children be informed enough to bridge halakha and

an ever changing world? How will they answer the double standard portrayal of the Jewish State? Will they appreciate the special *pizmonim* we are all so familiar with? These questions all touch on the idea of continuity. Our children will get these answers on campus and social media. It is our responsibility to provide our responses from our homes and families. We cannot allow the opinions of the next generation to be shaped by people who despise Judaism and the Jewish state. Are we to let the narrative be taken over by radicals? By the far left? By people who seek the destruction of the Jewish state and Jewish people?

The continuation of our verse in Shemot 13:14 tells us that Pesah is the answer to our children. When our young people question our way of life—we should welcome their questions and utilize Pesah as the answer: “and you shall encourage him enthusiastically and say: By strength the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from slavery” וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצֵאתָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם, מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים. Celebrating the epic transition from slavery to a people with a covenant with *Bore' Olam* is a powerful narrative. Digging down to our roots and defining ourselves is a vital exercise.

The four sons of the *seder* all essentially ask the same question in a different way, and each receive an individualized answer. In this spirit we hope that the following pages help inform and provide worthwhile discussion for your family this holiday.

Please continue to send responses about Qol Ha-Qahal articles to qahalnewsletter@gmail.com.

Tizku l'shanim rabbot,

Murray S. Mizrachi





Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Your article, "When Did Purim Become Mardi Gras?" (Issue 31: Shabbat Zakhor-Purim) investigating the origins and legal ramifications of various contemporary Purim practices was both informative and impassioned in its opposition to masquerading. I wonder, however, whether a survey of sources is sufficient to convince those with a different set of preferred sources. Thus, I'd like to provide one additional source: the mimetic tradition. To the best of my knowledge, none of our very own Syrian born *hakhamim* masqueraded on Purim. As it says in Debarim (32:7) זָכַר יְמוֹת עוֹלָם, בֵּינוֹ שְׁנוֹת דֹּר-דֹּר; שָׂאֵל אֶבְיֹךָ וַיִּגְדְּךָ. Do we really need any other sources to teach us how to celebrate Purim?

Jacob Sasson



Dear Editor:

While I enjoyed the article "When Did Purim Become Mardi Gras?" I found it a bit strict. Certainly there are many Sephardic rabbis such as Hakham Ovadia Yosef A"H that were not as harsh on the idea of costumes. Is it the worst thing if our children dress up as Queen Esther?

Sincerely,

Joseph Cohen

Dear Editors,

Last year's Qol HaQahal Purim issue featured an article by Rabbi Harold Sutton that demonstrated the erosion and distortion of some of our traditions related to celebrating Purim. That article is easily available though our archive online. It is in that manner, we can communicate our positions to our readership with a positive tone and guidance that will help restore our traditions from the manipulated norm seen today. As editors, we own responsibility to insure the articles we print are accurate, well sourced and also written to engage and inform our readers.

Hymie Shamah,
President, Sephardic Community Alliance

All comments and responses to Qol Ha-Qahal are welcome. Please send to QAHALNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM



The Seder

WHY THESE FOUR VERSES?

Rabbi Joseph Beyda

The Passover Haggadah is a conglomeration of readings and rituals designed to connect us to, and affirm our beliefs in, our national origin. Between the wine, vegetables, masah, and deluxe dinner, we read a number of texts. In one way or another, each of these texts aims to tell and retell the story of the Exodus to all those at the *seder* table. The primary recounting of the Exodus narrative is through classic rabbinic explication (midrash) of four verses from the Book of Deuteronomy:

My father was a wandering (lost?) Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and he sojourned there with a few people, and he became there a great, mighty, and large nation. And the Egyptians did evil to us and they tortured us and they placed hard labor upon us. And we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction and our oppression. And the Lord brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with great awe and through signs and wonders. (26:5-8)

Scholars pose the obvious question on this choice of verses as the basis for recounting the Exodus. Why these four verses above all others? Why choose a piece from Deuteronomy instead of the natural choice of the Book of Exodus? The question becomes more poignant when we analyze their context in the Torah. These verses are known as “*miqra bikkurim*,” for the Torah instructs us that they are to be recited by farmers upon bringing *bikkurim*, first fruits, to the *Beit Hamiqdash*.

Bikkurim is a misvah generally associated with the Festival of Shabuot, celebrated seven weeks subsequent to Pesah. Why use verses traditionally used for a different purpose and for a different holiday as the centerpiece of the Exodus conversation on Pesah?

One scholar suggests that these verses were an ideal choice because the people would have already been familiar with them from *bikkurim*. This is a difficult answer to accept, because *bikkurim* only applied to farmers. Further, the mishna in *Massekhet Bikkurim* teaches us quite the contrary, many of the farmers bringing *bikkurim* needed these verses read to them word for word. There must be more behind the choice of verses than familiarity.

Perhaps part of the solution is that these verses are the best available at succinctly describing the Exodus. Were we to use the Book of Exodus itself, we would have to read more than a dozen chapters. It is not difficult to appreciate that the average attention span of a *seder* participant could not

handle that. The “*miqra bikkurim*,” in four concise verses, gives a thorough overview of the key steps in the Exodus process. However, if brevity were the goal, why provide pages of Rabbinic expansion on those very verses? Indeed, in the standard Haggadah, the commentary on these four verses spans 25 paragraphs! Whatever we gain in brevity, we quickly concede in midrashic expansion upon these verses.



The seven species that are obligated to be included in the bikkurim

According to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, it is the expansion upon the few verses which is precisely the point. In his view, the Haggadah and the *seder* are all about *talmud Torah*, learning. We therefore take a few verses and expand upon them greatly, as is the way of Rabbinic literature. With great reverence for Rabbi Soloveitchik, I find this answer lacking, as well. We read the same set text each year. The character of the *seder* is one, like the farmer did with “*miqra bikkurim*,” in which we state a formula to affirm our belief. It is not classic *talmud Torah* in which questions and answers are posed.

It is my belief that “*miqra bikkurim*” was chosen as the basis for the Haggadah because it is, even in its context, a recap of an event that had already taken place. The Book of Exodus would be a lesser choice because it describes the events as they are happening. On the other hand, “*miqra bikkurim*” is a statement of a person who, like us, is looking back many years later, necessitating great effort to connect to the foundational event that is the

Exodus. At the *seder*, we are like the farmers. We must dig deep and struggle to connect our emotions to the words we utter. Just like Shabuot is removed from Pesah, we are, somewhat, removed from the Exodus by many miles and centuries. The farmer nevertheless arrived at Jerusalem, fruit basket on his shoulder, motivated by the events which transpired many years before. We, too, drink our wine, eat our masah, and taste bitter herbs in homage to an experience many centuries before we were born.

“We must dig deep and struggle to connect our emotions to the words we utter.”

May our *seders* be ones in which we successfully connect to the collective memory which has sustained ‘*Am Yisrael* for millennia.

Rabbi Beyda is the Rabbi of Congregation Bnei Yitzhak and will serve as the Principal of the Yeshivah of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School beginning in September of this year.

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Designed by Joey Pinhas

MASAH MACHINE, 18 MINUTES, AND PAGANISM

Rabbi Haim Ovadia

Many years ago, as a Bar Ilan University undergrad, I was doing research on the historical debate around the first masah-baking machine. The intention of the two professors who asked me to do the research was to prove that the opposition to the machine had to do with the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, in the rabbinical literature of the times, references were made to the miserable state of affairs in the masah sweatshops on the one hand, and to the concern for the workers' income on the other. These arguments echoed those used by the proponents and opponents of Whitney's cotton gin and the McCormick combine harvester. The professors' hypothesis seemed plausible at the beginning, but as I delved into the material I found that there were deeper, darker layers to the story. In the first bulletin against the machine, published at the turn of the 20th century, 17 great scholars explained why the use of the machine is forbidden. Shortly afterwards, a counter publication appeared in which other great scholars decried the prohibition and claimed that the opponents have never even seen the machine.

I was intrigued by the contradictory arguments and decided to search for contemporary literature which will help me shed light on the nature of the machine.

I knew that the inventor's name was Israel Singer and that he was a native of Alsace-Lorraine, but his name was nowhere to be found, even in a book dedicated to inventors of his exact era and region. I returned to the rabbinical bulletin and dug deeper for descriptions of the machine, and eventually found that the "machine" consisted of nothing more than two large rolling pins, activated manually by a crank and gears. The proponents were right. The opponents never saw the machine and had no solid arguments to present. So now I wondered how this document came to life, rife with 17 opinions against the machine.

Further investigation revealed that the whole anti-

machine campaign was launched by one Rabbi Dembitzer, who in previous years was accused by the community of embezzlement and, God forbid, attraction to enlightenment (השכלה). It turns out that Dembitzer wanted to clear his name and found a great cause in the novel contraption. He sent letters to over one hundred local rabbis, of whom seventeen gave him the desired answer. He published his bulletin, threw the European rabbis into a halakhic whirlpool, and emerged as a pious and zealous man.

This story is important because all the arguments regarding machine and hand-made masah are rooted in that first, deceptive, bulletin. When I see an announcement by a descendant of one of the original opponents, Rabbi Hayyim

Halbershtam, that we have a long standing tradition that machine baked masah are forbidden, and that they must be round, I don't know if I should laugh or cry. I personally follow the advice of the late Hakham Shalom Messas, who said that he puts aside all the handmade masah he receives from Hassidic leaders, and enjoys the delicious machine baked ones.

So the hypothesis of the two professors was proven wrong, but I gained an insight on the history of the notorious machine, as well as on

the way customs and prohibitions evolve. I also discovered, in the process of searching the history of baking machines and bread making, another interesting fact: You know the eighteen minutes allocated for masah baking cycles? How we rush the production before the dough rises? Well, that time frame is closer to 26 hours. Yes, hours. And in the ancient world, that was a very well-kept secret. For most people, the daily bread consisted of flat tortilla-like concoctions, and only expert chefs knew the secret of the leavening agent, or the starter dough, taken from dough which was left to rise for over a day. And who were these experts? Let us turn to the Haggadah:



*Masah-forming machine, ca. early 20th century
(the Lviv Museum of the History of Religion)*

מצה זו שאנו אוכלים על שום מה? על שום שלא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה עליהם הקדוש ברוך הוא וגאלם מיד. שנאמר: ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עוגות מצות כי לא חמץ, כי גורשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם צדה לא עשו להם. (סדר רב עמרם גאון, הגדה של פסח)

Why do we eat this Matzah? Because the dough of our forefathers did not have time to rise before already God revealed Himself and redeemed them. As it is written "they baked the dough which they took out of Egypt into round Masah because it has not risen, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, and were also unable to prepare provisions.

This well-known paragraph from the Haggadah explains that the masah commemorates the moment of the Exodus. Our forefathers kneaded the dough, but before it had time to rise, God revealed Himself and redeemed them. This idea is supported by the Biblical text: "they baked the dough which they took out of Egypt into round masah because it has not risen, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, and were also unable to prepare provisions" (Ex. 12:39).

Wait! They were taken by surprise? They did not know that they were leaving Egypt that night? Didn't God tell them, several days before Pesah, that they must eat masah? Let us go back to the beginning of chapter 12 (vv. 3-17) and see:

דברו אל כל עדת ישראל לאמר בעשר לחדש הזה ויקחו להם איש שה...ואכלו את הבשר בלילה הזה צלי אש ומצות...וככה תאכלו אתו מתניכם חגרים, נעליכם ברגליכם, ומקלכם בידכם... ושמרתם את המצות, כי בעצם היום הזה הוצאתי את צבאותיכם מארץ מצרים.

Speak to the Israelites, tell them: on the tenth of this month take a lamb...eat the meat on that night roasted, with masah...you shall eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hands...observe the [feast] of Masot, for I have taken your hosts out of Egypt on that very day.

According to the Torah, the Israelites were addressed by Moshe no later than the tenth of Nissan, and were told that

they are going to leave Egypt on the fifteenth. They were also commanded to eat the Pesah sacrifice with masot. These verses challenge the above cited paragraph in two ways:

1. The reason for eating the masah is the divine commandment and not the circumstances. The Israelites knew of the exodus in advance and were not surprised. They were even told to eat the masah fully dressed for a long journey.
2. If the Israelites knew beforehand that they will be traveling, how come they did not pack some bread? The knowledge that she will be travelling in four days to the desert, a place not known for supermarkets and fast food chains, would have sent any good Jewish mother packing. The Israelites should have emptied Egypt not only of its gold and silver, but of its bread as well.

Additionally, anyone who ever bothered to look at a package of masah and see that it was done in less than 18 minutes, will have to wonder how the dough taken out of Egypt did not become *hames*. Even if the Israelites took the highway, they would have probably needed more than 18 minutes to get to the Ramses Turnpike or the Nile State Parkway, and during that time their dough would definitely become *hames*.

These questions and others related to the topic have bothered me for many years, and even though the commentators offered different ways to untangle the textual confusion, I couldn't find an explanation that soothed me. It was the research I made regarding the machine masah which opened my eyes. You see, it turns out that the leading experts on bread and beer production in the ancient world were no other than our dear friends, the Egyptians.

Not only did the story of the masah at the exodus make sense to me now, this revelation solved for me several other mysteries:

In Genesis 19:3 we read of the messengers who came to

"The secret of bread making was kept zealously by the Egyptians, and more specifically, by their priests."

Continued from page 9

visit Lot and were treated by their host to masot. Rashi explains that it was Pesah, but it is a little hard to understand why Lot would celebrate Pesah, in Sodom, hundreds of years before the Exodus. The explanation is much simpler. He baked masot because he didn't have the time or the knowledge required for baking bread. This also explains why, as we previously read (18:6) Abraham asked Sarah to hurry up and make עוגות. He is not referring to cake but to flat, round, unleavened bread. It is the same term which the Torah will later use to describe the bread of the Exodus: עוגות מצות – round, flat masah.

The secret of bread making was kept zealously by the Egyptians, and more specifically, by their priests. This should not come as a surprise to us, since in many societies priests ran lucrative businesses, such as wineries, under the cloak of holiness. This is evident in the paragraph describing the meal served to Joseph's brothers upon their second visit. Joseph ate by himself, and so did his brothers and the courtiers. The Torah explains (Gen. 43:32):

כי לא יוכלון המצרים לאכול את העברים לחם כי תועבה היא למצרים

The Egyptians cannot eat bread with the hebrews because it is an abomination for Egypt.

The traditional translation of this verse is that the Egyptians could not dine with the Hebrews, because the latter consumed meat, and such behavior was abominable to the Egyptians. But if this was the case, the Torah should not have mentioned bread. Rather, we should understand the word abomination as a euphemism, or opposite-language, for sacred. The Torah does not want to recognize the sacred status of bread in Egypt so it calls it an abomination. The verse should be translated thus: "The Egyptians would not serve the Hebrews bread, because it was hallowed for them."



With this new understanding we can now return to the story of the Exodus. God told the Israelites before the Pesah that they will leave on the eve of the fifteenth and that they could only eat masah, but even if they wanted to, they could not have stocked up on bread or made fresh bread during the exodus. The reason for that was that the only way they knew to make bread was to let the dough sit for over a day and then bake it.

In conclusion, both reasons given by the Torah are valid. The Israelites were commanded to eat masah, and they were not capable of making bread. God did not command the people to ask for bread the same way they asked for gold and silver, because in their mind the bread represented Egyptian priesthood and paganism. This is, in my opinion, the reason why *hames* is not allowed on the altar and in the Temple. The insistence on unleavened bread on sacred premises is meant to clearly mark the boundaries of monotheism, and to eschew elements of paganism.

I began my story and my journey with the masah baking machine and ended it with a discussion of ancient paganism, but to say the truth, I find myself wondering more than once, if we have not wandered off the path God paved for us. There are zealous, virulent, and sometimes violent wars, over the manner in which masah is baked, the levels of

supervision, the accurate time frame for the baking, and exact size or volume of the portions of the final product we are obligated to consume. Let us not forget that the message of Pesah is that the human spirit guided by God,

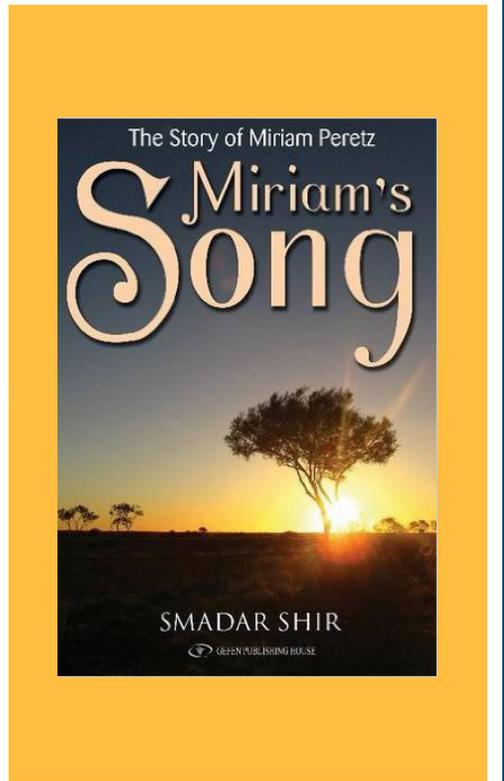
can endure in its struggle for freedom and the rejection of bigotry and idolatry.

“The insistence on unleavened bread on sacred premises is meant to clearly mark the boundaries of monotheism, and to eschew elements of paganism.”

Rabbi Ovadia is the Rabbi of Magen David Sephardic Congregation in Maryland.



Miriam Peretz Event
— Author of —
Miriam's Song



ETERNAL MOMENTS

— Rabbi Joseph Dweck

“But life is short, and things do matter, often more than the human heart can bear. This is an elemental truth that neither temporarily victorious nihilism, nor fashion, nor cowardice can long suppress”

— Mark Helprin

There are moments in life that bring us a deep sense of value. It could be the birth of a child, a wedding day, or a moment of great accomplishment. When we experience such moments it is as if the world, in a fractal-like way, reveals itself to us in perfection. We perceive these moments to be filled with grace and

“We yearn to be free in order to choose and achieve meaningful lives.”

benevolence, and we might feel that our lives were worth even one such experience.

This is what lies behind the portion of the Haggadah that we call “*dayenu*” (lit. “enough for us”). *Dayenu* lists the gracious acts of God that brought us out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. After mentioning each one, we exclaim “*dayenu!*” – “It would have been enough for us!” not because we wouldn’t have needed more, but because the experience — even once — of that grace and kindness from the Creator, would have been enough for us to say that it was all worth it. Each and every element of the *dayenu* brought us face to face with the full meaning of our lives.

Dayenu is part of the *seder* because our freedom is fundamentally based upon the idea that the world is meaningful, and thus, so are our choices. We yearn to be free in order to choose and achieve meaningful lives. When

we are fortunate enough to experience a “*dayenu* moment,” we are reminded, deep in our hearts, that our lives matter, our choices matter, and that even if it is but once in a lifetime, seeing it is knowing that it is indeed enough.

Rabbi Dweck is the Senior Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom.



This Massah a page from the Barcelona Haggadah Spain, 14th Century



MASAH U'MAROR

Rabbi Dr. Raymond Harari

The most prominent items at the Passover seder are the *masah* and the *maror*. Indeed, Rabban Gamliel teaches us that the Passover *seder* would be incomplete without the presence of both these food items:

רבן גמליאל היה אומר: כל-מי שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו: פסח, מצה, ומרור.

Rabban Gamliel said: Whoever does not make mention of [i.e. explain] these three things on Passover does not discharge his duty, and these are they: The Passover-offering, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs.

Not surprisingly, they bring to the table dramatically

“Passover reminds us of the unusual turns that our lives as the Jewish people have taken.”

different motifs. The *masah* represents the exodus from Egypt while the *maror* represents the slavery itself. The *masah*, bread in its unleavened state, expresses God’s impatience in delivering us from the hands of the Egyptians. For all future generations we would know that God’s rush in taking us out of Egypt would be symbolized by bread that was not allowed to rise. The *maror*, on the other hand, reminds us of the bitterness of our oppression and the evils of the demonic power that ruled over the people of Israel for centuries.

These two food items, therefore, capture the essence of the holiday of Passover. They remind us of our obligation to connect to our forefathers and our history in the fullest sense: the good and the ugly, the exhilarating and the depressing. Much like the holiday of Purim that we celebrated a month ago, Passover reminds

us of the unusual turns that our lives as the Jewish people have taken. We have witnessed the worst of what humankind has dealt others and the best of what God has rewarded His people. In our own times, our people were both slaughtered during the Holocaust years and witnessed the miraculous rebirth of the Jewish people in its homeland.

Passover reminds us that both experiences and emotions are part of what it means to be a Jew. And by connecting to the messages that the *masah* and the



maror send us, we propel ourselves to strengthen our relationship to the Almighty.

Rabbi Dr. Harari is the Rosh Yeshivah of Joel Braverman High School and Rabbi of Mikdash Eliyahu.





Arba' Parashiot

CAN YOU FEEL IT?

Rabbi Daniel Greenwald

לעילוי נשמת מור אבי, הרב אליהו דוב בן גיטעל ואברהם, הכ"מ

Our preparations for Pesah, the holiday of our redemption, begin in earnest even before Rosh Hodesh Nisan. The principal function of *Perashat Hahodesh*, the last of the “*Arba Parashiot*”- the four special Torah readings between the beginning of Adar and Pesah- which is always read on, or before, Rosh Hodesh Nisan, is to remind us that Pesah is around the corner and that we must begin - if we have not yet already begun - our preparations for the holiday.

The preparations for Pesah come in many forms: physical and spiritual. We are all very familiar with the physical chores needed for the holiday – the cleaning of the house and the clothing, the purchasing of wine and masot and all the other foods and necessities for the holiday, and of course the ladies are intimately familiar with the cooking. The spiritual preparations include studying the many halakhot of the *hag* as well as the commentaries on the Haggadah, etc. There is also the mystical notion of preparing for the holiday by working to rid ourselves of the negative traits of arrogance and boastfulness – as symbolized by the *hames*, the “puffed up” dough, which we replace with the flat *masah*, symbolizing humility and modesty.

But there is another dimension which requires our preparation as well, and that is the psychological. There is a well-known mishna in *Massekhet Pesahim* 10:5 that we quote each year as part of the *seder* that states, “*bekhol dor vador hayyab adam lirot et ‘asmo k’ilu hu yasa miMistayim*” – “In every generation, a person is **obligated** to see himself as if he left Egypt.” How can **we** relate to the experience

of slavery that our ancestors were subjected to so many thousands of years ago in Egypt! In addition, how can **we** even begin to comprehend emotionally, the experience of the redemption like the generation who came out of Egypt? Even great Torah authorities, such as Rabbi Yishak Ze’ev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav, pointed out that this requirement is probably the most difficult of all the obligations that we are commanded to carry out at the *seder*. In short, how can **we** possibly fulfill this obligation and how can we prepare for it?

“The preparations for Pesah come in many forms: physical and spiritual.”

Many interpretations are offered with regard to this mishna. Some argue that this obligation is merely a mental exercise; we only have to try to perceive ourselves as slaves who have just been set free. Others acknowledge that while this exercise is indeed impossible to do on our own,

it is the very format of the *seder* itself which enables us – to some degree – to connect with these emotions.

Maimonides has a slightly different version of the mishna (which is used in our Haggadot), that reads, “... a person is **obligated** to portray himself as if he left Egypt” - which he interprets to mean that one must not simply try to regard themselves mentally as a participant in the Exodus, but one needs to **demonstrate** this attitude with a personal relevance. Therefore, a person must do certain actions in order to demonstrate that they too were redeemed. He suggests that we accomplish this by reclining in the manner of “a person of leisure” and through the requirement to drink four cups of wine. [*M.T. Hamess U’Massa* 7:7] However, if we pay close attention to the mishna’s wording, we will notice that it does not say that each person is obligated to consider themselves

exactly like they were personally freed, but rather, it says “*k’ilu*” - “**as if**” they were personally freed. It seems that the mishna is coming to teach us that we need to relate personally, in some manner, with **similar** feelings to the generation of the Exodus – and not necessarily to emulate their exact emotions. How do we do this? I would like to suggest that the answer to our dilemma can be found in the text of the Haggadah itself – and is even connected by the use of the same phraseology, “*bekhol dor va’dor*.” In the midst of the “*maggid*” portion (between the beginning sections of Shemuel and Rab’s “Haggadah,” see Pesahim 116a), we find a paragraph that is seemingly unrelated to the re-telling of the story of the Exodus: “*ve’hi she’amda...*” - “This stood up for our fathers and for us...” We proclaim through these lines that in every generation, someone has risen up to destroy us, but *Haqadosh Barukh Hu* has saved us. Exactly what was it that stood up for our fathers and for us? Based on the teachings of Maimonides as explained by Rabbi Benzion Buchman in “*Rambam and Redemption*” - it was the promise made to Abraham Abinu in the *Berit Ben Habetarim* mentioned in the previous paragraph in the Haggadah:

[The word *ve’hi*, “this,” refers to the promise. This promise that was made to Abraham applied not only to the generation of our forefathers that emerged from the persecution of Egypt, but to every generation. A continuous cycle of imposed suffering will be followed by vengeance upon Israel’s oppressors coupled with a period of prosperity for *Bnei Yisrael*. The same name, *Haqadosh Barukh Hu*, is used to describe God as the savior that was used to refer to God who “calculates the *kes* [= end].” Each cycle of suffering and salvation is in itself a process of *galut* and *kes*. [p. 74-75]

In other words, in every generation there is a cycle of persecution and salvation, and it is through our very own redemption that **we** can identify with the generation of the Exodus. So when the mishna enjoins us to see ourselves “*bekhol dor va’dor*”- in every generation as if **we** have left Egypt, we have to do no more than to examine and reminisce about our own contemporary experiences of Anti-Semitism, which unfortunately continue to occur in every generation. Thus, the paragraph of “*vehi she’amda*” – in which we take note of the cycle of history and the eternal promise of salvation by *Bore’ Olam* – serves for us as a vehicle through which we fulfill our obligation of “feeling” the oppression and the redemption of our ancestors.

While the “*vehi she’amda*” paragraph helps us identify with the past, it also offers us hope for the future: for just as *Bore’ Olam* saves us in every generation, we know that one day he will ultimately send Mashiah and save us from the “yoke of the nations” – which is why when we recite this paragraph, we cover the *masot*, which represent oppression, and lift the cup of wine which symbolizes our freedom. Thus, this statement is not only a remembrance of the liberation of the past and an acknowledgement of our present salvation - it is also the promise of the future redemption for us and all of Israel. May this take place

speedily in our own day!

Mo’adim le’simha and tizku l’shanim rabbot

Rabbi Greenwald is the Assistant to the Rabbi at the Edmond J. Safra Synagogue in Manhattan.



During the Araba' Parashiot we read from two sifrei Torah



Pesah Thoughts

THE THREE DAY JOURNEY: FACT OR FAKE OUT?

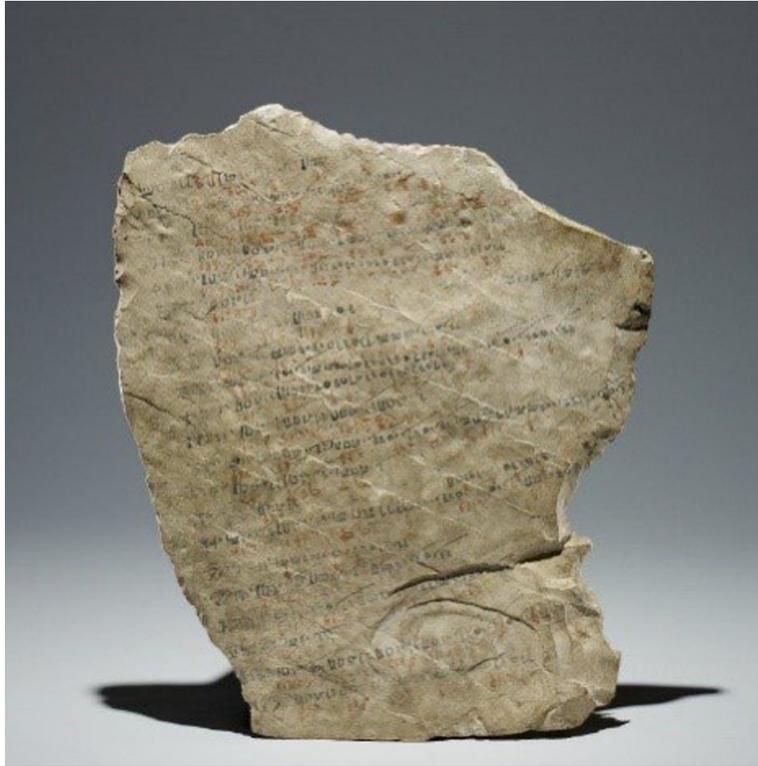
Rabbi Dr. Richard Hidary

At the burning bush, God instructs Moshe to go to Pharaoh and request a three-day reprieve for the Israelites to travel to the desert and worship their God (Exodus 3:18). In fact, Moshe makes exactly this request (5:3), which he repeats during each stage of negotiation during the plagues (8:21-25; 10:7-11, 24, 26). Pharaoh is so stubborn that he only concedes the smallest bit of permission after tremendous pressure from the plagues and from his own advisors, and even then he reneges once the plague is finished.

Abravanel (1437-1508) asks the obvious ethical question here: How could the Almighty instruct Moshe to utter a falsehood in His name? Wouldn't it have been far better for him to have said plainly: "Free My people from the burdens of Egypt?"

Rabbi Shmuel David Luzzato (Italy, 1800-1865) provides an answer: This request was undoubtedly not made in good faith since they had not the slightest intention of returning to Egypt. But it was justified on the grounds that Pharaoh would certainly have had no scruples about enslaving them again on their return.

Nevertheless, we still have to wonder why Moshe needs to resort to this type of ruse. Hashem knows that Pharaoh is going to deny the request anyway and Hashem can easily demand the full freedom that He will miraculously bring about in any case. What is the purpose of this deception?



Ostracon with Attendance Register:

Limestone Ostracon labelled "Year 40" of Ramses II on the top of the front side and providing a workmen's register for 280 days of the year.

There are twenty-four lines of New Egyptian hieratic on the front and twenty-one lines on the back. A list of forty names is arranged in columns on the right edge of each side, followed to the left by dates written in black in a horizontal line. Above most dates is a word or phrase in red, indicating the reason why this individual was absent from work on that date.

Better knowledge of the ancient corvée (forced labor tax) system can help illuminate this ruse. Archaeologists have discovered a limestone tablet in Egypt that dates to the 40th year of Ramses II, likely the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The tablet is an attendance roster of who was absent for work that year. It lists forty names of workers, the dates they were absent and the reason for the absence. One person can't show up for work because his wife gave birth. Other excuses sound comical ("brewing beer" and "scorpion bit him"). Relevant for us are the people who are absent from work in order to worship their gods or their ancestors.

For example, Sawadjyt is absent from work for two days to give an offering to his god and another three days to offer libations to his dead father.

MAQAM OF THE WEEK

www.pizmonim.com

On **Shabbat Hagadol**, which is the week before the Pesah festival, prayers are conducted in maqam Rahaw (Nawah), according to all Syrian sources. The usage of Maqam Rahaw is associated with this Shabbat, because it is the maqam applied for the Passover Haggadah. Another explanation for this maqam, as per Professor Idelsohn, is because Rahaw was considered the “maqam

of the angels.” This relates to the holiday of Pesah, because the angel of death had passed over the homes of the Israelites. Hazzanut: Semehim: *Emunim Irkhu Shebah* (359). Pizmon Sefer Torah: *Mi Yemallel* (361).

Sephardic Pizmonim Project, www.pizmonim.com

Continued from page 16

We see from this document that corvée workers under Ramses II were regularly allowed to leave work for a few days in order to worship their gods. Moshe’s request, then, was normal and very reasonable. We would not expect Pharaoh to just free his slaves outright, especially in an age when slavery was generally accepted. However, Pharaoh fails to live up to the moral standards even of his own time compared to the way other workers were treated under his command. Hashem tells Moshe to make this request not to deceive Pharaoh—He knew it would not work anyway. Rather, as Rabbi Isaac Arama (Spain, 1420-1494) explains, the goal is to show everyone just how stubborn Pharaoh is that he cannot even give in to a small and routine request.

If Pharaoh can be that ruthless, then he surely deserves all the punishments coming to him. As the Psalmist states (Psalms 18:27-280):

עַם נָכַר תִּתְבָּרַר וְעַם עֲקֹשׁ תִּתְפַּתֵּל, כִּי אַתָּה עִם עֲנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ
וְעֵינַיִם רְמוֹת תִּשְׁפִּיל.

With the pure, You act purely, and with the perverse, You are wily. It is You who deliver lowly folk, but haughty eyes You humble.

Rabbi Dr. Hidary is a Rabbinic Distinguished Rabbinic Fellow at congregation Shearith Israel

<p>טוהור שבת האחול ליל שבת ארפי מקובליו ראובנים חיש למנו זמנו זמנו יוב השבת המלך נשנע ימד כר שלח הללויה מדלל שורו נא נשמת מלא מנשלות לבי שולנת ואנא נאזלא בתדלע ל הו לנרי ואורי תא-ראם קדישו לא אבי מחסוך אשלא נשואים ואלהתם זכה פסח מנצילים הימתני הימתני קדושה לך אזהק בלב נשבר פזמון סת מי מלל עזוז גבורות כת יתנו יתן לשלמא רבא אין כל הינו ממרום קולם מנחת שבת ואני תפלא בית ידו ידו יגל יגל קדושה מקום בנק איפק נשעא מוצאי שבת קדישו תפנכני ליה יא טעא ראובנים לא מלא קנחסי מקפד</p>	<p>פרגט ציו ליל שבת ארפי מקובליו ראובנים חיש למנו זמנו זמנו יוב השבת המלך ליה לה הבה הללויה גוא ולדגא היו נשמת לעיר חנה דירשעה שפועת רם ונבלם ארון עולם לא הו אתה לבכיר רחום נשמך קדישו מגן א צורי מי ידירי נשואים ואמרתם זכרו פסח מנצילים שמתני וזיי תני תורתך יק נשמתני קדושה רואה וכוחן לבב הכל שירי סת מי ימולל עזוז גבורות כת יתנו יתן לשלמא רבא אין כל הינו זקק לא ידו מנחת שבת ואני תפלאי אות לא מלאפת קדושה חביבי הו נשפע לטב מוצאי שבת קדישו יא מלא הנסר ראובנים תפנכני ליה יא סנאדת לא ביה</p>
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1938 and 1939 Hakham Moshe Ashear's Hazzanut Notes for Shabbat Haghadol

<p>לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח</p>	<p>לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח</p>	<p>לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח</p>	<p>לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח לחג הפסח ליום ז של פסח</p>
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Pizmonim for Passover according to Sassoon Manuscript #647, Aleppo, circa 1850.

PHARAOH: THE MODEL TYRANT

Rabbi Meyer Laniado

How did Pharaoh turn the Egyptians against *Bnei Yisrael*? During one generation *Bnei Yisrael* went from guests of honor to a national enemy. Yoseph not only saved Egypt from total starvation and destruction, he turned Egypt into one of the wealthiest and most powerful kingdoms in the region. How can a nation persecute those to whom it once felt indebted? The oppression developed over time through a strategy of propaganda and demonization. Pharaoh was not the last to utilize these tactics to oppress, and there will likely be more. The strategy of Pharaoh, and dictators like him, is clearly described in the first chapter of the book of Shemot.

Pharaoh had a multi-step plan. Firstly, Pharaoh “forgot” the past,¹ actively ignored and erased the contributions of Yoseph and *Bnei Yisrael*. Countries disregarding Jewish contributions took place throughout our history, for example in Germany:

The German Jewish community had contributed a great deal to German society culturally, economically and socially. Many Jews were patriotic Germans, and had sacrificed their lives for their country in WWI. For example, survivor Trude Levi's father fought for Germany during the 1914-1918 conflict and was granted medals for serving the country. In his oral testimony in Topic 1 she describes how her father was told to return his medals and that his Hungarian citizenship had been revoked.²

Mr. Levi fought for the Germans, receiving medals of honor, yet had his medals taken from him and his citizenship withdrawn. After Pharaoh erased the memory of *Bnei Yisrael*'s contributions, he defined *Bnei Yisrael* as “the other.”³ This is exactly what happened in Germany as well:

The Jew is no German. If you say that the Jew is born in Germany...has obeyed German laws has had to become a soldier--has fulfilled all his duties, has paid his taxes, too, then all that is not decisive for nationality, but only the race out of which he was

born is decisive.⁴

Once their contributions were ripped from them, and they were defined as “the other,”⁵ as a separate nation, there would be less resistance to his scheme.⁶ Pharaoh's plan continued to unfold as he then framed *Bnei Yisrael* as not only a separate nation within the land, but as an internal threat, a “fifth column.”⁷

Pharaoh rallied his people around “the Jewish question,” telling them that *Bnei Yisrael* developed their power and wealth from the Egyptians.⁸ Hitler used the same propaganda in his speech on January 30th, 1939:

For hundreds of years Germany was good enough to receive these elements, although they possessed nothing except infectious political and physical diseases. What they possess today, they have by a very large extent gained at the cost of the less astute German nation by the most reprehensible manipulations.

Pharaoh said that something had to be done lest *Bnei Yisrael* rise up and take over the country.⁹ Hitler created similar fears in his country when he said:

The rescue of Europe began at one end of the Continent with Mussolini and Fascism. National Socialism continued this rescue in another part of Europe and at the present moment we are witnessing

⁴ Hermann Ahlwardt, *Speech to Reichstag, 1895* <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=gwKVLCMVIuG&b=394895>

⁵ Hitler defining Jews as the other: http://www.hitler.org/writings/first_writing/

⁶ Ramban Shemot 1:10 also note Hitler's words in a letter to Herr Gemlich noted in footnote 5: “If the threat with which Jewry faces our people has given rise to undeniable hostility on the part of a large section of our people...”

⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/topic/fifth-column>

⁸ *Mimenu* (Shemot 1:9) can be read as from us. The point of them becoming more numerous in the beginning of the chapter is only in relation to their small numbers previously, not in relation to the Egyptian population. In Germany as well, the Jews were only a small percentage of the population, less than 1 percent, hardly the root of all of their social and economic problems. “According to the census of June 1933, the Jewish population of Germany consisted of about 500,000 people. Jews represented less than one percent of the total German population of about 67 million people” <http://www.usmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007687> and many of those had previously converted to other religions

⁹ Shemot 1:10

¹ Shemot 1:8

² <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/testimonies/life/backgd/before.html>

³ Shemot 1:9

in still a third country the same drama of a brave triumph over the Jewish international attempt to destroy European civilization.¹⁰

The Jews had as much intention of taking over Egypt as they did of taking over Europe in the 20th century, none.

The answer to the Jewish Question was in place: forced labor. At this early phase the Egyptians would not harm *Bnei Yisrael* themselves, and Pharaoh could not outright harm *Bnei Yisrael*, but he could oppress them with meaningless labor, eliminating them as a threat. So, he conscripted them as part of a labor tax, and had them build store houses, as opposed to national infrastructure. Labor taxes were normally used to build infrastructure such as irrigation and roads, but Pharaoh solely sought to oppress, and therefore had *Bnei Yisrael* engaged in labor that would not be contributing to society. Eventually, the Egyptian people themselves oppressed *Bnei Yisrael* having become disgusted with them.¹¹

Once the Egyptian people were willing to oppress *Bnei Yisrael*, it was time for Pharaoh to issue his order to the entire nation of Egypt. The nation of Egypt was instructed to kill all newborn Israelite males.¹² This was an open policy, not a secret plan to be implemented only by the midwives.¹³ Finally, the entire populace was turned against *Bnei Yisrael*, and that is why all of Egypt was later punished with the *makkot*.

The oppression and enslavement of *Bnei Yisrael* did not happen overnight. It was a carefully drafted plan:

1. Erase Jewish contributions¹⁴

¹⁰ Hitler's *The Jewish Question* speech, delivered before the Reichstag in Berlin, Germany January 30, 1939.

¹¹ *Shemot* 1:12-13

¹² *Shemot* 1:22

¹³ *Shemot* 1:15

¹⁴ *Shemot* 1:8

2. Define Jews as the other¹⁵

3. Label Jews as a threat¹⁶

4. Establish anti-Jewish governmental laws¹⁷

5. Have populace become disgusted by Jews and join in embittering their lives¹⁸

6. The populace is empowered to take up arms against the Jews.¹⁹

The lesson in the first chapter of *Shemot* is to be aware

of the rise of a tyrant and his plans of oppression before it is too late. *Bnei Yisrael* saw themselves as Egyptians and never thought it possible that the populace would turn against them, the same way the German Jews saw themselves as German and never thought they would find themselves stripped of their citizenship with their one time friends as enemies. Our Torah's telling of our history, such as the enslavement of *Bnei Yisrael* in Egypt, is not solely to record of our history, but to guide us for our future.



Pharaoh Notes the Importance of the Jewish People, by James Jacques Joseph Tissot (France, 1836-1902)

Hag Sameah,

Rabbi Laniado is a Rabbi at Congregation Magen David of West Deal and Hillel Yeshiva High School.

¹⁵ *Shemot* 1:9

¹⁶ *Shemot* 1:10

¹⁷ *Shemot* 1:11

¹⁸ *Shemot* 1:12-14

¹⁹ *Shemot* 1:22



Israel Spotlight

CHANGING THE WAY WE EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN ABOUT ISRAEL AND JUDAISM

Rabbi Raphael Shore

Gabriel Goldstein is a sophomore studying Psychology and Politics at Brandeis University.

At school, he was groomed and trained to be a pro-Israel activist leader on campus. Intelligent, eloquent and confident, Gabriel thought he was ready for the task.

Little did he know.

Once he got to campus, he realized all he had been taught was insufficient, misleading, and narrowly one-sided. Certainly far too superficial and sugar-coated to confront the slick and sophisticated BDS hate campaigns on campus.

As he says:

These people have twice the knowledge your average day-schooler does. They understand the right, the left, and the grey area between the two poles. Simply put, they're faster, stronger, and smarter than many of the robotic activists being pumped out of the pro-Israel establishment.

This is one of the primary concerns of the SCA and the larger Jewish community. How are our kids going to cope with anti-Israel activity on campus? Has the partisan, pro-Israel education they have received equipped them with all they need to remain proud Jews and staunch pro-Israel advocates? Are our yeshivahs and high schools giving them all they need?

Well no, according to Goldstein: "If the pro-Israel establishment wants to breed activists truly equipped for the war that awaits them on college campuses, it must

reconstruct its training programs. It must incorporate narratives from both sides and lay the facts on the table."

Jerusalem U is building such programs.

Through story-based, nuanced films and videos, we educate audiences about Israel and Judaism. We don't gloss over the problems and faults, but we do present a broad view of Israel and talk about narratives from both sides of the conflict.

And we're doing it through the most powerful media available today.

In a world where close to 100% of young Jews have access to smartphones, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Netflix, and many more visual media,

the key to Jewish engagement and education is just a screen away.

And that's why we're leveraging film to spark a new conversation about Israel, connect our youngsters to an Israel and Judaism they can feel proud of, and train leaders who are open-minded, deeply knowledgeable, and skilled in effective activist techniques.

For example, our latest film course is called *Step Up On Campus: How to Stand Up to Anti-Israel Activity*.

It discusses what students can do in various campus scenarios, and includes three short animated "What Would You Do?" films, activity/discussion guides, and other resources.

"How are our kids going to cope with anti-Israel activity on campus?"

Another of our recent video classes, *Media 101: Reading Between the Lines*, addresses the very timely issue of anti-Israel media bias – what it is, how to identify different types of bias, and – most importantly – what you can do about it.

And our new mini-documentary, *Mekonen: The Journey of an African Jew*, spotlights an Ethiopian-born commander in the IDF Paratroopers Brigade. The film accompanies him back to Africa and tells how he rose to become an officer despite the difficulties of being part of a minority group in Israel.

Because when you confront the issues head on, present both sides of the argument and in a language and through a media that speaks to today's younger generation, it works!

- After watching *Crossing the Line 2: The New Face of Anti-Semitism on Campus*, 73% of viewers said they are now informed and aware of anti-Israel activities on campus.
- 94% of our 900 Jerusalem U Israel gap year alumni say they now have the tools to defend Israel.
- 92% of high school students were inspired by *Beneath the Helmet*, our coming-of-age story about five young IDF recruits.

No, Israel education is not easy and there are big and ugly questions to answer. But we cannot just ignore them and sweep them under the carpet. We must teach our children to be open-minded and give them a bigger, broader, and more rounded picture of modern Israel. We must help them to develop the critical thinking skills they'll need to discern fact from fiction or misleading information.

This also helps them formulate a stronger, more confident Jewish identity.

We salute organizations like the SCA for recognizing the break in mainstream Israel education and stepping up to do something about it. Particular thanks to Chuck Mamiye, Murray Mizrachi, and Hymie Shamah for making the connection between us and the Community, and helping to make it work.

Thanks to you and our other partners in over 700 Jewish organizations and communities, our cutting edge education is making an impact on the younger generation – engaging them with cool, relevant content, educating them with comprehensive knowledge and in-depth answers, and empowering them to think critically before stepping up for Israel and the Jewish people.

Preparing them properly for the realities they're likely to face on campus.

Let's face it. Our children are always on their screens anyway.



Let's give them something worth watching.

To screen a Jerusalem U film contact qahalnewsletter@gmail.com.

Rabbi Shore is CEO and founder of Jerusalem U. He is the producer of Mekonen: The Journey of an African Jew; Crossing the Line; Israel Inside: How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference; Beneath the Helmet and several other films.



PESAH YERUSHALAYIM, 1949: THE FIRST EVER PESAH IN THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL

Hakham Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel A"H

This¹ year we have designated Pesah as “*Pesah Yerushalayim*” (The Jerusalem Passover), as this marks the very first year that we celebrate the festival of freedom as a truly free people in our land, and especially in our Holy City of Jerusalem. In addition to all of the traditional symbols of freedom associated with Pesah -- such as reclining and drinking the 4 cups of wine symbolic of our past and future redemption -- this year we express our freedom on Pesah by celebrating the holiday in a Jerusalem that is no longer threatened by enemies and is no longer under siege (as it was just last year). We celebrate our freedom through the wonderful victories and heroism of our soldiers, who are armed with both spiritual faith and physical strength. This year, we celebrate our freedom by expressing our national independence in our newly established “State of Israel,” which, in addition to providing shelter and independence for our people, gives us elevated political and economic status amongst the nations of the world. By witnessing all of these miracles before our eyes this past year, we feel the depth of complete independence and freedom that God has once again given us, and we especially feel all of this through the spiritual merit of our holy city of Jerusalem.

In every generation, the enemies of Israel cast their eyes on Jerusalem, seeking to destroy her walls and exile her people. They knew that emptying

Jerusalem of her children would destroy the spirit of Israel, and would lead to the conquest of the entire Land of Israel. This was the case during the destruction of both the First and Second Temple, and during the Bar-Kochba revolt. This was also the case in our generation, as the enemies of Israel cast their eyes on Jerusalem and her Jewish inhabitants, seeking to demoralize both the city and her people, attempting to bring them to their knees in humiliating surrender. But Jerusalem stood firm like a solid rock, even during the most awful days that threatened her existence.

Just a year ago on Pesah, under extreme conditions, we prepared and celebrated the *seder*. By the same merit that our ancestors were redeemed in Egypt, we, the people of Jerusalem, were also redeemed, and our redemption spread out all across the land. So here we are today, one year later, celebrating Pesah in Jerusalem, this time with joy and happiness.

Our joy is tempered by the fact that Jerusalem “within the walls” (The Old City) lies in ruins, emptied of her Jewish people, with the Kotel standing alone. This breaks our hearts, and we will never feel comforted until the day comes when we merit

to return to the sacred Old City, which is the eternal capital of the State of Israel.



An Israeli stamp commemorating Rabbi Uziel

¹ Translated from the Hebrew original by Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, Director of the Sephardic Educational Center.

Despite this, we nevertheless rejoice on the establishment of the “New Jerusalem” that we currently live in by the

good grace of God, secure from the threat of the enemy.

Let us now rejoice on this Pesah, the holiday of freedom, and let us celebrate it with aspirations that peace and justice reign throughout our land. Let us together lift our voices to God and pray:

Lord our God, give strength to our army, spread over them the tabernacle of peace and save them from all enemies. Endow our state and leaders with wisdom, understanding and strength, bring peace in our land and in the world, and establish the Kingdom of David in your holy city of Jerusalem.



Bring freedom and redemption to our Jewish brethren in Arab lands, save them from the hands of their oppressors, and bring them home to their land together with all Jews dispersed in the diaspora.

As we celebrate Pesah this year in our newly liberated City of Jerusalem, next year, may we merit celebrating Pesah in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, with great joy, happiness and songs of praise to God, Amen.

Hakham Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel A"H was the last Hakham Bashi of the Ottoman Empire, the first Rishon Lesion of the

State of Israel, and the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Medinat Yisrael

Comments? Questions?

Write us by sending an email to Qol Ha-Qahal

QAHALNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM



From The Archives

PASSOVER: THE HOLIDAY OF OUR FREEDOM

Mr. Sam Catton A"H

The first of our festivals is the Holiday of Passover in which God showed His might in Egypt for the sake of His preferred people. We were lowly slaves in the land of Egypt and our enslavers were desirous of destroying our existence as a Nation.

The Almighty did not forget His promise to Abraham and with his great power, redeemed us from our slavery in Egypt.

The observance of this Holiday has many aspects which are very well-known. The first of which is to recite the Haggadah, in which we tell the story of our miraculous delivery from Egypt to our children in order to establish

for all generations to come the basis of our faith in God, and the reason of our existence as a free people. Only "Kosher for Passover" foods and beverages may be consumed or even present in our households.

As we came out of Egypt some 3,400 years ago, the sun of freedom broke out and shined upon us. It was truly the miracle of all time. The Talmud states that "in the month of Nissan we were redeemed and we will once again be redeemed in this same month." May the Almighty hasten that day.

Passover, the Festival of Massot, begins on 15 Nissan.

פזמונים של פסח
 לרבי אהרן כהן ז"ל

אמונים

ערכו שבח לאל וטבחו טבח
 וְאִמְרָתָם זָבַח פֶּסַח הוּא לֵינוּ
 תְּרִימוּ קוֹל שִׁירִים וְשִׁמְחוּ בַּלַּיִל שְׂמֹרִים עַל
 מִצּוֹת זְמֵרִים אֲכָלוּ וְשָׂתוּ יַיִן וְאִמְרָתָם
 רִאשׁוֹן לְכֹל רֵאשׁוֹנִים עַל יַד צִוְרֵי אֲמוֹנִים מִיָּד
 כָּל מַעֲנִים תִּצְוֶה אֶת זְמֹנֵינוּ וְאִמְרָתָם
 נָשִׂי אֵל זְכָרֵינוּ וְחִסְדֵינוּ סִפְרֵנוּ עֲתֵה יַדְעָמֵינוּ כִּי
 גִדּוֹל יְיָ וְאִמְרָתָם
 בְּכֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיִם מִגִּשְׁתּוֹ וְאִפְרִים יִצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם
 כָּל צְבָאוֹת יְיָ וְאִמְרָתָם
 חֲנֻחֵל אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ לְעַמּוֹ וְעֲרֵחוֹ שׁוֹמְרֵי סִעְוָתוֹ
 עִם נוֹשַׁע בְּיָדוֹ וְאִמְרָתָם
 נִפְלְאוֹת מַעֲשֵׂיךָ וְעֲצוֹמִים נִסֵּיךָ יִאֲמְרוּ כָּל חוֹסְיֵיךָ
 טוֹב לְחַסֹּת בְּיָדוֹ וְאִמְרָתָם

The Pizmon "Emunim" from the 1527 Mahzor Aram Soba



Young Adult
ALL FOR ONE
BAKE SALE



Sephardic History

NEVER FORGET OUR NOBLE HERITAGE

NUNCA OLVIDES MUESTRA HISTORIA DESTINGUIDA

נונכה אולבידיס מואיסטרה איסטוריה דיסטינגיידה

Mr. Sheldon N. Goldman

Chapter 17: The Omayyads Rise Again

During the rule of Ramiro II of Leon, Abd ar-Rahman III made periodic raids on his Christian kingdom. After Ramiro's death in 951 these raids became even more frequent. Old Castile under the rule of Count Fernan Gonzalez was a vassal dukedom of Leon now under the rule of Ordono III. In July of 955 Abd ar-Rahman III attacked a fortress in Castile with the Christian's suffering heavy losses. Ordono III and Count Fernan Gonzalez retaliated, winning a victory at San Esteban de Gormaz on the Duero River in the Kingdom of Leon. After this victory Ordono III thought it was time to stop the fighting. He sent envoys to Abd ar-Rahman III in Cordova in 955 proposing a truce. Abd ar-Rahman was favorably inclined to enter a peace treaty because he himself planned an offensive against the Fatimides in North Africa and this would free his hands.

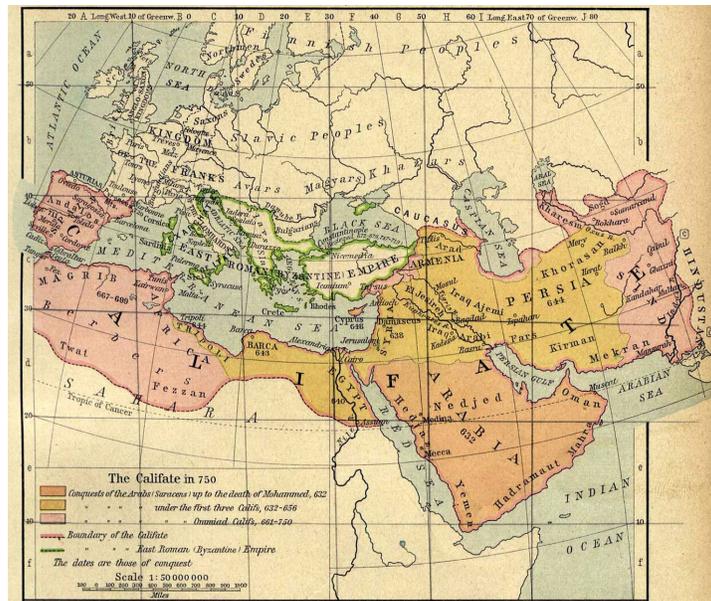
In 956 the Caliph sent a mission to King Ordono III which included Muhammad b. Husain and Hasdai ibn Shaprut. They quickly worked out a peace pact and they brought back with them to Cordova some emissaries from the King of Leon. Abd ar-Rahman III had his son al-Hakam review the pact and it was approved. The Duke of Castile, Fernan Gonzalez, immediately followed suit and also entered into a treaty

with the Muslims of Cordova.

Unexpectedly, King Ordono III died in the spring of 957. He was succeeded by his extremely fat brother Sancho I who refused to honor the peace pact. This resulted in Abd ar-Rahman III initiating an invasion of Leon. This caused havoc in Leon. The nobles of Leon were unhappy with Sancho's rejection of the treaty. They thought it was foolish on his part and brought about terrible consequences. They considered him fat and dumb and they wanted to rid themselves of him. They convinced

the Duke of Castile to take steps to dethrone him and this he successfully did. Sancho was succeeded by Ordono IV. Sancho I ran off to Pamplona in Navarra to complain to his grandmother Queen Toda who was mother of his uncle King Garcia of Navarra. Queen Toda was ambitious for her grandson Sancho I and she decided to do everything necessary to return him to power, even if she had to humble herself. Queen Toda realized that the first thing she had to

do was to get Sancho I to lose weight and trim down so that the subjects would not make fun of him. She also realized that the army of Navarra was too weak to battle the nobles of Leon and Castile. She needed a strong ally. For this she turned to Abd ar-Rahman III. Again Hasdai ibn Shaprut was called upon by the Caliph. This time he was called upon to serve both as a diplomat and as a



Umayyad Caliphate in 750

physician. He was sent with sufficient troops to invade Leon.

The objective of Abd ar-Rahman III was to bring to power in Leon a Christian king with whom he could work and even control. Acting as a physician, Hasdai ibn Shaprut convinced Queen Toda that he could help Sancho I lose weight more effectively in Cordova. Acting as a diplomat he convinced the queen that she and the Caliph could hammer out an agreement more acceptable to her if she did her negotiations in Cordova. Queen Toda reluctantly accepted Hasdai's proposals. She arrived in Cordova in 958. This was viewed as an outstanding diplomatic victory for Hasdai ibn Shaprut and for Cordova when such a royal personage humbles herself by such a visit. Sancho I, Queen Toda, Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III, and Hasdai ibn Shaprut came to the following agreement: Sancho promised to give the Caliph ten fortresses in Leon. Queen Toda promised to make available the Navarra army when the Caliph

attacked Leon. She had agreed to attack Castile while the Caliph would invade Leon. They thought this would distract Count Fernan Gonzalez, and cause his defeat. Hasdai the physician carried out his promise to Queen Toda. He turned Sancho I into a new person, lean and alert, the way he had once been.

In 959 Abd ar-Rahman III penetrated Leon. Ordone IV was forced to flee to Asturias. By 960 Leon was securely in the hands of Sancho I, the Christian king under the control of Abd ar-Rahman III, the Muslim caliph.

Mr. Goldman is a retired Chemical Engineer who is a member of Congregations Beth Torah and Kol Israel. From 1978 through 1992 he was the Editor of the Beth Torah Bulletin. He was Secretary of Beth Torah from 1980 through 1995 and is still the Editor of the Beth Torah Calendar.

UPCOMING COMMUNITY LECTURES:

*College and Young Professionals
Yom Haasmot Event: May 12*

Into the Wilderness Young Adult Hike: May 15

NORPAC Mission to Washington, D.C.: May 19

Young Adult Lag La'omer BBQ night: May 25

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ROCK OUT WITH ISRAEL

YOM HA'ASMAUT

THURSDAY, MAY 12TH

7:00PM

18+ COLLEGE/ YOUNG PROFESSIONAL

MP TAVERNA

**31-29 DITMARS BOULEVARD,
WILLIAMSBURG BROOKLYN**

- ▲ PERFORMANCES BY ANBESSA ORCHESTRA, MILK & HONEY
- ▲ ART BY ISRAELI ARTIST HISTORY
- ▲ A SELECTION OF 70 LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CRAFT BEERS
- ▲ HORS D'OEUVRES

TICKETS:

PRESALE THROUGH MAY 1ST \$26

PRESALE THROUGH MAY 12TH \$36

DOOR \$52

INCLUDES DINNER & DRINK

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