

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

## PESAH

APRIL 22-30, 2016 15-22 NISAN 5776

**DEDICATIONS: In memory of Yosef Ben Rachel and Yosef ben Esther**

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### Editors Notes

#### BeChol Dor VaDor – In Every Generation

A couple of weeks ago I put onto paper an imaginary trip down memory lane to Passover in 1925, to the table of my great grandfather Joseph Bibi, to the birth of my father in the room next door and to the image of grandfather holding his newborn namesake in his hands. I received a tremendous amount of feedback and much of it had to do with your own Passover memories or stories you heard from your own grandparents.

Rabbi Abittan taught us of the importance of memory. In fact The Jewish people are a people of memory. The Zohar tells of a place in Heaven called the chamber of memory which I understand to be a place of connections. It is related to Yosef HaSadik, to Joseph, and is the secret of his success. Joseph binds Heaven with Earth and Hashem with the people. The Sefirah of Yesod, the Sefirah which binds above and below is forever linked to Joseph. And the secret of the bond is in memory.

The Rabbi once commented that although there is often a great deal of variation in Jewish liturgy depending on the community, for some strange reason, the Hagadah that we use whether we hail from Spain or Poland, from Syria or Russia, from Italy or Babylon is with some slight exceptions almost exactly the same. The Jewish people are bound together through a shared collective narrative, today often represented by the one Holiday that brings Jews of all walks of life to the table. It is Passover more than any other day on the calendar and the story which binds us. Certainly through some Divine intervention, the Hagadah has been preserved having been developed by its unknown author through stories, teachings and rituals.

Memory is crucial to our practice of religion. The rabbis list ten archetypical Biblical events which the Torah commands every Jew to remember and which we try to enumerate daily. (See this week's

newsletter for the list of ten) The first of which is, The Exodus from Egypt. Rabbi Shalom Arush explains this as the commandment to "remember Hashem's loving-kindness and all the miracles and wonders that He performed when He redeemed the Jewish people from slavery, made us a nation, gave us the Torah, and more. The remembrance of the exodus from Egypt is the fundamental remembrance upon which all others and our entire existence as a nation are founded. As such, every person must thank G-d for the exodus from Egypt with all his heart, and then imagine himself being redeemed from Egypt and say to G-d: "Thank You very much, G-d, for taking us out of Egypt. Thank You for splitting the Red Sea for us. Thank You for accompanying us through the desert with the seven clouds of glory. Thank You!"

This is something we should spend at least a moment on every single day. But given the reality that so many of us don't, we have the night of Passover where we come together and through the Matzah, the wine, the songs, the stories, we are commanded to remember and tell the story.

But not only that story, we sing in the Hagadah - Vehi sheamda lavotenu velanu - The promise made to our forefathers holds also for us. Shelo echad bilvad 'amad 'alenu lechalotenu - For not just one enemy has risen against us to destroy us. Ella shebechol dor vador 'omdim 'alenu lechalotenu - But in every generation they rise against us to destroy us. Ve haKadosh Baruch Hu matzilenu mi-yadam - And the Holy One Blessed Be He saves us from their hands.

We must tell our own stories and the stories we heard from our ancestors of our own personal exoduses, our own salvations, our own miracles, our own recognition of the Almighty and our own pronouncements of appreciation.

Prepare your stories and tell them over.

I would like to close with this. In Florida, we pray in a beautiful Synagogue built by the Carye family. When I am there for Shabbat, I often pray with a man who inspires me to no end. His name is Sam Domb and I have tremendous hakarat hatov for him as when the many communities were suffering after Superstorm Sandy, it was Sam who stepped up with a half million dollar donation and it was he who inspired so many others to give. But it is more than his charitable acts

which inspire. It's his amazing life story told in the book, "He Hath Not Let Me Die".

Quoting from the introduction, "Sam's book tells how the Nazis made his Polish town, Poltosk, judenrein (free of Jews). The Nazis drove Sam, then five years old, and his father, mother and three sisters and all the Jews out of Poltosk. As his mother was carrying Sam, she stumbled and was immediately shot. His father knew if he stopped to help, the entire family would be killed. He grabbed Sam, and without looking back, continued the march."

In the forest, he stood in the second row of a group of Jews shot on the edge of a pit. A 10 year old boy grabbed Sam's shirt sleeve and pulled him aside. "We ran into the nearby forest and the Nazis shot at us but we survived."

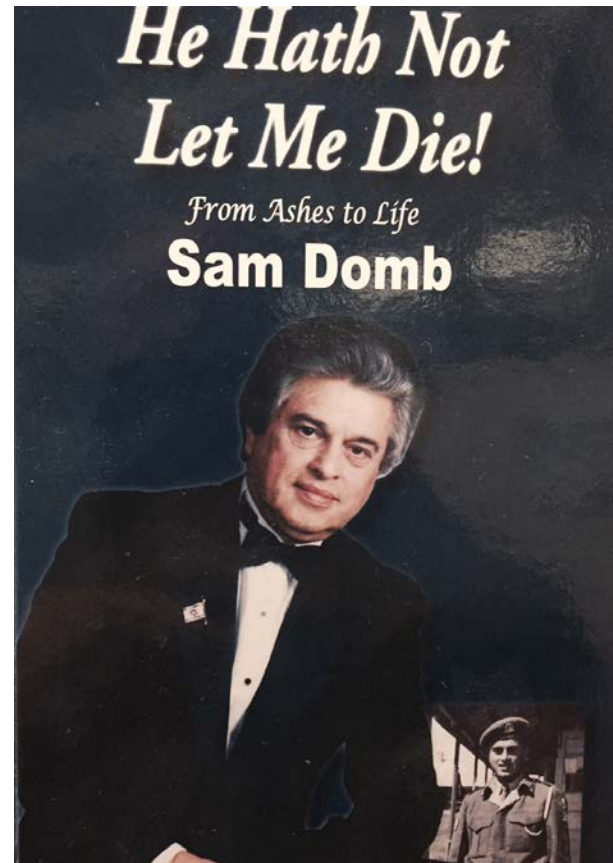
To this day, Sam does not know the name of that boy, but calls him a malach, (angel). Sam was compelled to flee and wander along arduous paths, starving, thirsty, hiding out in basements and crevices, in forests, beneath bridges and between corn stalks, utterly destitute.

But he survived. Sam came to Israel as a refugee youth, spent a few years on Kibbutz Hanita, served in the Israel Defense Forces and was injured in the Sinai Campaign when the jeep in which he was riding ran over a mine. In the early 1960s, Sam came to New York to visit his sister, the only other member of his family who survived the Holocaust. "That visit," says Domb, "has lasted until today."

"Starting out as a dishwasher, when he arrived in the United States, he eventually became the owner of a hotel chain in New York. In the process, he befriended many local and national political leaders and became a confidante to numerous Israeli prime ministers who sought his advice and support. Mr. Domb is a passionate advocate for Jewish issues around the world".

To Read Sam's book, visit [SamDomb.com](http://SamDomb.com) where you can read it on line or download chapters as published in Image Magazine.

Sam's story is truly part of our National Memory housed in Bechol Dor VaDor, in every generation. You have a story too! What is it? Don't forget to tell it over!



### The Ten Remembrances

**Ingratitude is a manifestation of the dark-side spiritual force of Amalek. The main point of the commandment to remember Amalek is to remember to thank Hashem for everything...**

**By: Rabbi Shalom Arush  
Translated by Rabbi Lazer Brody**

The Torah commands every Jew to remember ten archetypical Biblical events. Not only are we commanded to remember them, but we must remember the loving-kindness that G-d showered upon us in each of these events and thank Him for it.

The following short commentary on the Ten Remembrances should help us to focus on what miracles to thank G-d for when we recite the verses:

1. The Exodus from Egypt – To remember Hashem's loving-kindness and all the miracles and wonders that He performed when He redeemed the Jewish people from slavery, made us a nation, gave us the Torah, and more. The remembrance of the exodus from Egypt is the fundamental remembrance upon which all others and our entire existence as a nation are founded. As such, every person must thank G-d for the exodus from Egypt with all his heart, and then imagine himself being redeemed from Egypt and say

to G-d: "Thank You very much, G-d, for taking us out of Egypt. Thank You for splitting the Red Sea for us. Thank You for accompanying us through the desert with the seven clouds of glory. Thank You!"

2. Shabbat – We must thank Hashem every day for Shabbat. G-d told Moses, "I have a fine gift stored in My treasure house, and Shabbat is its name, go and tell them (Israel)." We must thank G-d every day for Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. How can we not say thank you for such wonderful gifts? True, we can never thank G-d enough for these gifts, but at least we should be grateful every day.

3. Manna – We must thank G-d for the manna, the Heaven-sent bread that He fed us in the desert, for the quail and for the well of water that accompanied Israel throughout their desert trek. Not only did the manna fall from the heavens to feed Israel on a daily basis, but it also brought abundance down to earth with it. When we thank G-d for the manna, we should also thank Him for the sustenance that G-d provides for us every hour of every day. We must also strengthen ourselves with faith and confidence that it is G-d Who provides our sustenance. We must know that it is G-d's job to provide and man's job to serve Him and if necessary, G-d will once again shower us with manna from heaven.

4. Amalek - Amalek first attacked Israel when they asked a question that stemmed from ingratitude: "Is G-d in our midst or not?" A person who is not an ingrate sees Hashem's loving-kindness every moment and would never ask such a question. When reciting this remembrance we should focus on belief that G-d protects and watches over us constantly. He is always with us, showering us with His goodness. We should never ask if G-d is in our midst or not. Instead, we should always see His goodness and thank Him for His boundless kindness.

Ingratitude is a manifestation of the dark-side spiritual force of Amalek. The main point of the commandment to remember Amalek is to remember not to be ungrateful and to thank G-d for everything. To erase the memory of Amalek means to erase our ungratefulness and complaints. Every time that we remember Amalek we should focus on not being ungrateful. By blotting out the ingratitude in our character, we blot out Amalek.

5. Receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai – We must thank Hashem for the Torah every day! We can never thank G-d enough for the Torah, but at least we should thank Him daily and say: "Thank You, G-d for giving us the holy Torah at Mount Sinai and thank

You for the commandments that we receive anew every day."

6. Angering G-d in the desert, particularly with the Golden Calf - One way to understand this remembrance is that we must thank Hashem for His patience, especially for the fact that He did not pour out His wrath upon us, but rather divided the punishment for the Golden Calf into smaller installments. We must also thank G-d for His patience with us now and say: "Thank You, G-d, for Your patience with all my sins and for the fact that You still love me."

The main point of this remembrance is to recall how much we angered G-d with our unnecessary crying and complaints from the very beginning of the redemption from Egypt, as the Torah testifies: "Remember, do not forget how you angered Hashem your G-d in the desert from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against G-d" (Deuteronomy, 9:7).

7. Hashem's foiling of Balak and Bilam's plot against our ancestors, so that we may know His righteousness – Clearly, we must remember G-d's loving-kindness and goodness; how He protects us from our enemies' plots minute by minute, even without our awareness. Balak and Bilam circled the Camp of Israel, looking for a way to carry out their evil plot, while the Nation of Israel did not even know the great danger that it was facing.

With this remembrance in mind, we must thank Hashem, Who alters nature in order to save His nation, as in the desert. Thanks to Divine intervention, neither Balak's sorcery nor Bilam's curses had any effect on Israel.

Surely we must thank the Creator for everything that He does for us every moment, even when we have no idea what our enemies are planning against us. In every generation a new enemy rises to destroy us, and the Holy One, Blessed be He saves us from their grasp.

8. Miriam the Prophetess in the desert – We must remember that Hashem gave us our mouths and the power of speech for the purpose of thanking Him, as it is written: "I have formed this nation for Myself, so that they may tell My praise" (Isaiah, 43:21). Immediately before reciting the Amidah prayer, we say: "G-d, open my lips so that my mouth may tell of your praises." We certainly do not want Hashem to open our lips and mouths so that we can complain, cry and speak ill of others.

9. G-d gives us strength to succeed – We must thank Hashem for all of our successes in every facet of our lives. We must not be ungrateful or arrogant, thinking that our achievements are due to our personal prowess.

10. Jerusalem – We must remember why Jerusalem was destroyed - the needless crying that resulted in the destruction of the two Holy Temples – for which we still cry to this very day.

In summary, all the remembrances teach us to develop our gratitude. If we remember all the kindness that Hashem performed for our ancestors, we will certainly remember the kindness that He has performed for each one of us individually. We can also add our own personal remembrances and thank Him daily for significant blessings in our lives. For example, a husband can thank G-d for his wife, the wife for her husband, both of them for their parents, their children, and their rabbi, and so forth.

For fifteen years, the Seer from Lublin spent an hour a day thanking G-d for bringing the soul of his mentor Rabbi Elimelech of Litzansk down to this world. Fifteen years! We must thank G-d all day long for the tzaddikim who bring us close to Him. When I heard this story about the Seer from Lublin, may his blessed memory intercede on our behalf, it became even clearer to me how much we must thank Hashem for the tzaddikim who illuminate our path.

### **Pesach - Fulfilling the mitsvah of the maggid Thank You Nathan**

Below are the facts about the makot that are stated explicitly in the Torah. Sometimes it gives us hizuk to know that certain aspects of the miracles are told to us specifically in the pesookim. Further, the Rambam writes that the main mitsvah of the maggid is to speak about the miracles that Hashem did for us and to feel as if we ourselves left Mitsrayim. Thus, below we have some of the details about the makot that we can speak out on the seder table and elaborate on to try and fulfill the mitzvah of feeling as if we ourselves left Mitsrayim.

#### **Dam**

- All the water in the river, canals, ponds, and all gatherings of water changed to blood
- There was blood in all of Mitsrayim. Even in the etsim (wood) and abanim (stone). We have to understand what this means.

- The fish died. The river became putrid (Imagine the terrible smell of rotten fish everywhere).
- The Mitsrim could not drink water from the river (i.e., they had no water to drink).
- There was blood throughout the land
- The Mitsrim dug all of Egypt around the river for water to drink since they could not find any water
- The Maka lasted for 7 days

#### **Sefardeyah**

- The river was swarmed with frogs
- The frogs ascended from the river into their homes and rooms where they slept, and onto their beds, and into their ovens and into their kneading bowls.
- The frogs went "**into them**" (we have to understand what this means. Sounds like they went into their bodies. They went in through the openings in their bodies).
- The sefardeyah (in singular) ascended and covered the land (the pasook says **sefardeya** in singular and not sefardeyim in plural. This is the source in the text for the midrash that says there was one frog and that when they hit it it multiplied).
- Moshe prayed to remove the frogs and all the frogs in all the houses and courtyards and fields died (sounds like they all died in one day).
- They gathered all the dead frogs into piles and piles and the smell was putrid.

#### **Kinim**

- There was kinim throughout the land
- The lice swarmed on all the people and animals
- All the dirt in the land of Mitsrayim turned to lice (seems like there was no dirt! It was all lice. The whole ground was lice. Every step you take is on lice).

#### **Arov**

- Wild beasts filled their houses
- Wild beasts came and they filled their houses "and also the land they were on" (this is the source in the text for the midrash that says the animals came "with the land they were on". The midrash explains that not only were the animals transported to Mitsrayim but the very land they were on was transported as well. For instance, the bear came with its jungle environment and the polar bear came with it's environment of cold weather and ice).

- Hashem set apart eretz goshen (where the Jews lived) and no arov came to that area
- The swarm of beasts was kabad (severe). The arbeh came in Paroah's house, his servants' house and throughout all of erets Mitsrayim and tishachet (devastated) was the land from the arov
- Moshe prayed and Hashem removed the arov from Paroah, his servants and his people. Not one arov remained! (Hashem did not leave over the animals so the Mitsrim would not benefit from the carcasses).

### Dever

- There was a severe epidemic on their livestock in their field, their horses, their donkeys, their camels, their cattle, and their sheep.
- Hashem distinguished between the livestock of the Jews and the livestock of the Mitsrim. Despite animals dying everywhere, the Torah says "ve'lo yamoot mikol libney Yisrael davar", not one Jewish animal died during the plague.
- Va'yamat **kol** mikneh Mitsrayim. "**All**" the livestock of the Mitsrim died (imagine what a financial loss this must have been).

### Shechin

- Moshe throws "piach kivshan" (soot of a furnace) into the air. It became like dust and spread throughout the entire land of Mitsrayim.
- It landed on people and animals and as a result "shechin porech ababoo'ot" boils erupting into blisters developed. And this was throughout the land.
- The hartoomim could not stand before Moshe because of the boils. There were boils on the hartoomim and upon all of Mitsrayim.

### Barad

- Hashem rained a very heavy hail on Mitsrayim. It was a hail that was so severe that there was never a hail like this in Mitsrayim ever since the day it was founded.
- Moshe stretched out his stick to the shamayim and Hashem sent thunder, hail, ve'tihalach esh (and darting fire) from the sky. Hashem rained hail on eretz Mitsrayim
- There was hail and esh mitlakachat betoch ha'barad (there was a flaming fire inside the hail).
- The hail struck the entire land of Mitsrayim and everything that was in the field from people to animals, and the barad struck all

the grass of the field ve'kol etz ha'sadeh shibar (and **every** tree of the field it smashed).

- **Note:** Can you imagine! There was not one tree standing in all of Mitsrayim. Imagine fallen trees everywhere. By hurricane Sandy if a few trees on a block fell it was a lot. Imagine every single tree fell. The trees probably smashed houses left and right.
- Of all eretz Mitsrayim only in eretz Goshen (where the Jews lived) there was no barad.
  - **Note:** Imagine its pouring rain and ten feet later where the street sign says you are now entering the town of Goshen, no rain, no fire, no thunder, and not a single tree down. Amazing.
- The flax and the barley were struck
- Moshe told Paroah when I will spread out my hands to shamayim and the thunder and hail will stop so that you know to Hashem belongs the earth. Moshe spread out his hands to Hashem and the thunder, hail, and rain "**lo nitach artsa**", did not come down to the earth (it sounds from these words that even the hail that was in mid-air did not come down to earth and rather it stopped in its place).

### Arbeh

- The arbeh filled the houses of Paroah, the houses of his servants, and all the houses of Mitsrayim.
- Hashem guided a wind from the east through the land all day and all night. In the morning, the eastern wind carried in a swarm of locusts.
- An extremely severe locust swarm came up over the entire land of Mitsrayim and it rested in the entire border of Mitsrayim.
- The locust swarm was so bad that there was never such a locust swarm before this time and there will never be one so bad like this in the future (i.e., it was the greatest locust infestation in the history of mankind).
- The arbeh covered the face of all the land **va'techshach ha'aretz** (and darkened the land).
- The locusts ate all the grass of the land and fruit of the tree that the barad left over. And there was no greenery left, nor grass, nor trees, in the entire land of Mitsrayim (imagine, there was no greenery left in all of Mitsrayim!).

- Hashem brought a very powerful westward wind that carried the arbeh toward the yam Suf va'yitka'ehu Yama Suf (and plunged the arbeh into the ocean). And not one arbeh remained in all or eretz Mitsrayim.

### Hoshech

- Va'yamesh hoshech (it was a darkness that could be felt). There are different explanations of how to explain these words.
- There was a **hoshech afela** in all of eretz Mitsrayim for 3 days.
- People could not see one another
- People could not move from their place for 3 days (they were stuck were they were). But all of Benei Israel had light in all their dwellings.

### Makat Bechorot

- Exactly at hasot ha'layla (midnight) every bechor of Mitsrayim died, from the bechor of Paroah to the bechor of the maidservant.
- Every bechor animal died
- There was saaka gedola, a loud outcry, in all of Mitsrayim like there had never been before and never will be again. There was not a house that did not have in it a person that died.
- Not one Jewish person or Jewish owned animal died

Note, some of the items mentioned above are things that Moshe warned Paroah would happen. The Torah then says Moshe brought the maka without repeating all the specifics and thus we concluded that these specifics happened as Moshe warned they would.

### **FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER**

“And I said to you: Live by your blood, live by your blood.” (Haggadah shel Pesah – Yechezkel 16:6)

In the song of Dayenu in the Haggadah we say, “Even if Hashem had only brought us to Mount Sinai without giving us the Torah, that itself would have sufficed to feel indebted to Him.” These are familiar words, but their meaning remains unclear. What lasting benefit would we have gained from merely standing in the presence of Har Sinai?

On the verse “Hashem miSinai ba” (Debarim 33:2) our Sages ask, what was the origin of Mount Sinai? They answer that initially it was part of the peak upon which our ancestor Yitzhak was bound for the Akedah. It was part of Mt. Moriah. Hashem then decided that such a mountain would be the ideal location to give the Torah nearly four hundred years

later. Therefore, a section was moved to the wilderness for the Revelation (Yalkut Eliezer).

The implication is unmistakable. Hashem was teaching Israel that in order to remain faithful to their tradition a vital prerequisite was a willingness to emulate Yitzhak, to submit completely to the wishes of Hashem come what may. Hence, merely to stand in front of that mountain and ponder upon its message was itself of great value even without receiving the actual details of the Torah.

On reflection, it could well be that our attachment to religion nowadays is weaker than that of our grandparents for that very reason. Previous generations had to fight and make sacrifices for their beliefs, and this fortified their observance. We, however, are not tested to the same extent, leaving us less resolute and more vulnerable.

Perhaps therein lies the reason why Pesah always held a special place in most Jewish homes. Pesah is observed to a degree by every family and retains a favored place in the Jewish calendar. The explanation must surely be that it is the festival that taxes us most! The work needed to clean the house properly beforehand, the disruption of our staple diet, the extra expense on food, pots and cooking utensils, all these challenges negotiated over the centuries by our ancestors have borne fruit with their descendants. Their exertion and sacrifice have baked Pesah into our bones so that its observance remains widespread even amongst the less committed.

The prophet Yechezkel probably had this theme in mind when he said in reference to the Children of Israel before the Exodus, “Live by your blood, live by your blood.” When Hashem searched for a merit that would entitle the Jews to be redeemed and reborn as a nation, it was their blood, the blood of sacrifice shed by them over the ages and also the blood of milah and Korban Pesah. This blood was not lost - on the contrary, it would rejuvenate them and create the Chosen Nation. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“G-d has bestowed many favors upon us.” (Passover Haggadah)

Gratitude and appreciation are virtues that are not simply praiseworthy, they are essential traits. On the Seder night we are enjoined to recount the many wonders and miracles that Hashem wrought for us. Ibn Ezra contends that appreciation goes a step further. We are to remember how it used to be, how we suffered, the pain and affliction to which we were subjected, the thirst and hunger which accompanied us and the depression and hopelessness that ruled our lives. Hashem rescued us from all that. He took us out of misery, granting us the opportunity to live as free people.

Harav Mordechai Gifter, shlita, explains that one must appreciate and give gratitude where it is due. Does one, however, analyze the good that he has received? Does one ever think about what life would have been like had he not been saved? Do we ever really evaluate the good? Do we simply say, "Thank you," and continue with "business as usual?" One must remember what it had been like; think back to the days of misery and pain, feel some of the frustration and grief that used to be so much a part of his life. Then and only then will he truly understand the essence of the favor he has received. All too quickly we pay our respects to our benefactor and forget about him. If we pay more attention to our past we might more fully appreciate the present.

This, according to Harav Gifter, is the purpose of the Dayenu format of the Haggadah. We must delve deeper into the "good" that we have received, reviewing it, analyzing every aspect of it, so that we will experience greater appreciation at the present time. Let us appreciate all that we have so that we may merit to be blessed continuously. Happy Pesah, Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**  
**"You Shall Guard the Masot"**

In presenting the Halachot relevant to the holiday of Pesah, the Torah instructs, "U'shmartem Et Ha'masot" – "You shall guard the Masot" (Shemot 12:17). Masa needs to be protected from becoming Hametz. Hametz and Masa are made from the same ingredients – flour and water – and the only difference between the two is time. Bread is made by allowing time for the dough to rise, while Masa is made quickly with special care and caution to ensure that the dough will not have the opportunity to ferment. The Torah therefore warns us to "guard" the flour and water during the baking process to ensure that the Masa does not become Hametz.

The Sages of the Talmud teach that the word "Masot" in this verse should actually be read as "Misvot." The Torah here commands us to "guard" not only the Masot, but all the Misvot. Our observance of each and every Misva should be characterized by the same care, zeal and attention that are required when baking Masot. Whenever we perform a Misva, we should do so with enthusiasm and fervor, just like the process of baking Masa.

The Zohar writes that as soon as a person begins doing a Misva, the "Kelipot," the powers of impurity, step in to try to thwart his efforts. Misva performance brings great sanctity and merit to a person, and therefore the forces of impurity work "overtime" to interfere with Misva performance. But we can

overcome this interference, the Zohar writes, by performing the Misva with zeal and alacrity. If we get to it immediately, without delay – similar to the way Masot are baked, with energetic haste – then the Kedusha grows too quickly for the "Kelipot" to get in the way. The rush of holiness simply overwhelms the forces of impurity and foils their efforts.

I recall an incident when a group of people met with me to discuss a certain need in the community that required some fundraising. We sat and had a productive discussion, working out precisely how we would raise the money, deciding who would call whom, and so on. When the meeting ended, we decided we would reconvene the following Tuesday to follow up on the campaign. I realized, however, that this was an auspicious time, an opportunity that should not be wasted. We were all assembled and focused on the issue, working constructively together – this was the time to get things done. Before the meeting adjourned, I quickly picked up the phone and called one person on my list. I spoke to him for a few moments, explaining to him the great Misva that needed to be done, and in just several minutes he pledged \$10,000.

I hung up the phone, and the people in the room asked me who I was speaking with. I told them that I was speaking to so-and-so who was on my list of people to call, and he pledged \$10,000. They were astonished at how much money was raised in just a matter of minutes. Right there and then, everyone began making calls, and before we knew it, the entire project was completed, that same day.

This is a classic example of "U'shmartem Et Ha'misvot." As the Zohar teaches, we must push ahead with Misvot at full speed right away, without delay, before they can become "Hametz," before the forces of impurity can get to them. We "guard" the Misvot by getting to them immediately, rather than leaving them on the shelf. This will ensure their success and protect them from the harmful forces that seek to sabotage our efforts. Just as Masot are baked with zeal, care and intensity, similarly, we must approach all Misvot with the seriousness, attention and energy they deserve.

**VICTOR BIBI**  
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### Rabbi Wein

Aside from the actual lessons and topics regarding freedom from bondage and the emergence of the national identity of the Jewish people, Pesach conveys to us the wonders of the natural seasons of the year here in Israel. The great Song of Songs of King Solomon occupies a place of honor in the synagogue service of the holiday and recorded in that most holy work are recorded colorful descriptions of the beauty and variety of nature here in the Holy Land.

Pesach always falls in the spring months here in Israel, a natural symbol for the constant rebirth and vitality of our ancient and ever young nation. For many centuries a significant portion of the Jewish people - especially in Eastern and Central Europe - lived in climates and under weather conditions that were uncomfortable and even brutal. Frigid winters of snow and ice were followed by impassable mud and then dusty and hot summers. Even nature in Eastern Europe was not necessarily kind to the millions of Jews who lived there.

In the United States, winter in the Midwest or the Northeast is usually quite cold and snowy, so spring is always a welcome arrival. But here in Israel it takes on a special meaning, more than just a change in weather. The season's beauty is highlighted by the reappearance of the flowers and the blossoming of the fruit trees. Jews search for blossoms in order to recite the "blessing on the trees" in this month when Pesach arrives. Nature's revival sparks a renewal within us as well. And that is a key ingredient in our Pesach celebration and commemoration,

Unfortunately in our super-technologically oriented society many are too busy texting to notice the natural beauty that surrounds us now. In general, our educational systems and life styles do not emphasize the wonders of nature. The Torah and the Talmud are both very nature oriented. The prevalent custom here in Israel to take nature hikes is a manifestation of our attempt to reintroduce a knowledge and appreciation of the natural surroundings into our lives.

There are entire sections and tractates of Mishna that are simply not understandable even to scholarly students of the Oral Law because of our ignorance of the botany and topography of Israel. My father told me that there were certain fruits that he never tasted or even saw until he came to study here in Israel in the middle 1920's. Except for the ritually required citron, citrus fruit was practically an unknown commodity in his native Lithuania. In extolling the

virtues of the Land of Israel, the Torah dwells constantly on its natural beauty and abundant food variety and sustenance.

The holiday of Pesach subtly carries with it this message of the wonders of nature, especially as they relate to the Land of Israel. So, wherever we find ourselves on this glorious holiday that falls in this month of such verdant natural beauty, we should pause to admire the world of beauty that God has placed us in. It will be a delight for the eyes and a blessing for the soul.

### Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Pesach and the Jewish Task

Pesach is the oldest and most transformative story of hope ever told. It tells of how an otherwise undistinguished group of slaves found their way to freedom from the greatest and longest-lived empire of their time, indeed of any time. It tells the revolutionary story of how the supreme Power intervened in history to liberate the supremely powerless. It is a story of the defeat of probability by the force of possibility. It defines what it is to be a Jew: a living symbol of hope.

Pesach tells us that the strength of a nation does not lie in horses and chariots, armies and arms, or in colossal statues and monumental buildings, overt demonstrations of power and wealth. It depends on simpler things: humility in the presence of the God of creation, trust in the God of redemption and history, and a sense of the non-negotiable sanctity of human life, created by God in His image: even the life of a slave or a child too young to ask questions. Pesach is the eternal critique of power used by humans to coerce and diminish their fellow humans.

It is the story more than a hundred generations of our ancestors handed on to their children, and they to theirs. As we do likewise, millennia later, we know what it is to be the people of history, guardians of a narrative not engraved in hieroglyphics on the walls of a monumental building but carried in the minds of living, breathing human beings who, for longer than any other have kept faith with the future and the past, bearing witness to the power of the human spirit when it opens itself to a greater power, beckoning us to a world of freedom, responsibility and human dignity.

Pesach is more than simply one festival among others in the Jewish calendar, more even than the anniversary of Israel's birth as a free people setting out on its journey to the Promised Land. In this section, I want to show how it emerged, in four ways, as the central event around which most of Judaism



turns.\*

First, close examination shows us that the Torah narrative of Genesis from Abraham to Jacob is a series of anticipations of the exodus, focussing our attention on, and heightening our anticipation of, what would eventually take place in the days of Moses. Second, remembering “that you were once slaves in Egypt” is the single most frequently invoked “reason for the commands.” The exodus was not just an event in history. It forms an essential part of the logic of Jewish law.

Third, key elements of Jewish law and faith are best understood as a protest against and alternative to the Egypt of the pharaohs even where the Torah does not state this explicitly. Knowledge of that ancient world gave us fresh insights into why Judaism is as it is.

Fourth, sustained meditation on the contrasts between Egypt and the society of the Israelites were called on to create reveals a fundamental choice that civilisations must make, then, now and perhaps for all time. There is nothing antiquarian about the issues Pesach raises: slavery, freedom, politics, power, state, society, human dignity and responsibility. These are as salient today as they were in the days of Moses. Pesach can never be obsolete. At the heart of the festival is a concrete historical experience. The Israelites, as described in the Torah, were a fractious group of slaves of shared ancestry, one of a number of such groups attracted to Egypt from the north, drawn by its wealth and power, only to find themselves eventually its victims. The Egypt of the Pharaohs was the longest-lived empire the world has known, already some eighteen centuries old by the time of the exodus. For more than a thousand years before Moses, its landscape had been dominated by the great pyramid of Giza, the tallest man-made structure in the world until the construction of the Eiffel Tower in 1889. The discovery in 1922 by the English archaeologist Howard Carter of the tomb of a relatively minor pharaoh, Tutankhamun, revealed the astonishing wealth and sophistication of the royal court at that time. If historians are correct in identifying Rameses II as the pharaoh of the exodus, then Egypt had reached the very summit of its power, bestriding the narrow world like a colossus.

At one level it is a story of wonders and miracles. But the enduring message of Pesach is deeper than this, for it opens out into a dramatically new vision of what a society might be like if the only Sovereign is God, and every citizen is in His image. It is about the power of the powerless and the powerlessness of

power. Politics has never been more radical, more ethical or more humane.

Heinrich Heine said, “Since the exodus, freedom has spoken with a Hebrew accent.” But it is, as Emmanuel Levinas called it, a “difficult freedom,” based as it is on a demanding code of individual and collective responsibility. Pesach makes us taste the choice: on the one hand the bread of affliction and bitter herbs of slavery; on the other, four cups of wine, each marking a stage in the long walk to liberty. As long as humans seek to exercise power over one another, the story will continue and the choice will still be ours.

### AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“Avadeem hayeenu l'pharoh b'misrayeem” We were slaves to Pharaoh in Misrayeem (Pesach Haggadah) The son has just completed asking the four questions and now the father begins his obligation to tell the Haggadah to his children. “My son, you are asking, why we do certain things?” Now this question is not only four questions, it's 613 questions. Why we do all the laws of the Torah and in each law there are many questions. And there is one answer to all of them. “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Misrayeem and when they gave us any orders we couldn't ask questions why we have to do this. If you asked a question they knocked out your teeth. And then Hashem took us out. And so, we exchanged one master for another. Instead of being forced to do things which are not for our benefit, now you are being forced to do what is for your benefit. All the Mitzvot are for your benefit. Although the obeying of Mitzvot is not contingent upon knowing reasons, however there is a reason: the reason for everything is “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Misrayeem” and Hashem took us out. Because of that we are so full of love to Hashem. We are so grateful to Him, that we'll do whatever He'll tell us. So, the reason we do Mitzvot is because Hashem took us out of Misrayeem. That's the basic fundamental reason for obeying the Torah. When Hashem began speaking to us on Har Sinai He said, “I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out of Misrayeem.”

He brought us out with a Mighty Arm, which means that Hashem turned all of nature upside down for us by bringing Ten Plagues on Misrayeem. There never was such a time and there will never be such a time until the end of days.

A person must obey the dictates of a decent conscience. And a decent conscience says ‘be grateful’. You have to be grateful to everybody, if not you are lacking in the attributes of humanity. Gratitude to Hashem supersedes every other form of gratitude.