

Preparation

April 2011

הכנה

Nisan 5771

**Kehillat
Chovevei
Tzion**

*Kehillat Chovevei Tzion
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*Visit us on-line at
www.kct.org*

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*A Kehillah For Those
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***Celebrating The Start
Of Our Eighteenth Year!***



**Preparing
to
Celebrate
Pesach
at
Kehillat
Chovevei
Tzion**





5771

SCHEDULE
OF
PASSOVER
SERVICES

KEHILLAT
CHOVEVEI
TZION



SERVICES CANDLE LIGHTING

12 NISAN

SHABBAT HaGADOL *

FRIDAY APRIL 15 6:05 PM 7:13 PM
SATURDAY APRIL 16 9:00 AM

* *Happy Anniversary to the entire Kehillah Mishpacha!*

14 NISAN

BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

SUNDAY APRIL 17

After dark, *Bedikat Chametz* (Search for Chametz) is conducted

14 NISAN

EREV PESACH

MONDAY APRIL 18

Siyyum HaBachor

6:45 AM

Dispose of all *Chametz* by

11:45 AM

15 NISAN

FIRST DAY PESACH

MONDAY APRIL 18

7:00 PM

7:16 PM

TUESDAY APRIL 19

9:00 AM

16 NISAN

SECOND DAY PESACH

TUESDAY APRIL 19

7:00 PM

8:17 PM

WEDNESDAY APRIL 20

9:00 AM

19 NISAN

SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED

FRIDAY APRIL 22

6:15 PM

7:20 PM

SATURDAY APRIL 23

9:00 AM

21 NISAN

SEVENTH DAY PESACH

SUNDAY APRIL 24

7:00 PM

7:22 PM

MONDAY APRIL 25

9:00 AM

22 NISAN

EIGHTH DAY PESACH

MONDAY APRIL 25

7:00 PM

8:24 PM

TUESDAY APRIL 26

9:00 AM

(INCLUDING YIZKOR)

PESACH ENDS TUESDAY EVENING AT 8:25 PM

26 NISAN

SHABBAT KEDOSHIM

FRIDAY APRIL 29

6:15 PM

7:28 PM

SATURDAY APRIL 30

9:00 AM

ROSH CHODESH IYAR

WEDNESDAY MAY 4 - THURSDAY MAY 5

קהילת חובבי ציון Kehillat Chovevei Tzion

This form must be returned no later than FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2011

Contract for Selling Chametz

I, _____, hereby authorize Rabbi William Berman to sell the *chametz* in my possession (the sale will take place on Monday, April 18, 2011). I understand that all places enumerated below will be sold, will not belong to me, and may not be used by me from 11:45 AM EDT, on Monday, April 18, 2011. The *Chametz* which I have sold will be permitted for my use as of 8:25 PM EDT, on Tuesday, April 26, 2011, if the buyer has not exercised his right to acquire it permanently.

Please print clearly:

The *chametz* and the areas are at:

Street address _____

City, State _____

. . . in the following specifically enumerated places:

***Note: A separate form must be completed for each address
(home, business, vacation home, etc.)***

Your signature _____ Date _____

It is proper to include a modest contribution for *Ma'ot Chittin*, to feed the poor for Pesach (\$18 or more, is suggested). Please make checks payable to Kehillat Chovevei Tzion. Before Pesach begins, you are urged to feed the non-Jewish poor with your *chametz*.

Return this form to: Charlie Mann 6 Settlers Way Setauket, NY 11733 689-9605

NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2011.

*Celebrating, studying and growing together as a community of the committed, the extended member families of **Kehillat Chovevei Tzion** will again come together this year, for the start of its compelling **eighteenth year**, in its Setauket Beit Midrash for the Pesach holiday period. The KCT Ritual Committee is delighted to provide you with this compendium for self-study, for family and individual use, in preparation for the upcoming holiday.*

Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place. Shmot 13:3

Chag Sameach !

. . . . Mechirat Chametz

No matter how hard you try to remove the *chametz*, the job isn't quite complete until the "paperwork" is done. Kehillat Chovevei Tzion has arranged with Rabbi William Berman to serve as our *shaliach* in selling the *chametz* on the morning of Monday, April 18. Accordingly, the change in ownership takes effect at precisely 11:45 AM Monday morning. For your convenience, a form is included along with this booklet, which you may complete, attaching your donation for the *Ma'ot Chitim* Fund and send along to Charlie Mann at the address shown on the form, being sure to arrange for him to receive it **no later than Friday, April 15.** ~K~

. . . . The KCT Memorial Wall

In the KCT Beit Midrash, the Memorial Wall represents the *Kehillah's* commemoration of our loved ones. Each plaque contains the name of the person recalled, in Hebrew and English, and the date of death in both the secular and Hebrew calendars. *Yahrzeit* lamps on each side of the plaque are lit during the week of the appropriate date and for *Yizkor*. New additions to the Memorial Panel are specially dedicated at the next *Yizkor* service following placement, and each is individually remembered at every *Yizkor* service that follows. Please let us know if you'd like to order a plaque or if you have any questions about the Memorial Wall. ~K~

. . . . The Kehillah Remembers

The *Yizkor* service is recited on the morning of the the last day of Pesach, Tuesday April 26. The Kehillah remembers with great fondness and respect all the loved ones whom we have individually lost

over the years and those whose names have been inscribed in the Kehillah's Book of Remembrance, which will be available at services. *Yizkor* is at once both a collective experience and an individual one, and is the timeless prayer of personal memory of the Jewish people. *Yizkor* is recited on Yom Kippur, on Shmini Atzeret, and then again on the last day of each of Pesach and Shavuot. ~K~

. . . . Tzedakah and Yizkor

Pesach offers two opportunities for tzedakah and gemillut chesed specifically associated with the spirit of this most unique of holiday celebrations . . . the Ma'ot Chitim donation to feed the hungry at the start of the holiday, and the yizkor donation associated with remembering and sanctifying the memories of departed family members.

The essence of *Yizkor* is an act of *tzedakah*, a contribution made on behalf of loved ones, of which the *Kodosh Baruch* takes note, to earn merit for the deceased in His eyes. Our Kehillah has made a significant, ever-growing commitment to *tzedakah* over the years. We encourage you, as you plan your individual *tzedakot*, for whatever contributions are within your means and family custom, to consider **Kehillat Chovevei Tzion** as a worthy beneficiary of your generosity and support at this time and throughout the year. ~K~

Special occasion coming up? Please ask us about sponsoring the Kiddush on a Shabbat or a Yom Tov morning.



.... Helping Hands for Pesach

M'YAD L'YAD was founded in 1998 to serve the poor, the disabled, the elderly, and others in need on Long Island and in the New York metropolitan area. Volunteer sponsors are paired with recipients to provide assistance beyond the basic necessities, to enhance the lives of those in need. In keeping with one of the highest ideals of charitable giving within Judaism, our donors' and recipients' identities remain anonymous, thus maintaining the privacy and dignity of those participating.



KCT is an organizational sponsor and many of our families and individuals have become sponsors as well. Coming into Pesach would be a wonderful time for you to join these families in becoming a sponsor yourself . . . easy enough to do, by contacting Amy Engelberg at 471-8414 for more information, or by e-mail to MyadLyad@KCT.org. Contributions may be sent to KCT for forwarding or directly to M'YAD L'YAD at 74 Hauppauge Road, Commack NY 11725. ~K~

.... The Spring Cleaning Ritual

Extracted from a poem by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, the rabbi of Temple Beth Or of the Deaf in New York City

"Spring Cleaning Ritual on the Eve of the Full Moon Nisan" is a long and descriptive poem which concludes with these words:

Some destroy Chametz with fire
others throw it to the wind
others toss it to the sea.

Look deep for the Chametz
which still gives you pleasure
and cast it to the burning.

When all the looking is done we say:
All that rises up bitter
All that rises up prideful
All that rises up in old ways no longer fruitful
All ametz still in my possession but unknown to me
which I have not seen nor disposed of
may it find common grave
with the dust of the earth

Amen, Amen Selah . . .

~K~



.... Preparation Through Study

Drawn from various sources, ancient, historic and modern, the following section of personal study materials is presented by the editors with a view toward stimulating thought, study, discussion, agreement and disagreement, and evaluation approaching and throughout the days of Pesach.

.... The Higher Meanings of Chametz

The Torah tells us that before the holiday of Pesach we are to remove all *Chametz* from our dwelling places - we are not to see *Chametz*, own *Chametz*, or derive benefit from *Chametz*.

The rabbis tell us that there are two ways by which we comply with these laws:

1st - by *byur* - destroying the *Chametz* by burning;
and

2nd by *bitul* - nullification - any *Chametz* that we have not found is nullified - considered as dust of the earth.

The rabbi also teach that the term *Chametz* has a higher meaning than just the physical leavened products that must be removed before Pesach.

Based on the verse in the Torah that says: - *you shall destroy [by burning] the evil that is in your midst* - the rabbis tell us that the removal of *Chametz* also involves the removal of evil from the Jewish heart and the Jewish people.

Specifically, the evil referred to is arrogance and pride. As leavened products have the ability to rise - to get puffed up, so does the human disposition. In preparation for Pesach we remove the physical *Chametz*. The rabbis teach us that this is also the time to remove arrogance from our individual and collective souls.

How should this be done?? The rabbis teach that we should strive for *byur*, total destruction of the evil inclination that resides in each of us. However, being realistic, it is clear that this will never be achieved - so we must settle for *bitul* the realization that arrogance and pride is part of each of us and humankind in general - and the attempt to nullify - to go to a higher level while accepting our human imperfections.

May each of us have a Pesach that is both *kasher* and *samach* and free from physical and spiritual *Chametz*.
~K~



"The Ten Plagues" by Kalderon

... Matzah and Morality

By Rabbi Irving Greenberg, this essay first appeared in the author's book "The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays". Rabbi Greenberg was the president of Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation and founding president of CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. He also is the author of *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity* (2004, Jewish Publication Society).

Unleavened bread represents both slavery and freedom.

Just as shunning *chametz* [leaven] is the symbolic statement of leaving slavery behind, so is eating matzah the classic expression of entering freedom.

Matzah was the food the Israelites took with them on the Exodus. "They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes [matzot], for it was not leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay; nor had they prepared provisions for themselves" (Exodus 12:39). According to this passage, matzah is the hard bread that Jews initially ate in the desert because they plunged into liberty without delaying.

However, matzah carries a more complex message than "Freedom now!" Made only of flour and water--with no shortening, yeast, or enriching ingredients--matzah recreates the hard "bread of affliction" (Deuteronomy 16:3) and meager food given to the Hebrews in Egypt by their exploitative masters. Like the bitter herbs eaten at the seder, it represents the degradation and suffering of the Israelites.



Bread of Slavery, Bread of Freedom . . .

Matzah is, therefore, both the bread of freedom and the erstwhile bread of slavery. It is not unusual for ex-slaves to invert the very symbols of slavery to express their rejection of the masters' values. But there is a deeper meaning in the double-edged symbolism of matzah. It would have been easy to set up a stark dichotomy: matzah is the bread of the Exodus way, the bread of freedom; *chametz* is the bread eaten in the house of bondage, in Egypt. Or vice versa: matzah is the hard ration, slave food; *chametz* is the rich, soft food to which free people treat themselves. That either/or would be too simplistic. Freedom is in the psyche, not in the bread.

The *halakha* [Jewish law] underscores the identity of *chametz* and matzah with the legal requirement that matzah can be made only out of grains that can

become *chametz* – that is, those grains that ferment if mixed with water and allowed to stand. How the human prepares the dough is what decides whether it becomes *chametz* or matzah. How you view the matzah is what decides whether it is the bread of liberty or of servitude.

The point is subtle but essential. To be fully realized, an Exodus must include an inner voyage, not just a march on the road out of Egypt. The difference between slavery and freedom is not that slaves endure hard conditions while free people enjoy ease. The bread remained equally hard in both states, but the psychology of the Israelites shifted totally. When the hard crust was given to them by tyrannical masters, the matzah they ate in passivity was the bread of slavery. But when the Jews willingly went from green fertile deltas into the desert because they were determined to be free, when they refused to delay freedom and opted to eat unleavened bread rather than wait for it to rise, the hard crust became the bread of freedom. Out of fear and lack of responsibility, the slave accommodates to ill treatment. Out of dignity and determination to live free, the individual will shoulder any burden.

Stressing the Goodness . . .

The great Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, whose analyses always portrayed the people of Israel in a favorable light, insisted that the willingness of the Israelites to enter the desert with hard bread continues to evoke God's love. Levi Yitzchak asked: "Why does the Torah continually call Passover *chag hamatzot* – the feast of unleavened bread--while the Jews call it *chag haPesach*--the feast of Passover? Because as lovers, they stress each other's goodness. Israel praises God who passed over the homes of the Jews when destroying Egypt. God praises the Jews who went so trustingly out of the fertile plain of Egypt into a barren desert with meager food.

Tradition specifically requires eating unleavened bread on the first two nights of Passover. (Dieters will be happy to learn that during the rest of the holiday the only requirement is not to eat *chametz*.) Eating hard bread during the holiday of liberation stimulates appreciation for the flavor of freedom and summons up empathy for those still in need. At the seder, the Exodus retelling opens with the phrase, "This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in Egypt."

The moral consequence follows immediately, "Let all who are hungry enter and eat; let all who are in need come and join in the Passover with us. This year [we are] slaves. Next year [may the slaves be] free." The hard crust commands us to help the poor, the stranger, the outsider. ~K~

. . . . What To Wear?

Excerpted from the "Guide to Jewish Religious Practice" by Rabbi Isaac Klein.

Whereas the rabbis normally discouraged displays of affluence, in the case of the Seder they urged that the table should be set lavishly with the finest silver and dishes at one's disposal (*O.H. 472:2; ibid. in Shneur Zalman of Lyady, Shulhan 'Arukh*). In many families it is customary for the chief celebrant to wear a white robe known as a Kittel (*sargenes* among German and Alsatian Jews). Many reasons have been given for this practice.

The Kittel is a festive garment that was worn in ancient times at all joyous celebrations. The High Priest wore white garments when officiating in the Temple of Jerusalem (*Lev. 16:4*), and wearing the Kittel gives the Seder the status of a sacred service in the Temple.

According to the kabbalists, white symbolizes the divine attributes of loving kindness and mercy, *chesed v'rachamim*, and thus reminds us that the Holy One showed loving kindness and mercy to our ancestors in Egypt since not all of them were deserving of redemption.[. . .] Hence the special emphasis on inviting guests who are in modest circumstances to the Seder (*Wahrman, Hagei Yisra'el Umo'adaw, pp. 147 f.*).

A strange interpretation of the practice maintains that the Kittel resembles a shroud and is donned as a precaution lest the celebration turn to revelry (*O.H. 472 in M.D. 3*).

Dr. Finkelstein, z"l, has suggested that the Kittel was an adaptation of the festive garment of Jerusalem in the days of the Second Temple. As a matter of fact, many of the practices connected with the Seder derive from the life of the Jews of that period, such as eating an egg and parsley, washing the hands before touching any food, and the reclining posture which becomes free men (copied from the Persians) (*Finkelstein, The Haggadah, p. iv*). ~K~

... The Laws of Reclining

Extracted from a volume produced by Congregation Bnai Yosef and the Aram Soba Foundation, describing the practice of "hesebah" (reclining).

"**We** were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and God our Lord took **us** out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm." We read these words from the Haggadah each year on Seder Night.

On Pesah night, one must behave as if he, himself, left Egypt. Therefore, we introduce elements of royalty and luxury at the seder to emphasize our freedom. Hazal instituted the specific practice of "hesebah," that one must recline on his left side during the seder, as this was the custom of the ancient kings. Even a pauper who does not own a pillow or cushion must recline on a bench, the floor, or on his friend. He should not, however, lean on his own leg, for this gives the impression that he is in mourning. *Hesebah* must be performed specifically on the left side, no matter whether the individual is right-handed or left-handed. One who reclined on his right side, straight back, or forward, is as if he did not recline at all. *Hesebah* must be done while eating the matzah and drinking the four cups of wine. One who ate the *matzah* without reclining must eat it again while reclining, and one who drank one of the cups of wine without reclining must drink another cup with *hesebah*. Additionally, one must perform *hesebah* while eating the "*korech*" and the *afikoman*. Throughout the rest of the meal, it is preferable to recline but not necessary. While eating the *marror*, however, one should not recline, as the *marror* symbolizes the bitterness of bondage, not our freedom. One should not recline during *birchat hamazon*, either. *Hesebah* while eating the *karpas* is optional. The authorities are in dispute whether one should recline while reading the Haggadah and reciting Hallel. ~K~

... Reconnecting to Passover's Roots

By Leah Koenig, a freelance writer whose work has been published in The New York Times Magazine, Gastronomica, Jewish Living, Lilith, Culinate, Beliefnet and other publications.

**Reconnecting to Passover's Roots:
... Spring Greening.**

One of the dirty little secrets about the Jewish calendar is that many of the holidays have agricultural subtexts, which over time have been muted or lost completely under the historical and religious themes that were layered on top of them. Two of these holidays, Sukkot and Shavuot, have maintained a relatively transparent relationship to their earthy roots. But finding the natural themes of Passover takes a bit more digging.

The first step is to forget about Moses – for now anyway – and recall that Passover, also known as Chag Ha-Aviv (holiday of spring), is one of the Torah's three mandated pilgrimage festivals. It is inextricably linked to the beginning of the barley harvest in Israel. Leviticus 23:10-11 describes the *omer* (sheaf) offering of barley (the first grain to ripen in the spring) that took place in the Temple on the second day of Passover:

When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. He shall elevate the sheaf before the Lord for acceptance on your behalf.



This priestly grain dance symbolized prosperity and was the official green light that the season's harvest could be consumed. Today, Jews count the Omer for 49 days, starting on the second night of Passover--to coincide with the date of the omer offering--and continuing through Shavuot (the beginning of the wheat harvest). In most cases, however, Omer practices have been almost completely disembodied--stripped of their connections to grain and ground.

The Seder Plate is Already Green . . .

Contemporary Jews are, of course, forbidden to bring sheaves of just-picked barley, which is chametz, to our seder tables. Still, if one is willing to look, signs of spring and nature's rejuvenation abound throughout Passover. This is especially true of the seder plate, which weaves together the historical and agricultural in one eating ritual.

. . . . The Song of Songs

The book of Shir HaShirim – The Song of Songs will be read at KCT on the morning of Shabbat Chol HaMoed - Saturday morning April 23rd.

Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs (1920-2006) was a Masorti rabbi, the first leader of Masorti Judaism (also known as Conservative Judaism) in the United Kingdom, and a leading writer and thinker on Judaism.

The Rabbis taught: All the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.

Song of Songs (Hebrew, *Shir Ha-Shirim*) is the book of eight chapters in the third section of the Bible, the *Ketuvim*, first of the five *Megillot* (scrolls).

Dating and Authorship . . .

According to the Rabbinic tradition generally, the author of the book is King Solomon (based on the heading: 'The Song of Songs by Solomon,' though this can also mean 'about Solomon') but in the famous Talmudic passage (Bava Batra 15a) on the authorship of the biblical books it is stated that the book was actually written down by King Hezekiah and his associates (based on Proverbs 25:1).

Modern scholarship is unanimous in fixing a much later date for the book than the time of Solomon, though opinions vary regarding the actual date. On the surface, the book is a secular love-poem or a collection of such poems and is considered so to be by the majority of modern biblical scholars.

No doubt because of this surface meaning, the ancient Rabbis, while accepting the Solomonic authorship, debated whether the book should be considered part of the sacred Scriptures. The Mishnah (Yadaim 3:5), after recording this debate, gives the view of Rabbi Akiba, eventually adopted by all the Rabbis, that no one ever debated that the Song of Songs is sacred: 'for all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Ketuvim are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.'

In the liturgy of the synagogue, Song of Songs is recited during the morning service on the intermediate Sabbath of Passover. Under the influence of the Kabbalah, the custom arose in some circles, especially in Chasidism, of reciting the Song of Songs on the eve of the Sabbath.

The roasted lamb bone (*z'roa*), which commemorates lamb sacrifices made at the Temple is taken from one of spring's most iconic babies. The green vegetable (*karpas*) sitting next to it that gets dipped in saltwater is a symbol of the first sprouts that peak bravely out of the just-thawed ground in early spring. The roasted egg (*beitzah*) recalls both the sacrifices made at the Temple and also spring's fertility and rebirth.

Chametz as a Metaphor . . .

Even before Passover begins, the act of removing *chametz* from our homes offers other opportunities to connect to the natural world. This period of "Jewish spring cleaning" requires us to shake out our sheets and round up any bread or crumbs hiding in our kitchen cupboards. But removing *chametz* from our homes can also remind us to get rid of the excess "stuff" clogging up our lives--to liberate ourselves from any emotional or spiritual baggage from the year, and send bad habits packing.

It is a perfect time to recycle the stack of junk mail piling up on the desk (and stop more from coming), plant seedlings in the garden, start composting, switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs, or volunteer for a cleanup day at a nearby river, beach, forest, or park. It also offers a great opportunity to plan ahead, in order to avoid the all-too-common overuse of disposable dishware during Passover. As you clean out your kitchen cabinets, stock them with light-weight, recycled dishes and cutlery, like the stylish offerings from Preserve, which store easily and can be reused year after year.

While these actions might seem like a distraction on an otherwise busy pre-Passover to-do list, integrating them into our holiday preparations can imbue our celebration with deeper significance that lasts beyond the holiday.

During Passover, all Jews are challenged to remember the Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom, and feel as if they went through it themselves. But for those willing to dig even further, the story of Passover is not simply historical. It is rooted to the land, the giddy joys of spring, and to the reminder that after every period of dormancy and every experience of suffering, new life awaits just under the soil.

~K~

שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמֹה יִשְׁכָּנִי מִצְשִׁיקוֹת
כִּי טוֹבִים דְּדִיק מִיֵּץ לְרִיחַ שְׂמֹנֶיךָ טוֹבִים
שְׂמֹן תּוֹרַתְךָ שְׂמֹךְ עַל כֵּן עַל מוֹת אֲהַבֹּךְ מִשְׁכָּנִי
אֲזָרִיךְ צְרוּצָה הַבִּיאֲנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲזָרִיו צְגִילָה וְנִשְׁמָזָה

Interpreting Song of Songs . . .

That the Rabbis in the second century CE could debate whether Song of Songs belongs to sacred Scripture, is evidence enough that in this period there were some who took it all literally as a dialogue of love between a man and a woman, sexual desire expressed exquisitely but with the utmost frankness.

One or two Orthodox Jews in the twentieth century did try to suggest that even on the literal level the book can be seen as sacred literature, since love between husband and wife is holy and divinely ordained. But, while there is no explicit rejection of such a literal interpretation in Rabbinic literature, the standard Rabbinic view, and the reason why Rabbi Akiba declared the book to be 'the Holy of Holies,' is that the Rabbis saw the 'lover' as God and the 'beloved' as the community of Israel.

The Rabbis also understood the opening verse as 'Song of Songs about Shelomo' and took the name as referring not to King Solomon but to God, she-ha shalom shelo, 'to whom peace belongs.'

Revealing in this connection is a passage in the Talmud (Sanhedrin, 101a) dating from the second century: 'He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it as a song and one who recites a verse at a banquet (this usually denotes a wedding feast), unseasonably, brings evil upon the world,' from which it would seem that it was only the profane and frivolous use of the book in its plain meaning to which the Rabbis objected.

Allegories Abound . . .

Nevertheless, throughout Rabbinic literature it is the allegorical meaning that is followed. The Midrash Rabbah to the book interprets the whole book in this vein. For example, the verse (1:2): 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth' is interpreted as referring to the revelation at Sinai when Israel took

upon itself to keep the Torah and an angel was sent by God to kiss each Israelite.

The verse (1:5); 'I am black but comely' is given the interpretation that the community of Israel says to God: 'I am black through my own deeds, but comely through the deeds of my ancestors,' or 'I am black in my own eyes, but comely in the sight of God,' or 'I am black during the rest of the year, but comely on Yom Kippur.'

The verse: 'Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens (2:2)' is interpreted as referring to Israel's oppression by the secular powers: 'Just as a rose, if situated between thorns, when the north wind blows is bent towards the south and is pricked by the thorns, and nevertheless its heart is still turned upwards, so with Israel, although taxes are exacted from them, nevertheless their hearts are fixed upon their Father in Heaven.'

In the Zohar and the early Kabbalah the dialogue of love is between the two Sefirot, Tiferet, the male principle in the Godhead, and Malkhut, the Shekhinah, the female principle. In the opening passage of the Zohar, in current editions, the lily among the thorns is Malkhut attacked by the demonic forces but strengthened against these evil forces by the five strong leaves surrounding the lily, the other lower Sefirot.

The sixteenth-century mystic, Moses Cordovero, interprets the book as a dialogue between the individual soul and God. Even in an earlier period, Maimonides (Teshuvah 10:3) writes in the same vein, when discussing the love of God:

'What is the proper form of the love (of God)? It is that he should love the Lord with great, overpowering, fierce love to the extent that his soul is bound to the love of God and he dwells on it constantly, as if he were love-sick for a woman and dwells on this constantly, whether he is sitting or standing, eating or drinking.'

'Even more than this should be the love of God in the heart of those who love him, dwelling on it constantly, as it is said: "with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 6:5). And it is to this that Solomon refers allegorically when he says: "For I am love-sick" (Song of Songs 2:5) and the whole of Song of Songs is a parable on this topic.' ~K~

... The Telling of the Story

The Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, delivered this Pesach message to communities across the Commonwealth eight years ago, but its message remains powerful and compelling today.

The story we tell on Pesach, of the going out from Egypt, is the oldest and greatest in the world. It is no exaggeration to say that it kept Jewish identity alive through almost two thousand years of exile and dispersion, a phenomenon that has no parallel in the history of any other people. What is it about the story that gave and continues to give it such power?

The sages of the Mishneh laid down a rule about how the story is to be told. They stated it in four words: *matchil bigenut umesayem beshevach* . . . Begin with the shame, end with the praise. Begin with the bad news, end with the good. To be sure, there was an argument about what exactly was the bad news, and what the good. Some said it meant beginning with "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt . . ." Others said it meant, "At first our ancestors [meaning Terach, Abraham's father] were idolaters . . ." To keep the peace, we do both.

But everyone agreed on the basic principle. On Pesach, we do not close our eyes to the bad news. Our ancestors were slaves. At many points in history, Jews suffered. They were no strangers to exile, insecurity, ghettos and pogroms. We still taste the bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of persecution. Though we begin with the bad news, we end with the good. That is the basic structure of a Jewish story.

To this day, I wonder whether we fully understand the significance of this fact. Ancient Greece gave the world a particular kind of story. Its great practitioners were Aeschylus and Sophocles. In a later age, Shakespeare used it to write some of his greatest works. It is called tragedy. Tragedy is the story you tell when you believe in a universe blind to our dreams and deaf to our cries. That is why there is no word in classical Hebrew that means tragedy in the Greek sense.

Our ancestors told, and we still tell, a story that is the opposite of tragedy. Its key word is hope. Hope is the principled rejection of tragedy. The universe is not blind. Our dreams are not destined to end in disillusionment. Not by accident, when Jews began a new exodus from places of persecution to the land of Israel, they called the national anthem of the old-new state, Hatikvah, the hope.

These are not easy times for Jews. In a hotel in Netanya, as the guests were getting ready to begin the seder, a suicide bomber struck, killing twenty-nine people and injuring hundreds of others. There were firebomb attacks on synagogues throughout Europe. One, in Marseilles, was burned to the ground. That after 54 years Israel has still to fight a battle for its survival, and that less than 60 years after the Holocaust we still witness antisemitism in Europe, is nothing less than appalling. What are we to think or say or do?

The deepest answer lies in Pesach itself. The ancient Greeks and their Jewish contemporaries both knew that there was suffering and injustice in the affairs of mankind. But they interpreted it in different ways - the difference between tragedy and hope. Ancient Greece declined and fell; Jews and Judaism survived. That was no accident. Hope is not naive. It knows the bad news. But it also knows that the bad news is the beginning of the story, not its end. Hope is what gave our ancestors strength. We were and remain the people of hope - and such a people cannot be defeated. This year, as we pray for peace and security for the people and state of Israel, let us reaffirm the great principle of the Pesach story. The Jewish people kept hope alive. Hope will always keep the Jewish people alive. Wishing you a *chag kasher vesameach*. ~K~



"The Passover Dinner" by Kalderon

... The Invisible Guest

First published in 1994 by Dr. Eliezar Segal, Chairman of the Department of Judaic Studies at the University of Calgary, a long-time favorite of the KCT editors of this publication, this essay portrays Eliyahu HaNavi in captivating terms.

Since my childhood, a special mystique has always been generated by the presence at the Passover seder of a visitor who was never seen, but whose reality was no less tangible for that fact. The unseen guest is of course Elijah the prophet. A special cup filled with wine was set for him, and we all waited impatiently until the moment when one of us would (often with discernible signs of fear at the prospect) open the door to admit the righteous visitor. Afterwards we would carefully measure Elijah's cup to verify that the level of the wine had receded since being poured.

The belief that Elijah continues to wander about our world is a mainstay of Jewish folklore. Rabbis in the Talmud were accustomed to running into him and addressing questions to him about the goings-on in the Heavenly realms, or about other matters that are normally concealed from human view. Many tales were spun about how a ragged vagrant was discovered, to have been the prophet in disguise, come to earth to test people's faith and virtue, or to grant them a long-sought desire.

The Bible relates how Elijah was accustomed to travel about assisting people in distress. He was also privileged to be numbered among the select few who never actually died; instead he was carried up to heaven in his lifetime in a flaming chariot. Elijah was thus eminently qualified to serve as an intermediary between the upper and lower worlds.

The original reason for opening the door probably had nothing to do with Elijah. The door opening occurs just after the conclusion of the meal and before the resumption of the Hallel, as we intone the words "Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name," a time when our European ancestors had good reason to check outside to make sure that there were no malevolent figures lurking outside ready to pounce upon the celebrants with accusations of the infamous blood libel that often ignited massacres of innocent Jews.

Another widespread belief had it that Elijah's presence at the seder was necessary in order to resolve the talmudic dispute about how many cups of wine should be drunk that night, in keeping with the talmudic belief that certain facts remain undisclosed "until Elijah will come." The uncertainty grew out of the midrashic premise that the cups symbolized the four expressions of redemption contained in God's pledge to the enslaved Israelites: ...I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments. And I will take you to me for a people. *(Exodus 6:6-7).*

Given this rationale, a doubt arose with regard to the words "And I will bring you in unto the land" in the next verse. Is it really appropriate to commemorate this promise which was not to be fulfilled until after the generation of the Exodus had perished? Talmudic tradition reports that Rabbi Tarfon advocated the drinking of a fifth cup. The two Babylonian academies of Sura and Pumbedita were divided on this issue, as were several medieval Jewish communities. Some, like the Yemenites, have always included a fifth cup in their Haggadah. Rashi, on the other hand, was so opposed to the idea that he had Rabbi Tarfon's opinion excised from the Talmudic manuscripts (which is why you will not find it in the printed editions of the Talmud).

Thus, the extra cup that is placed on the festive table, but is not drunk (at least not by the mortal participants) serves as a memorial to a practice that has been rejected by Ashkenazic Jews. It is understandable that this cup came to be identified with the name of the renowned resolver of halakhic doubts.

The two most prominent instances of the prophet's participation in the seder, the opening of the door and "Elijah's cup," have thus been seen to be relatively recent add-ons to the basic Passover service. There are however more substantial grounds for the widespread feeling that Elijah's spirit pervades the holiday and connects to its most essential themes and teachings.

Jewish tradition has always acknowledged a continuity between the past liberation of the enslaved Israelites and our future deliverance from the oppressions of exile. This attitude underlies the choice of the prophetic reading on the Sabbath preceding Passover, in which God offers his

assurance that "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Because it is Elijah who will herald the advent of Messiah, Jews over the generation have clung tenaciously to the hope that the prophet would take advantage of his annual visits to Jewish households in order to proclaim the imminence of the cherished redemption. ~K~

. . . The Prayer for Dew

The beautiful Prayer for Dew, Tefillat Tal will be recited at KCT at the beginning of the Musaf Service on the first morning of Pesach, Tuesday, April 19th.

By Rabbi Ronald H. Isaacs, the spiritual leader of Temple Shalom in Bridgewater, NJ, who has served as the publications committee chair of the Rabbinical Assembly.

Israel's rainy season formally ends on Passover. The forthcoming dry season is long and hot, but it is lessened by breezes that come in from the Mediterranean Sea and bring dew at night. This bit of moisture is very important, and so Jews say this prayer, wherever they are. Because dew appears at night and helps plants to grow though there is no rain, it is a symbol of revival, and thus the prayer for dew also speaks of the hopes for a fully rebuilt Jerusalem and Land of Israel.

The special prayer for dew (*Tefillat Tal*) injects into the festive mood of the Passover liturgy a mood of solemnity, normally associated with a period of judgment. Passover, according to the Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah 16a*), is the time when God blesses the crops. In keeping with the spirit, it is customary for the Cantor to don a white robe for the Musaf service of the First Day of Passover.

Here are some excerpts from the Prayer for Dew:

"Give us dew to favor Your land, grant us a blessing of Your joy. Make us strong with plentiful grain and wine. Restore Jerusalem, Your delight, as flowers are renewed by dew. Let this be a good year for dew, crowned with proud and beautiful fruit. May the city of Jerusalem, once empty, be turned into a crown that sparkles like the dew.

"May dew fall upon the blessed land. Fill us with heaven's finest blessings. May a light come out of the darkness to draw Israel to You as a root finds water from dew.

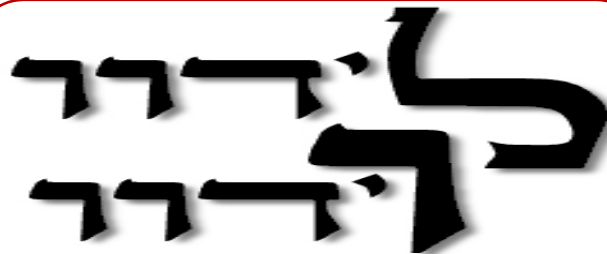
"May You bless our food with dew. May we enjoy plenty with nothing lacking. Grant the wish of the people that followed You through the desert like sheep – with dew.

"You are Hashem our God, who causes the wind to blow and the dew to fall.

For blessing and not for curse. *Amen.*

For life and not for death. *Amen.*

For plenty and not for lack. *Amen.* ~K~



Please consider this your invitation to make the joy of that special personal or family moment last forever by endowing an engraved leaf on the **KCT Tree of Life** on the **Dedication Wall** of the KCT Kiddush Area. Join the many families in our community who have chosen this method to provide needed support for the Kehillah's important year-round educational and religious programming. Your \$180 donation will be gratefully acknowledged by the placement of a beautifully engraved leaf honoring this special moment in your family's life. ~K~

. . . The Celebration Continues

The celebration of the start of the eighteenth year of Kehillat Chovevi Tzion commences with Pesach. We invite you to watch the mailings for announcements of upcoming programs in this most "magical" eighteenth year!

Simmon Tov u'Mazal Tov! ~K~



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