INSPIRE

PASSOVER EDITION

15-22ND NISSAN - 8-16 APRIL 2020

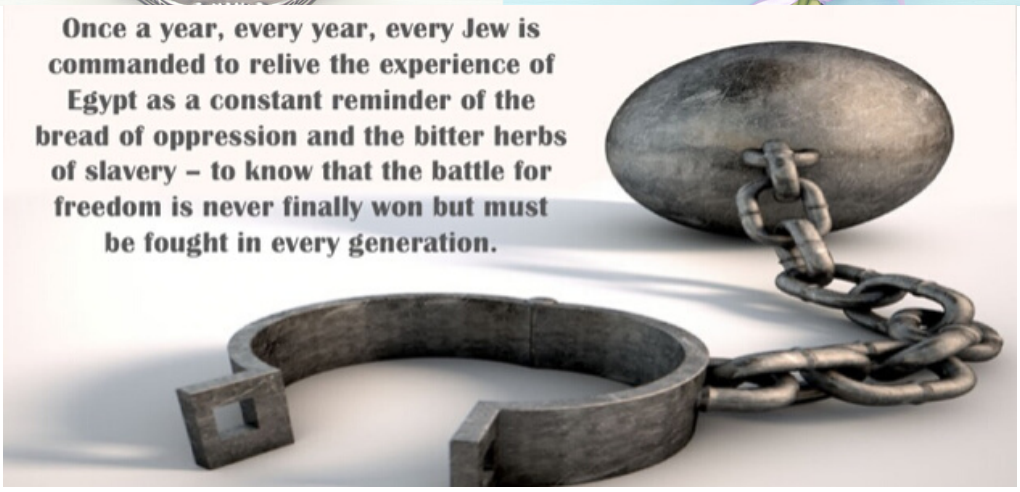
LOUGHTON SHUL
MORE THAN A

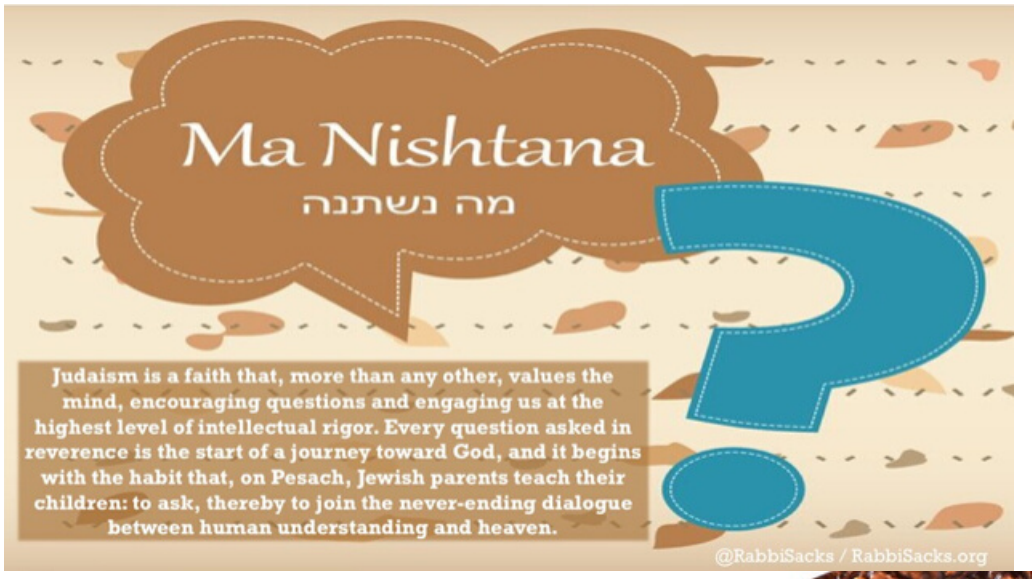
Times

END OF EATING CHAMETZ 10:40 BURNING AND SELLING CHAMETZ 11:40
WEDNESDAY 8TH CANDLE LIGHTING 7:32PM
THURSDAY 9TH CANDLE LIGHTING FROM EXISTING FLAME 8:40PM
FRIDAY NIGHT FROM EXISTING FLAME 7:35
SHABBAT ENDS 8:43PM

Essential vs. Non-Essential: Dayeinu During the Pandemic

Most people around the world are under home lockdown, following "Stay Home, Stay Safe" emergency orders to combat the coronavirus. Individuals are allowed to leave their homes for certain "essential activities," which includes grocery shopping, medical needs, going to the gas station or bank. In Boca Raton where I live, the order emphasizes that only "essential retail and commercial activities" are permitted and only "essential" business can stay open.The dictionary definition of "essential" is "absolutely necessary; extremely important." Synonyms are "crucial, necessary, key, and vital." Non-essential means "not completely necessary." Synonyms include "dispensable, gratuitous, inessential, needless, and unnecessary."Reading the recent order got me thinking about what we consider essential. Each of us is the executive of our own lives; we give the orders and we define what is essential, crucial, and vital versus what is non-essential, what is dispensable and gratuitous, and what we can live without.Obviously, none of us can live without our health or without the well-being of our loved ones. For those who are suffering or have experienced a loss, there are no words or platitudes, only our heartfelt empathy and love. And to those financially devastated by this pandemic, in addition to our commitment to help, provide and support, know that we care deeply and we are thinking about you.For those fortunate to have their health and financial stability, the consequences and impact of this pandemic are still extremely challenging. So many aspects of this new normal can't help but frustrate, disappoint, aggravate and worry even the most even-tempered, confident, competent, and capable person.Even if we are blessed not to be grieving loved ones, we are all grieving the loss of innocence, of certain assumptions and realities we took for granted and came to expect. Honor that feeling, lean into that pain, express that frustration in a healthy way, and then let it go and work to feel a sense of dayeinu. Dayeinu's message is straightforward - we need to know how to say "enough," not in a caustic tone, but in an appreciative one. On this evening of the journey from slavery to liberty, we achieve our very freedom. By saying dayeinu, we focus on what we have, not what we don't: we have enough, we are satisfied enough. Dayeinu means it is enough to enjoy this moment, to be present in this experience, to savor this gift and to cherish this opportunity without having to already look forward or crave the next one. Of course, each stage and each stanza of this song is incomplete, each is imperfect, but nevertheless, dayeinu; each is still enough. Enough to prompt us to say thank you and even enough to make us happy.Like the stanzas of Dayeinu, our lives are often incomplete, they are imperfect. For most of us, this Passover is different from all others. There is so much missing, so many people absent from our table or people feeling our absence from theirs. Yet, if we focus on what is missing, what we don't yet have or may never have, we become debilitated, deprived of happiness. On the other hand, if we find the capacity to sing Dayeinu, to focus on what is, to enjoy what we have, we set ourselves free to find happiness.This pandemic has forced us to redefine "essential" and "non-essential."Our Sages teach that he who has one hundred desires two hundred. An insatiable appetite for more, a voracious need for the latest, being unsatisfied without the newest, the best, the most, robs us of serenity, denies us happiness, and often distracts us from what matters the most.We live with unprecedented freedoms: freedom to practice our religion, freedom of speech, freedom to pursue happiness. And yet, with all those freedoms, our generation remains enslaved. We are slaves to needing "more." We are dominated by needs. Our need for more money, more time, more things, the latest things, a better seat, a better room, more power, more friends, the need to have the last word, even our need to be needed.Our needs, wants, and lack of contentment become our taskmasters. They occupy space in our head and in our hearts, they hijack our thoughts, they dictate to us how to feel and they command us to say things and do things that are self-destructive.This pandemic has forced us to redefine "essential" and "non-essential." With the proper frame of mind, many of us can be empowered in unprecedented ways to sincerely and genuinely sing Dayeinu from the essence of our being.If my children have dedicated teachers and inspired Torah to learn, even if they are missing their campus and its amenities, dayeinu.If we have each other, feel connected and part of a community working together, even if we can't get our haircuts, manicures or upgrade our wardrobes, dayeinu. If we have simchas to celebrate, babies born and couples entering a sacred bond, even if they can't be marked with the usual pomp and circumstance, dayeinu.If we can observe Passover, the holiday of Emunah, Faith, remembering that God runs the world and brings redemption, even if it isn't at a hotel or where we normally go or with the people we are normally with, dayeinu.Above all, if we can breathe easily, if we and those we love have our health, even if we can't enjoy our full lifestyles, dayeinu.On Passover we set ourselves free by singing Dayeinu. We are happy to pause to reflect on what we have and say thank you. Living with limits, finding happiness within what we have, maintaining the capacity to say "enough" is liberating, empowering, and enriching. When we always want more, we never pause to enjoy what we have, and we forfeit what is in the pursuit of what is next.During this Passover, take a few moments to reflect. Look around your table, take stock of your life and don't notice what is missing, what you wish was there. Instead, sing Dayeinu, "enough", and hold tighter onto that which is there. This is a critical theme of Passover. It's the key to setting yourself free.





WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK - CHAYIM ARUCHIM

Zussman Helen Mother Menucha bas Hershl 18 Nissan
Wrightman Hilary Mother Pesha bas Zev 20 Nissan

Eating the Egg at the Seder

The following reasons are specifically given by various commentaries regarding the eating of the egg (with other reasons given for the egg placement), so I have therefore distinguished them:

More Mourning

Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Rema) explains that the custom of eating the egg at the Seder is an outgrowth of having an egg on the Seder plate, and it is eaten as a way of mourning the destruction of the Temple and the lack of the korban pesach.Others explain that while the egg is placed on the Seder plate in commemoration of the korban chagigah, it is eaten as a sign of mourning.Rabbi Isserles points out that the night of the Seder has a unique connection to the destruction of the Temple, as the first day of Passover always falls out on the same day of the week as the Ninth of Av, the day of the destruction of the Temple.According to others, there is a tradition that Abraham passed away on the night of Passover, and the egg is eaten to mourn his passing.Egg With an Eye to the FutureWhile many of the explanations about the egg have to do with mourning our past, the egg also symbolizes our hope and prayer for the future. When a chicken lays an egg, the egg appears to be a completed object. Yet in truth it isn't complete, and the egg is just a preparation for the live creature that will emerge from it later. So too the Exodus from Egypt, while at first appearing to be an end in itself, in truth is only a preparation for the Final Redemption, with the coming of Moshiach—may it be speedily in our days!

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

The wise child asks the same question each year, again and again.That is wisdom: To ask a question of perpetual wonder.Even once it is answered, today is another Exodus. Today the wonder is renewed.

On the night of Passover, the Ari taught, you must enter your home for the Seder with great joy.On this night, all the portals of heaven are opened. On this night, G-d pours down His deepest love upon every Jew. On this night, we were liberated at midnight.On this night, expect wonder.

Torah Summary

On the FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER we read from the book of Exodus (12:21-51) of the bringing of the Passover Offering in Egypt, the Plague of the Firstborn at the stroke of midnight, and how "On this very day, G- d took the Children of Israel out of Egypt."The reading for the SECOND DAY OF PASSOVER, Leviticus 22:26-23:44, includes: a list of the moadim — the "appointed times" on the Jewish calendar for festive celebration of our bond with G- d; the mitzvah to Count the Omer (the 49-day "countdown" to the festival of Shavuot which begins on the 2nd night of Passover); and the obligation to journey to the Holy Temple to "to see and be seen before the face of G- d" on the three annual pilgrimage festivals — Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot.

On the SEVENTH DAY OF PASSOVER we read how on this day the sea split for the Children of Israel and drowned the pursuing Egyptians, and the "Song at the Sea" sung by the people upon their deliverance Exodus 13:17-15:26;

.On the EIGHTH DAY OF PASSOVER we read Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17. Like the reading for the second day, it catalogues the annual cycle of festivals, their special observances, and the offerings brought on these occasions to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Eighth Day's special connection with the Future Redemption is reflected in the Haftorah (reading from the Prophets) for this day (Isaiah 10:32-12:6).

HUMOUR???

One Shabbat morning at congregation Shaarei Shamayim, Rabbi Felder asked the assistant rabbi, Rabbi Rosenberg to give the sermon. Rabbi Rosenberg addressed the congregation and said, “Hashem, I hate coconuts.”
Rabbi Felder looked at the assistant rabbi, wondering where this was going. Rabbi Rosenberg continued, "Hashem, I hate eggs." Now Rabbi Felder was totally perplexed. Rabbi Rosenberg continued, "Hashem, I am not crazy about almonds either, or even straight sugar or salt. But after you mix them all together and bake them in the oven, I love macaroons!”
Rabbi Rosenberg continued. "Hashem, help us realize that when things come up that we don't like, whenever we don't understand what You are doing, that we need to wait and see what You are making. After you get through mixing and baking, it'll probably be something even better than macaroons."

A British Jew is waiting in line to be knighted by the Queen. He is to kneel in front of her and recite a sentence in Latin when she taps him on the shoulders with her sword. However, when his turn comes, he panics in the excitement of the moment and forgets the Latin. Then, thinking fast, he recites the only other sentence he knows in a foreign language, which he remembers from the Passover seder:"Ma nishtana ha layla ha zeh mi kol ha laylot."Puzzled, Her Majesty turns to her advisor and whispers, "Why is this knight different from all other knights?"

What kind of cheese do I eat on Pesach?Matzo-rella
Who was the best businesswoman in the Bible?Pharaoh's daughter, she pulled a profit out of the water.

From the Haggadah:"It happened once [on Pesach] that Rabbi Eliezer,Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva andRabbi Tarfon were reclining in Bnei Brak"
And then the police showed up.

Riddle of the week

Which Jewish king is mentioned in the hagada?

Answer to last weeks Riddle

because he was cheep

MEDITATION TIME

Illustration of the four sons wearing masks on pieces of Matzah

Mah Nishtana? Why is this year different from all other years?

That in all other years, families and communities unite at the Passover table. This year, so many of us are alone.

That in all other years, our synagogues are bustling with people during the holiday. This year, our houses of worship are silent.

That in all other years, the days before Passover are filled with excitement, in addition to the stress. This year, we are reeling in the face of devastating tragedies. This seder is conducted in the shadow of solitariness and pain.

That in all other years, we begin our seder with the declaration, “whoever is in need, let him come and eat.” This year, our doors are locked.

How do we conduct a seder in the presence of a Covid-19? Here are the 15-steps of the Passover Seder for 2020.

Kadesh -- recite the Kiddush, invite sanctity into your life:

Designate a space in your psyche that is always wholesome, sacred, pure, innocent, and child-like. Go back to your core—to that place in your soul which even the coronavirus can’t destroy. When all external layers are shed, who are you in your essence?

Urchatz -- wash your hands:

Wash your hands again and again, physically and emotionally. Being quarantined gives me an opportunity to clean my hands from all forms of un-cleanliness. Cleanse your life from lying, cheating, betraying, immoral relationships, destructive addictions, etc.

Karpas -- eat a vegetable dipped in salt water:

The vegetable growing low from the ground symbolizes the body, created from earth (adamah). Dip your body into the waters of authentic wisdom, inspiration and Torah. See your body as a conduit for your soul; a channel for you to fulfill your mission in this world.

Yachatz -- break the matzah:

Humility and vulnerability is the message of this fourth step. Strip yourself from pompousness and haughtiness. Get real. During this period, allow yourself to be vulnerable.

Magid -- recite the Haggadah:

Tell the story of our people. We have been around for 4000 years, enduring every conceivable plague in history—and we are still here. We were sustained by the power of love, hope and faith.

Rochtzah -- wash your hands:

Wash your hands, yet again.

You see, 2000 years ago the Rabbis wanted us to wash our hands at least twice during he seder!

Motzei -- recite the blessing HaMotzi, “He extracted bread from the earth:”

Do not take your life for granted. You have bread on the table, it came from grain, which grew in the fields. You will eat it, your digestive system will break it apart, and your 30 trillion red blood cells will carry its nutrients to trillions of cells. Be mindful of the miracle of life, and say thank you.

Matzah -- recite the blessing on the matzah and eat it:

The Talmud describes matzah as "bread of poverty," pristine flower and water without yeast. This is what we consume on the night of our liberation, because freedom happens when I can discover who I am at my core, without all the accessories.

Maror -- eat the bitter herbs:

Feel the pain and the bitterness, and the jumble of emotions that come with this pandemic. Cry for the people suffering, reeling from loss or illness. During the coming days and weeks, phone each day five lonely people and offer them love and empathy. Tell them you are thinking of them and praying for them.

Korach -- eat a sandwich of matzah and maror (in ancient times together with the Passover lamb):

Life is a roller-coaster of beautiful and rich moments (Passover lamb), bland moments (unleavened matzah), and painful moments (bitter herbs). As a virus rages, we must learn how to sandwich all of life into a single mosaic. We cry for the pain and the loss, but we also celebrate the silver linings, and are grateful for all the blessings.

Shulchan Orach – set the table and eat the festive meal with your loved ones:

Coronavirus sent us all home—for a long period of time. Apparently, G-d wants us to do some work in this quarantined region we call home. Do I need to work on my marriage? Do I need to enhance my relationships with my children? Do I need to learn to relax? Do I need to let go? Can we just sit around the table and bond?

Tzafun -- eat the hidden afikoman:

At this point in the Seder, we eat the hidden Afikoman. During this crisis of Covid-19, we are each given an opportunity work on our inner skeletons and change ourselves from within. There are emotional and spiritual viruses in me which I must tackle and extricate.

Beirach -- recite grace:

Show gratitude. Meditate and say thank you for all the blessings in your life, from your lungs inhaling, to having a bed to sleep on.

Halel -- recite psalms of praise:

Every breath you take and every move you make is an opportunity for praise and thanksgiving. One invisible virus changed the entire world. How many things must go right every day, every second, for our planet to function normally?

Nitrtzah – Our service is pleasing to our Divine Creator:

Our lives are not random. Even a mad virus is not arbitrary. Every moment has purpose; every one of our lives is part of the cosmic symphony. Ask yourself, I’m I fulfilling the purpose of my creation?

G-d's desire in creating the world was that we build a personal, intimate relationship with Him and that we transform our animal soul and our world into a Divine abode, into a world of goodness, kindness and love.

Next year in Jerusalem!

STORY TIME

It was the day before Passover and the Baal Shem Tov was in a happy mood as he and his disciples gathered for the ceremony of preparing the specially watched water for the matzot baked right before the onset of the holiday. But soon after the water was prepared, everyone noticed a drastic change in the mood of the Baal Shem Tov, from happiness to deep melancholy.As usual, the Baal Shem Tov himself led the evening prayers, but his devotions were accompanied by heart-rending sobs. His Chasidim were shocked, since he usually prayed with tremendous joy, especially Passover eve.Later that night, the Baal Shem Tov summoned ten of his disciples. "I want you to gather outside my room, and together, recite the Tikun Chatzot (midnight prayers). Just remember what I am about to tell you. If you see that I faint, do not touch me or do anything at all to revive me. The only action you must take is to recite Psalms until I come back to myself."The Chasidim followed his orders, assembling outside the Baal Shem Tov's room and saying the midnight prayer. After a short while, the scribe, Reb Tzvi, ran from the Baal Shem Tov's room in a panic, exclaiming, "The Rebbe is lying on the floor in a faint!"The Chasidim began reciting Psalms as they had been told, and continued all through the night, sobbing and imploring G-d to bring their master back to this world in good health.Finally, after dawn, the Baal Shem Tov awakened, but he was weak and unable to walk. He asked his disciples to carry him to the mikva, to immerse in its purifying waters.When the Baal Shem Tov regained his strength, he returned to the study hall to lead the morning prayers. Before beginning, to the surprise of everyone, he instructed those present to concentrate on the holy intentions that accompany the Rosh Hashana prayers.Throughout the entire service, the Baal Shem Tov wept. Even later in the day, when the time arrived to bake the special matzot, usually a time of great joy, the Baal Shem Tov's face still showed great concern and seriousness. After the afternoon service, the disciples recited the Passover eve prayers, and the Baal Shem Tov sobbed still more.Finally, night fell and the Baal Shem Tov sat down together with his disciples at the Seder table. But instead of illuminating the evening with his brilliant exposition of the Hagada, he simply read through the text, making no comments at all. When the first part of the Hagada had been recited, the Baal Shem Tov's mood changed; his gloom lifted, and he suddenly began to laugh. Finally the Baal Shem Tov turned to his disciples and said, "Now, I will explain to you what happened.""The day before Passover eve, the day of drawing the special water, I saw that a decree was made in Heaven against 400 Jewish families. These families were destined to be taken away, G-d forbid, from this world! I ascended to the supernal worlds and did everything in my power to have this decree annulled, but all of my efforts were to no avail. After all of my spiritual exertion, all that remained for me was simply to put my faith in G-d that all would be well."When I awoke the next morning, I saw that the decree was not revoked. In fact, it was even stronger than before. That is why such a sadness overcame me. Then I saw something else: A middle-aged couple sat around a Seder table in a far-away city. This couple had no children, and were sitting alone at their table, reciting the Hagada. When they reached the part describing Pharaoh's terrible decree to throw all the infant Jewish boys into the Nile, the woman began arguing against the Alm-ghty, 'No! This cannot be! If I were the mother of children,' she cried, 'would I do such a thing? Would I throw my children into the water? As bad as a child may be, is that how parents behave?' And the good woman did not stop. She continued berating the Creator, saying, 'How long will You keep us in exile? You say you are our Father! You take us out of exile and bring the Redemption!'"Her husband tried to calm her down. 'Have faith! Surely you know that everything G-d does is for the good and there is no evil in His actions!' But the woman was unmoved by all his arguments. 'A father must have mercy on his children no matter what,' she insisted."And then," the Baal Shem Tov continued, "there was a great commotion in Heaven. One group of angels said, 'What chutzpa! How can this woman make demands on G-d?' Then another group of angels began disagreeing, claiming, 'Here is a simple Jewish woman, one who, without being a mother herself, feels so passionately for G-d's children! She is right!'I was very fearful," said the Baal Shem Tov, "for I did not know which group would win the argument! And then what happened? The couple drank the four cups of wine, and finished the Seder. Then the woman said to her husband, 'True, it is a bitter exile, but now it is a Yom Tov, a holy day for G-d and the Jews. We should celebrate it with joy.' And the man and his wife danced merrily around the table, their hearts filled with joy for their Creator in the happiness of the holiday."All the celestial beings watched them in wonder. They saw the great joy with which this couple could celebrate the holy Yom Tov, even in bitter exile, and how they fulfilled G-d's will, despite the deep darkness of the exile. When the angels witnessed the unbridled joy of the couple, those who were accusers became advocates and the decree was overturned. And that is when I laughed, for I rejoiced in the power of joy which saved the lives of four hundred holy Jewish souls."

THE SEDER 1945

March 27, 1945.Holocaust survivor Solly Ganor, living in Herzelia, Israel wrote up a emarkable story about a Passover seder he experienced, 70 years ago. The seder took place on March 27, 1945, in Dachau, the notorious Nazi concentration camp. He was a youngster at the time, a slave laboring in the death camp where hundreds of thousands perished.This is how Solly recounted the story:It is the story of a man who made a difference even while we dwelt in the Nazi hell. We did not know his name. We only knew him as the “Rebbe” and that he came to us from the Lodz Ghetto, through Auschwitz.One evening, the “Rebbe” came to see us in our barracks. He was the same weird man from Lodz who staged the Purim party and almost got us killed by the German guards. We never found out if he was really a rabbi, but we all called him: ”Rebbe.” He knew all the prayers by heart and always urged us to keep the faith even in Dachau.Burgin, the head Jewish Capo, gave him the job of burying the dead and he had plenty to do, as more and more of our prisoners died. It was a dreadful job, but it was better than carrying hundred pound cement sacks on your back. He called himself ”Chevra Kadishe” and was known to say Kaddish after every burial, which earned him our respect. Everyone considered him strange, but he was a kind man and always smiled, which was another reason why we thought he was crazy.We were sitting around the small round iron stove trying to warm ourselves, when he came into our barracks. He smelled of the dead. We were well acquainted with that smell. “Yidden, peisach kumt in tzvelf tug un men darf baken matze,” (“Jews, Passover is coming in twelve days and we have to bake matzos.”) He spoke Yiddish differently from our Lithuanian Yiddish and sometimes it was difficult to understand him. He also had the strange habit of calling us “Yidden” and never called us by our names. We just looked at him in astonishment.In the last few weeks, our situation had deteriorated. The watery soup we got for lunch became even more watery, and the daily portion of bread became thin and quite often green with mold. The German overseers showed increasing nervousness as the Allies were closing in and were even crueler, beating us at every opportunity. We knew that the Allies were somewhere in Germany, but whether we could hold out till they reached our camp was doubtful.After the incident we had with the ”Rebbe” on Purim, we weren't too surprised that he would come up with another loony idea. Then he gave us a sly look and wagged his forefinger at us. ”Let me tell you, Yidden, we shall soon celebrate not only 'Yetzias Mitzraim' but also 'Yeztias Deutschland.'” He said this and gave a short high pitched laugh. (“We shall soon celebrate not only the exodus from Egypt, but also the exodus from Germany.”)We thought that his statement ”Exodus from Germany,” instead of liberation, was part of his strange behavior. ”From your mouth to G-d's ears, but how on earth do you know that Pesach is in twelve days?” my father asked in surprise. “I know because it is four days before the end of March!” he said triumphantly. That didn't any make more sense to us than his precise knowledge of Jewish holidays. We hardly knew what day it was, let alone the days of our holidays.“And to where is this Exodus taking us from Germany? Shall we cross the Red Sea to the promised land?” Chaim asked with derision. “No, we shall cross the Mediterranean to the promised land, young man,” he answered quietly. We looked at each other. Perhaps his ideas were not so crazy. We all thought that if we would survive this purgatory, the only place left for us to go was the Land of Israel (known at the time as Palestine).“So, how about some flour? I will bake the matzos and make the proper blessing to make it kosher,” he said, rubbing his hands. “For G-d's sake, Rebbe, where do you expect us to get flour? We are all starving here and you come with your crazy ideas,“ one of the prisoners said in an irritated voice.“Look, if you want to have an exodus from Germany, we must have matzos,” he said, stubbornly. “Or there won't be an exodus from Germany,” he said, sticking up his chin. Then he suddenly pointed his finger at me and said, ”You work in the German OT kitchen, you bring us the flour!”I looked at him in astonishment. My father got really mad at him. “You want my son to risk his life to steal flour from the Germans for your Matzos?” Father practically shouted at him.“For our Matzahs,” the ‘Rebbe’ said calmly. “He is the only one who can get the flour.” I thought about the cellar in the German kitchen, where they kept the foodstuffs. It was not only under lock and key, but the cook was always hanging around. There was no way I could get into the cellar, and if I did, I certainly wouldn't bother with flour, but would steal food to help us survive.The “Rebbe,” as if sensing my thoughts, held up his hand. “I have something that may help you get the flour,” he said, and took out from under his armpit a small rag tied with a string. He carefully untied it and took out two objects. He put it on his left palm and stuck it under my nose. I recoiled in disgust. They were two foul smelling teeth with some gold attached to them.We were all stunned. We all knew that he buried the dead. When he saw our looks he smiled. “It's not what you think. I didn't pull any teeth from the dead. It was Zundel who gave it to me before he died. I promised him that I would barter the teeth for flour to make matzos for the Passover Seder. You wouldn't want me to go back on the promise I made to a dying Jew?” he said looking at us accusingly.“Don't you understand? Pesach is the holiday of our freedom from slavery, aren't we slaves here for the Nazis? You know very well that this may be our salvation and the gate for our exodus from Germany.”Obtaining the Flour To this day, I don't know how I agreed to the Rebbe's crazy idea. Religion was the last thing on our minds under the circumstances. To some extent, we blamed G-d for what happened to the Jewish people in Europe. There was one sentence in the Haggadah that especially angered us: “In every generation our enemies rise to destroy us, but the Almighty always saves us from their hands.” He certainly was not saving all of us…The next day, I took the gold teeth with me to the German kitchen where I was working. The cook was a mean old German man who always cursed us and would strike us with his iron soup ladle. But he never really hurt us. How should I approach him? What should I tell him? “Here are two gold teeth extracted from a dead Jew. Can you please give me some flour to bake some matzos for Passover?” He would probably deliver me to the SS guards to be shot.The more I thought about it, the crazier it sounded. Finally, I decided to abandon the idea. When the cook saw me he called me over. “You can start cleaning the mess hall and then the wash room.” His tone of voice was much milder than before. I felt a difference in his voice. While he spoke to me, he kept looking at the sky.

THE SEDER 1945

Sure enough, a squadron of American fighter planes came roaring over the roofs. I saw them wheeling down towards the railroad tracks and heard their cannons rattling, followed by loud explosions. They must have been attacking some nearby target. It was an incredible sight and made my heart leap with joy. The cook almost fainted with fright and ran down to the cellar where the food was stored. I ran after him, but he began shouting, “Get out! Get out! Get out! I saw you gloating when the planes came over.” He screamed at me. I quickly got out of the cellar hoping he would calm down after a while. I had made a huge mistake by making him angry. I called out to him and begged his forgiveness. “I was just frightened of the attacking planes, please forgive me,” I said. We looked at each other.I could see in his eyes that he was thinking the same thing as I, “Soon the Americans will be here.”It was then that I suddenly blurted out the story of the Passover holiday and that we needed flour to bake matzos. It was as if the “Rebbe” had taken control of my tongue and made me say these things. Then I slowly opened the rag the “Rebbe” had given me and extended the two gold teeth to him.For a while he looked at me as if I had gone mad. Then I saw some recognition in his eyes. “Is that the holiday Passover when our savior Yashke (the founder of Christianity) sat with his disciples and ate the unleavened bread at the last supper? Is the unleavened bread what you Jews call matzos?“It was my turn to be surprised. I knew that he was an observant Catholic by the cross he wore around his neck, and I saw him cross himself several times when the American planes came over. This was an entirely unexpected turn of events.As children we were taught that Yashke was always connected with trouble for the Jewish people. But if Yashske can help us get the flour, nu nu, we will take it… I was beginning to be hopeful. He looked at the gold teeth for a while but didn't take them. He didn't say anything more, and told me to clean up the mess hall and the wash room.Before we went back to the camp, he came out of the kitchen and gave me a small paper bag full of white flour. “I think our lord would want you to have matzos for your holiday. After all he was one of your people. Sometimes we forget that.” I don't know why he gave me the flour, perhaps be thought that I would say a good word for him when the Americans came, or perhaps he did it out of religious convictions. The fact was that he didn't take the gold teeth. Whatever the reasons, the “Rebbe” had his flour and, on the small iron stove, he baked us little white wafers that reminded us vaguely of matzos. They had small holes in them and were slightly burned.

The Seder Begins

It was on March 27, 1945, when he brought the matzos and declared that the Passover Seder would now begin.“Out of the seven ingredients needed to conduct the Seder, we now only have two. Matzos and Marror, but the Almighty will understand,” this weird man said.“'Rebbe', where is the Marror (bitter herb) that you mentioned?” We asked him. He looked at us. “Our lives in this camp are the Marror; all of our lives are bitter enough.” He then divided the matzah, gave each of us a piece and made us say the blessings.“Since you are the youngest of the group, you will ask the four questions ’mah nishtana.’” To my surprise, I remembered most of them and sing-songed the questions with the help of the others. We did not hide the 'Afikomen' because there were no children in our camp. The children had all been sent to Auschwitz to be gassed.We had to go to work the next day and we were hungry and dead tired, but that night of Passover, we joined the “Rebbe” in holding some kind of a Seder. He remembered most of the Haggadah by heart; so did my father who had studied in a yeshiva when he was a boy. Some of the other participants also knew parts of the Haggadah. Some of us joined in saying the blessings, but we were all asleep before the “Rebbe” finished chanting the Haggadah. I vaguely remembered him singing Chad Gadya.At the end, he made a short prayer in Yiddish: “Please, forgive us, Oh Master of the Universe, for conducting such a poor Passover Seder service. But it was the best we could do, and please deliver us, Oh Lord, from the hands of our enemies who rose up, once again, in this generation to destroy us.”What should I tell you? We all felt as if we were there at “yetzias Mitzraim” (the Egyptian Exodus) and we believed the “Rebbe” that we would also be at “yetzias Deutschland” (the German Exodus).He woke me before he left and told me, “You deserve a special blessing for bringing the flour for the Matzos. You will be among those who will soon celebrate the exodus from Germany to the Holy Land.”About a month later, the war was over and we were rescued by the US army. It was May 2, 1945.

And Today…

We live today in very different times. Yet we still tell the same story as the “Rebbe” and the Jews in Dachau. Their story, our collective story, still inspires us.Each year, when Pesach comes around, I ask myself the question: How can I turn my Seder into the meaningful and trans-formative experience it was meant to be?The holiday of Pesach, commemorating the exodus of the Jewish people from the land of Egypt some 3,300 years ago (in the year 1313 B.C.E.) reflects the liberation of the soul from the psychological and emotional constraints represented by Egypt.What is Egypt? The Hebrew term for Egypt (Mitzrayim) may be translated as "inhibitions," or "restrictions." All of us struggle with various inner and outer inhibitions that stifle our growth and prevent us from maximising our potentials. We may be paralysed by fear, shame, guilt, resentment, codependency and addictions. We may be lacking the ability to love, to dream, to cry and to let go of our defences, or we may be enslaved by unhealthy urges and feelings of envy, animosity and bitterness.Often, our inner Jewishness—that intimate, wholesome and absolute relationship with the Master of the universe—is enslaved. It is there, but we know not how to access it.In this sense, we are all in one or another type of "Egypt," and the Seder experience presents each of us with an opportunity to leave our personal Egypt and embark on the road toward redemption.During the Seder, you and I owe it to ourselves to open our hearts and welcome into our lives the divine energy of liberation vibrating through the cosmos on the eve of Passover. To become fully you, fully human, fully Jewish.

Reclaiming Your Parents

The Talmud says, and it's quoted in the Haggadah, that "A second cup is poured and now the child asks 'Mah Nishtanah.'"The Talmudic words "now the child asks" ("V'kan Haben Shoel") may also be translated as, "now the child may borrow."Not all of us have been privileged to grow up with parents in our lives. Some were orphaned at a very young age; others may have had physical parents but never had emotional parents. Some of us were privileged to have nurturing parents who have since passed on to the next world. In all of the above cases the children are left behind, a void in their hearts. Here is the time during the Seder where "the child may borrow" a father and a mother. At this point in time, our father in heaven opens the chamber of unconditional love and boundless nurture, through which we may reclaim the confidence and security we so desperately needed from our fathers and mothers. Now the child is given permission to ask all the questions he could never ask. He may declare: "Father, I want to ask you four questions."Because slaves don’t ask questions. Free men and women ask questions. Not only because they feel they have a right to ask, but also because they fear not answers that may challenge them and perhaps even transform them.