

Torah Weekly

Everyone Has a Story

When I was invited a few weeks ago to lecture at a European retreat in Davos, Switzerland, that was hosted in the same luxury venue where the world economic leaders (including former president Bill Clinton) had met for their own economic summit a few years ago, I knew there was no way I'd refuse. The resort weekend was organized by Rabbi Sholom Liberow, director of the European Jewish Study Network (EJSN) and his wonderful wife, Leah. Aside from their sterling care and exceptional attention to details—both material and spiritual—the setting on the postcard picturesque Swiss Alps couldn't have been more awesome.

But truly, for me, there was an additional incentive to attend. My father was born in Switzerland where, for many years, my grandfather served as chief rabbi in the city of Basil. Switzerland became a haven of refuge for my father's family during the perilous Holocaust years and one of the very few islands of normalcy in a sea raging with anti-Semitic hatred, persecution and death for European Jewry. For me, in a tiny way, being a part of this program was almost a way of somehow paying back a debt of gratitude to my father's homeland.

A retreat weekend is always interesting, full of meaningful programs, and saturated with learning and spiritual growth. But for me, the most inspirational part of these weekends is meeting so many different people, from all over

the world—in this case, from places as diverse as London, California, Tel Aviv, Italy, Amsterdam, Ranana, and Brussels.

Somehow the anonymity of a diverse group of strangers coming together from far and near, old and young, opens the channels of communication, awakens sleeping hearts and forges new bonds. Personal life stories begin flowing freely just as the choice wines at each meal.

Somehow, it's easier to open up to and share with someone who lives in another country, who in all likelihood you won't be meeting up with again sometime soon. And so, in hushed private conversations in corners of sumptuous rooms, or in open gregarious table talk over a Shabbat luncheon, you learn incredible stories about people's lives.

What never fails to impress me from these conversations is how extraordinarily special our people is. If you seek, you will discover that *everyone* has a story.

A story of heroism and bravery. A story of courage and faith. A story of inconceivable kindness. Or a story of return. But always a story with a rich and vibrant history.

Whether the story occurred to a parent, a bubbly or zaidy, or a great-grandparent, our people's history is rich and replete with meaning.

History and present life choices intersect seamlessly as a beloved parent, bubby, or zaidy becomes instrumental in forging us into who we have become.

I hope to share some of these

stories in the upcoming weeks. But here's a little story of how I was reminded of my own grandfather right on the Swiss Alps, in his homeland—in Davos, Switzerland.

One of my lectures over the weekend was on "relationships." I was more than a little taken aback when I noticed that one of the participants was a very elderly, married gentleman who could probably have lectured *me* on relationships! (There was another concurrent, more relevant workshop but he chose instead to attend mine).

The puzzle was solved, however, when he approached me gratefully after my talk.

"I knew your grandfather very well," he said, delighted. "Your grandfather was my rabbi and my teacher." He paused. "I still remember him well. It gives me great pleasure to hear his granddaughter lecturing."

I have often met people who knew or learned from my grandparents. But to meet someone there, in Switzerland, who knew them from so long ago, at a period in their lives when they were just beginning to build their family and when my own father was just a young boy, seemed particularly special. I wanted to ask him so much about my father's family, but in his typically reserved Swiss manner, he wasn't very forthcoming.

He shared only one bit of wisdom before the weekend was over. "Do not be so modest," he admonished me during one of the meals. "Remember who you come

April 10 - 16, 2022
9-15 Nissan, 5782

Readings for Passover First Day:
First Torah: Exodus 12:21-51 Second
Torah: Numbers 28:16-25
Haftarah: Joshua 3:5-7; Joshua 5:2 - 6:1;
Joshua 6:27
Second Day:
First Torah: Leviticus 22:26 - 23:44
Second Torah: Numbers 28:16-25
Haftarah: Kings II 23:1-9; Kings II 23:21-25

PASSOVER ONE

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi or Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center
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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

from. Walk upright, with great pride."

I think of his words. And I think it is a message that must reverberate within each of us. We each hold the treasured keys to a rich history. We each have a bubby or zaidy—or a bubby and zaidy's bubby or zaidy—in whom we can, and must, take pride.

Search deeply and you will uncover your own personal saga of courage and heroism. Cherish the stories and lessons from your past. Take pride in your personal stories and allow them to forge you into the person you wish to become.

And, at all times, remember from where you have come.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

What Is Passover? The eight-day Jewish holiday of Passover is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan, April 15 - 23, 2022. Passover (Pesach) commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. [Pesach](#) is observed by avoiding leaven, and highlighted by the [Seder](#) meals that include four cups of wine, eating matzah and bitter herbs, and retelling the story of the Exodus.

In Hebrew it is known as Pesach (which means “to pass over”), because G-d passed over the Jewish homes when killing the Egyptian firstborn on the very first Passover eve.

As told in the Bible, after many decades of slavery to the Egyptian pharaohs, during which time the Israelites were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors, G-d saw the people’s distress and sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message: “Send forth My people, so that they may serve Me.” But despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed G-d’s command. G-d then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues, afflicting them and destroying everything from their livestock to their crops. At the stroke of midnight of 15 Nissan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), G-d visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians, killing all their firstborn. While doing so, G-d spared the children of Israel, “passing over” their homes—hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh’s resistance was broken, and he virtually chased his former slaves out of the land. The Israelites left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have time to rise. Six hundred thousand adult males, plus many more women and children, left Egypt on that day and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their birth as G-d’s chosen people.

In ancient times the Passover observance included the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, which was roasted and eaten at the Seder on the first night of the holiday. This was the case until the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the 1st century.

Sunday, April 10, 2022 --- 9 Nissan, 5782

Seven Day Feast Begun (366 BCE)

Following his [180 day feast](#) for all his international subjects, which ended a day earlier, King Achashverosh began a seven-day feast for his subjects living in Shushan, his capital. This feast ended with the death of his queen, Vashti.

Passing of R. Aryeh Levin, the "Tzaddik of Jerusalem" (1969)

R. Aryeh Levin, known as the “*tzaddik* [saint] of [Jerusalem](#),” was legendary for his selfless dedication in assisting his fellow Jews, whether the sick, the poor, or those suffering under the British regime during the Mandate of Palestine (1920–1948).

Monday, April 11, 2022 --- 10 Nissan, 5782

Miriam's Passing (1274 BCE)

[Miriam](#), the sister of Moses, passed away at the age of 126 on the 10th of Nissan of the year 2487 from creation (1274 BCE) -- 39 years after the Exodus and exactly one year before the Children of Israel entered the Holy Land. It is in deference to her passing that the "[Great Shabbat](#)" is commemorated on the Shabbat before Passover rather than the calendar date of the miracle's occurrence, Nissan 10.

Israelites Cross Jordan (1273 BCE)

Three days after the two spies dispatched by Joshua scouted the city of Jericho (see entry for "[Nissan 7](#)" above), the children of Israel were ready to enter the land promised by G-d to their ancestors as their eternal heritage. As they approached the Jordan with the Holy Ark carried by the Kohanim (priests) in their lead, the river parted for them, as the waters of the Red Sea had split when their fathers and mothers marched out of Egypt 40 years earlier. (Joshua 4) the burning cities.

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 --- 11 Nissan, 5782

Mass Circumcision (1273 BCE)

Following the Jewish nation's crossing of the Jordan into the land of Canaan (see entry for "[Nissan 10](#)"), and in preparation for the bringing of the [Passover Offering](#), all the men were circumcised under the guidance of [Joshua](#).

Due to the weather conditions in the desert which were not conducive for the healing of wounds, throughout the forty year desert sojourn only the Tribe of Levi circumcised their sons.

Passing of Nachmanides (1270)

11 Nissan marks the passing of [Nachmanides](#) ("Ramban", Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) -- Torah scholar, Kabbalist, philosopher, physician and Jewish leader -- in 1270.

Passing of Sheloh (1630)

Rabbi Isaiah Halevi Horowitz was a noted kabbalist, famous as the "Sheloh Hakodosh" (the saintly Sheloh) the acronym of his magnum opus, *Shnei Luchot Habrit*. He held Rabbinical positions in various communities in Europe, before emigrating to Israel. He passed away in Tiberius at the age of 70.

Lubavitcher Rebbe Born (1902)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, was born on this date in 1902.

Wednesday, April 13, 2022 --- 12 Nissan, 5782

Hezekiah Falls Ill (548 BCE)

On this day, King Hezekiah, the greatest of all the Judean kings, fell seriously ill, and was informed by the [Prophet Isaiah](#) that he would die, for G-d was displeased with the fact that Hezekiah had never married.

Hezekiah had refused to get married because he had prophetically foreseen that his children would lead the Jewish people to sin. He erred, for it is man's job to heed the commandment of procreating, and the rest is in the hands of G-d.

Hezekiah asked the prophet to pray on his behalf, but he refused, insisting that the Heavenly decree was final. The king asked the prophet to leave, saying that he had a tradition from his ancestors that one should never despair, even if a sharp sword is drawn across one's throat. The king prayed to G-d, and his prayer was accepted. G-d sent Isaiah to tell him that he would recover and that his life would be extended for fifteen years. Hezekiah recovered three days later, on the first day of Passover.

The King later married Prophet Isaiah's daughter.

Ezra Departs Babylon (348 BCE)

A year following the building of the second Temple in Jerusalem (see Jewish History for the [3rd of Adar](#)) Ezra gathered many of the Jews who had remained in Babylon and began a journey to the land of Israel. Though he certainly wanted to go earlier, his teacher, Baruch ben Neriah was too frail to travel, and Ezra refused to leave him until his passing.

Ezra was the head of the [Sanhedrin](#), who all traveled together with him.

On the 12th of Nissan, Ezra departed from the river of Ahava, the beginning of the long journey to the land of Israel which would last for nearly five months (see Jewish history for the [1st of Av](#)).

Thursday, April 14, 2022 --- 13 Nissan, 5782

Abraham's Brit (1714 BCE)

According to one account in the *Midrash*, on the 13th of Nissan of the year 2048 from creation (1714 BCE), G-d appeared to Abram, changed his name to Abraham ("father of a multitude of nations") and commanded him to circumcise himself and all members of his household--and all future descendants at the age of eight days --so that "My covenant (*brit*) shall be in your flesh, as an [eternal covenant](#)." Abraham was [99 years old](#) at the time, and his son Ishmael, 13. (Isaac, who was born a year later, was the first Jew to be circumcised at [eight days](#)).