

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

January 22 - 28, 2023
29 Tevet - 6 Shevat, 5783

Torah reading:
Exodus 10:1 - 13:16
Haftarah:
Jeremiah 46:13-28

PARSHAT BO

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/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 Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No Place Like Home A 2013 Pew Research study found that the Passover Seder is the most practiced mitzvah by 21st-century Jews in the United States:

Attending a **Seder** is an extremely common practice for the group. While only 23% of U.S. Jews said they attend religious services at least monthly, 70% said they participated in a Seder last year. Participation in a Seder is more common among Jewish Americans than any of the other practices we asked about, including fasting for all or part of Yom Kippur (53%)—often considered the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

Why is the **Passover** Seder so important to the Jewish people, even more so than other practices? What message does the Seder capture that, consciously or subconsciously, speaks to so many Jews today? To understand this, we need to look at the very first Passover Seder, recorded in this week's Parshah, which was celebrated not as a remembrance for a past event, but as a commemoration for an event that was about to take place. The Jews were commanded to prepare the Passover sacrifices, and to celebrate with matzah and bitter herbs on the night before the actual Exodus. But unlike the Passover offerings that would be offered in subsequent years, the very first Passover offering had to be offered not in one central location, but rather in the home of each family. Furthermore, each family was commanded to remain within the confines of the home for the entire night. They were commanded to place some of the blood of the offering on the doorposts and lintels of their homes.

Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Draw forth or buy for

yourselves sheep for your families, and slaughter the Passover sacrifice. You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip [it] in the blood that is in the basin, and you shall touch from the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and to the two doorposts. You shall not go out, any man, from the entrance of his house until morning."

Why the blood on the doorposts? Why the need to remain within the home until morning? The conventional answer is that marking the entrance and remaining in the home protected the Jews from the plague of the death of the firstborn. The deeper interpretation, however, is that by using the doorposts and the lintel as part of the **mitzvah**, the home of every Jew became holy. The commandment not to leave the home is because as a result of offering the Passover sacrifice in the home, the home became a miniature Temple and a haven of holiness.

At the birth of the nation, as the people of Israel were about to emerge from Egypt as a distinct nation, Moses communicated G-d's message to them: the goal of Judaism is to transform every corner of life and every place on earth. The objective of Judaism is that spirituality and worship not be reserved for imposing monuments, towers or sanctuaries. Judaism seeks to transform each and every home into a place of spirituality, holiness, peace and tranquility.

Granted, the intensity of holiness is indeed stronger in Judaism's most sacred space, on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Thus, in subsequent generations the Pesach offering could be offered only in the traveling Tabernacle, and later in the Temple in **Jerusalem**. Yet the very first Passover Seder, offered in the critical hours when our nation was being born, served as a symbol to teach us

that the essence of Judaism is spreading holiness to every corner of the world, into each and every home.

Thus, intuitively, the Jew feels that to connect to the core of his Jewish identity, more important than experiencing the intensity of holiness in shul on **Yom Kippur**, he must experience holiness as it spreads to the home, where it engulfs in its embrace the totality of the Jew, his home, his possessions, his family and his friends.

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

Let My People Go

The words ring out again and again in the biblical account of the Exodus story, as Moses repeatedly demands of the unrelenting Pharaoh that he grant the Jewish people their freedom.

Actually, the precise words that Moses conveys to the stubborn monarch in the name of G-d are, "*Shalach ami v'yaavduni*," "Let My people go so that they may serve Me."

It is interesting to see how some expressions and phrases become memorable and popular, while others just don't seem to catch on. "Let My People Go" became the theme song for the story of Egypt and the Exodus way beyond the Jewish community. It has been used as a catchphrase for a variety of political causes. Unfortunately, the last Hebrew word of the phrase somehow got lost in the shuffle: *v'yaavduni*—"that they may serve Me"—never quite made it to the top of the charts. The drama of the Exodus captures our imagination, while the fact that that the purpose of leaving Egypt was to go to Sinai, receive G-d's Torah and fulfill Jewish destiny is less emphasized. The call to freedom excites the human spirit; the challenge of service and commitment, by contrast,



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doesn't seem to elicit as much enthusiasm.

I remember back in the early '70s, when Jews the world over were demonstrating for their oppressed brethren in the then Soviet Union, demanding of the Russian government that they allow Jews the freedom to leave if they wanted to. Their rallying cry was, "Let My People Go!" Sadly, they left out the *v'yaavduni*. We were so concerned about political liberties that we forgot a primary purpose of being free: to enjoy religious freedom and live fulfilled Jewish lives.

Indeed, for so many of our Russian brethren, obtaining their exit visas and acquiring freedom of movement did little to help them reclaim their spiritual heritage and identity. Seventy years of organized atheism behind the Iron Curtain left their toll. We are delighted that they can live in Israel (or Brighton Beach), but the fact remains that far too many remain outside of the Jewish community and its spiritual orbit. In my own backyard, here in South Africa, this idea has become blatantly obvious. We have now enjoyed over fifteen years of democracy. There have been four free and fair elections where all citizens have had the opportunity to cast their ballots. It was a long, hard struggle, but political freedom has been achieved. And yet, while confidence levels in our country's future are at an all-time high, millions of people living here are still suffering from the very same hardships they endured under apartheid—ignorance, poverty and poor health. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu has castigated the country's black leaders for allowing a situation where a small number of well-connected blacks have become enriched while the masses remain impoverished. HIV/AIDS is still public enemy number one, and even the family members of some of the most high-profile political figures have succumbed to the deadly disease.

It is clear that political freedom minus spiritual purpose equals disillusionment. Leaving Egypt without the vision of Sinai would be getting all dressed up with nowhere to go. It is not enough to let our people go. We have to take them somewhere. "That they may serve Me" means that we need to use our political freedom to experience the freedom and fulfillment of faith, and a life of spiritual purpose dedicated to G-d's service.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Sunday, January 22, 2023 --- 29 Tevet 5783

Winter

According to Rabbi Judah (cited in the Talmud, Bava Metzia 106b), Tevet 29 marks the end of winter. (As per Genesis 8:22, the year consists of six 2-month "seasons": seedtime, harvest, cold, heat, summer and winter.)

Passing of R. Yitzchak Kaduri (2006)

Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri, known in recent years as "the eldest of the Kabbalists," in the Holy Land, was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1898. As a youth, he studied under the great "Ben Ish Chai" (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, 1840-1913) and was regarded as an *illu* (prodigy) by the sages of the venerable Baghdad Jewish community. In 1922, Rabbi Yitzchak emigrated to the Holy Land and joined the ranks of the Jerusalem Kabbalists, even as he earned his living for many years as a bookbinder. Over the years his fame grew, and thousands flocked to him to receive his counsel and blessing.

Rabbi Kaduri passed away on the 29th of Tevet of 2006, age 108. Hundreds of thousands attended his funeral in Jerusalem.

Jews of Tripoli Saved (1795)

In 1793, Tripoli (in what is now Libya) fell under the rule of the cruel Ali Burghul, who took advantage of divisions within the local leadership to take control of the city. Burghul terrorized the city's inhabitants—especially the Jews—with excessive taxes and unjust executions. Among those executed was the son of R. Abraham Khalfon, the head of the Jewish community.

In 1795, a local Jew helped negotiate an agreement between the opposing factions, and on 29 Teves they succeeded in driving Burghul out of the city. The community celebrated this day each year as a day of rejoicing and would recite a special hymn recounting the miracle (printed in *Se'u Zimrah*, pp. 191ff.).

The community of Tripoli kept a similar date of rejoicing one week earlier, on 23 Teves, commemorating the date (in 1705) when a siege that had been placed on the city by the ruler of Tunisia was lifted.

Monday, January 23, 2023 --- 1 Shevat, 5783

Moses Repeats the Torah

On the first of Shevat in the year 2488 from creation, Moses convened the Jewish people and began the 37- day "review of the Torah" contained in the Book of Deuteronomy, which he concluded on the day of his passing on Adar 7 of that year.

Thursday, January 26, 2023 --- 4 Shevat, 5783

R. Abraham Kalisker (1810)

Rabbi Abraham of Kalisk (1741-1810) was a controversial figure in the 3rd generation of Chassidic leaders. In his youth, he was a study partner of Rabbi Elijah "the Gaon of Vilna," who led the initial opposition against Chassidism; but later Rabbi Abraham himself joined the the forbidden *kat* ("sect," as the Chassidic movement was derisively called by its opponents) and became a disciple of Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezeritch, the successor to Chassidism's founder, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. After Rabbi DovBer's passing in 1772, much of the opposition to Chassidism was directed against Rabbi Abraham's disciples, who, more than any other group within the movement, mocked the intellectual elitism of the establishment's scholars and communal leaders; even Rabbi Abraham's own colleagues were dismayed by the "antics" of some of his disciples. In 1777, Rabbi Abraham joined the first Chassidic "aliyah", in which a group of more than 300 Chassidim led by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk emigrated to the Holy Land. Rabbi Abraham passed away in Tiberias on the 4th of Shevat of the year 5570 from creation (1810 CE).

R. Israel Abuchatzera (1984)

Rabbi Israel Abuchatzera (1890-1984), known as "Baba Sali," was born in Tafillalt, Morocco, to the illustrious Abuchatzera family. From a young age he was renowned as a sage, miracle maker and master kabbalist. In 1964 he moved to the Holy Land, eventually settling in the southern development town he made famous, Netivot. He passed away in 1984 on the 4th of Shevat. His graveside in Netivot has become a holy site visited by thousands annually.

Friday, January 27, 2023 --- 5 Shevat, 5783

2nd Gerer Rebbe (1905)

Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter (1847-1905), the second Rebbe in the Chassidic dynasty of Ger -- known for his famed Chassidic work "Sefat Emet" -- passed away on the 5th of Shevat of the year 5665 from creation (1905). He was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Abraham Mordechai.

Shabbat, January 28, 2023 --- 6 Shevat, 5783

Majorcan Jews Guaranteed Protection (1393)

The governor of Majorca issued an edict for the protection of the Jewish inhabitants, providing that any citizen who injures a Jew would be hanged.

The advantageous position of the islands, as well as their newly found protection, attracted many Jews from Provence, Sicily, Tunis, and Algiers, amongst other African cities. The Jews even had their own organizations and representatives by sanction of the King.