

PESACH (PASSOVER)

13-19 Nissan 5784
21-27 April 2024

Torah: Exodus 33:12-34:26,
Numbers 28:19-25
Haftorah: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Omer

TUESDAY NIGHT
IS THE 1ST DAY OF
THE OMER

Psalms Daily

**Psalms for our
brethren in the Holy
Land**

Psalms 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Pirkei Avot (1:8)

Rabbi Yehuda the son of Tabai said: When litigants stand before you (a judge), consider them both guilty; and when they leave your courtroom, having accepted the judgement, regard them as equally righteous.

The Pharaoh Syndrome

People knock pop-psychologists and their euphemisms, but I often wonder if we wouldn't be better off borrowing some of their political correctness when dealing with Torah issues. The four sons, for example, might be better understood as the Gifted Child, the Difficult Child, the Well-Balanced Child and the Inquisitively Challenged Child. "The Desecrators of the Holy Shabbat" might be more inclined towards meaningful dialogue if we modified our terminology to the Sabbatically Challenged.

Switching to "the Chassidically Challenged" could end much inter-sectarian strife, since it lands us all somewhere along the same spectrum. "The Halachically Challenged" may also be helpful for much the same reason. There are also some major aspects of the Exodus story that could be better understood if we would just apply the right nomenclature. Take the Red Sea event that occurred on the seventh day of Passover. It's difficult to understand Pharaoh when you consider matters superficially. He sees an entire nation led by a pillar of fire over a dry bed between two pillars of water that stand as stone walls, yet, like a madman, rushes in with his entire army. And it wasn't like he had no precedent to learn from. One might be tempted to describe Pharaoh in this situation as a little lacking up there, to be polite. But here is a case where one of those pc terminologies comes in useful. You see, Pharaoh was actually quite intellectually capable. It was just that he was monotheistically challenged.

To be more specific, Pharaoh belonged to a subset of the monotheistically challenged that have a fixation with a perceived natural order. It's called "Ma'at" in Ancient Egyptian. Similar to the Buddhist concept of karma. In modernese, "deterministic, materialist reductionism"—which some people still believe physics is all about.

The pathology works like this: When a conflict arises between the

natural order and perceived reality (i.e. a miracle), the subject experiences anxiety. Whereas this anxiety could be easily resolved through the assumption of an Omnipotent Force behind and beyond nature, our subject prefers to simply ignore the obvious reality before his eyes in favor for the world-concept of natural order that he has previously integrated into his perception and personality. This has been known to result in violent death by drowning under the crashing waves of the Red Sea.

We're All Somewhere on the Spectrum

As you can immediately recognize, now that I've provided a more sympathetic view of Pharaoh's personal difficulties, he becomes so much easier to relate to. After all, we all do the same thing all the time. It's called "worry". Worry is a state where we ignore the obvious, perceived reality in favor of a warped, unsubstantiated view of how we imagine the natural order to be. We imagine our life as a struggle between our own competency and the laws of physics, commerce, and social acceptance. And if that were the true reality, we really would have a lot to worry about. The obvious reality is that our daily life is full of miracles straight from Above. We have very little control over where we end up and what we have to do there. Physics doesn't have much say, either. That's just the mode of transport. We only need to do our best with whatever we are given and have confidence in the Director of It All that He knows what He's doing. And if we mess up, say sorry, have confidence that He's good and cares for us, and get on with things.

But instead, we worry.

Why do we worry? Because we don't perceive the miracles. Why don't we perceive the miracles? Because we see this natural order going on all around us, and if there is a natural order, then miracles could not have happened, right? After all, don't miracles mean that nature's laws are temporarily trashed, that life becomes totally weird, and G-d's voice is heard bellowing, "Tzvi Freeman, take note! This is a

miracle!?" Wrong. That's just the Pharaoh inside us all over again. Perhaps somewhat more subtle, but Pharaoh, nonetheless. Monotheism means believing that the natural order is not an absolute set of rules to either play by or break by. Believing there is One Infinite Force behind all things means acknowledging that He can be found doing His thing anywhere—by the rules or not by the rules. Nothing stops Him from getting His way—no supervising committee, no appeal board, no shareholders, no mother-in-law. Not even The Natural Order. That's just a façade. It's really all just Him. The prognosis? According to the prophets, we eventually grow out of this. That's what the prophet Micah was hinting at when he said, "As the days when you left Egypt, so I will make you see miracles." The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch explained, "As the days when you pointed at the Red Sea splitting and said, 'This is my G-d doing this!'—so then, in those times when we will leave this exile, I will let you see the even more wondrous miracles that are happening right now every day in your daily life." We can open our minds and try to start seeing reality that way right now. And stop worrying

By Tzvi Freeman

Passover Schedule

- 22 APRIL/14 NISSAN IS EREV PESACH (EVE OF PASSOVER) – FIRST SEDER TONIGHT
- 23 APRIL/15 NISSAN IS FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER – 2ND SEDER TONIGHT)
- 24 APRIL/16 NISSAN IS THE 2ND DAY OF PASSOVER
- 25-28 APRIL/17-20 NISSAN IS CHOL HAMOED – THE "INTERMEDIATE DAYS" OF PASSOVER
- 29 APRIL/21 NISSAN IS THE 7TH DAY OF PASSOVER
- 30 APRIL/22 NISSAN IS THE 8TH AND FINAL DAY OF PASSOVER



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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 22 – 23 in 2024). Passover commemorates the emancipation of the ancient Jews from slavery in ancient Egypt. Pesach is observed by avoiding leaven, and highlighted by the Seder meals that include drinking four cups of wine, eating matzah and bitter herbs, and retelling the story of the Exodus. In Hebrew, it is known as Pesach (lit. "to pass over"), because G-d passed over the Jewish homes when killing the Egyptian firstborn on the very first Passover eve.

Passover History in a Nutshell

As told in the Bible, after many decades of slavery to the Egyptian pharaohs, during which time the Jews 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 Jews left in such a hurry, in fact, that the bread they baked as provisions for the way did not have time to rise. Millions of men, women, and children left Egypt on that day and began the trek to Mount Sinai and their national birth as G-d's chosen people.

Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Fathers)

It is customary to learn one chapter of Pirkei Avot (lit. "Chapters of the Fathers") every Shabbat afternoon for the six Shabbats of Sefirat HaOmer, between Passover and Shavuot. After the Jews left Egypt, they embarked on a period of self-refinement and character improvement. This was critical in order that they be worthy of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai on Shavuot. While counting the Omer, we too try to perfect our character. To assist in achieving this goal, we study Pirkei Avot, the tractate which is devoted to piety, humility, kindness, and ethics. Many communities, including Chabad, continue the study of Pirkei Avot through the summer, until Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year).

Sefirat HaOmer (Counting of the Omer)

The Torah commands us to count seven weeks from the time that the Omer, the new barley offering, was brought in the Temple, i.e., from the 16th of Nissan. We begin our count on the second night of Passover (the night of the second Seder in the Diaspora) and continue until Shavuot, which is the fiftieth day after the offering. We actually count forty-nine days, for our Sages had a tradition that the Torah's use of the word fifty meant until the fiftieth day. Each individual should count the days of the Omer by himself. This Mitzvah is applicable today, even though the Holy Temple no longer stands, and we no longer bring the Omer offering.

When to Count the Omer

The correct time for counting the Omer is at the beginning of the night, for the verse states that we are to count seven complete weeks and the count can be complete only if we commence when the 16th of Nissan begins. Since we commence counting the Omer at night, we continue to count at night throughout the entire forty-nine days. One may count the Omer throughout the night; if they forgot to count at night, they may count during the day, but without the blessing.

How to Count the Omer

We first recite the blessing on counting the Omer "Who has commanded us to count the Omer" and then count, saying: "Today is the [...] day of the Omer". Some congregations have a custom of saying BaOmer, "in the Omer", while others have a custom of saying LaOmer, "of the Omer".

From the seventh day on, one adds the count of weeks to the count of days; e.g., "Today is eight days, which is one week and one day, of the Omer"; the Sephardic wording is "...eight days of the Omer, which is one week and one day".

If one made a mistake and neglected to count either the days or the weeks, they must count again but does not recite another blessing. The blessing and the counting should be said while standing, but if one sat while counting, they have nevertheless fulfilled the obligation.

After counting the Omer, it is customary to say: "May it be Your will that that the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) be rebuilt speedily in our days."

Blessings

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the counting of the Omer.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, April 21, 2024 - 13 Nissan, 5784

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).

Passing of R. Joseph Caro (1575)

Nissan 13 is the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Joseph Caro (1488-1575), author of the Shulchan Aruch ("Code of Jewish Law").

Passing of Tzemach Tzeddek (1866)

The third Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavitch passed away on Nissan 13.

Monday, April 22, 2024-14 Nissan, 5784

Maimonides Born (1135)

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Talmudist, Halachist, physician, philosopher and communal leader, known in the Jewish world by the acronym "Rambam" and to the world at large as "Maimonides", was born in Cordova, Spain, on the 14th of Nissan of the year 4895

Isaac Born (1713 BCE)

"...And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age... Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born to him." - Genesis 21:1-6

The Exodus (1313 BCE)

At the stroke of midnight of the 15th of Nissan 2448 (1313 BCE), 210 years after Jacob settled in Egypt, several million Jews - 600,000 adult males, plus the woman and children, and a large "mixed multitude" of non-Jews who joined them - left Egypt on that day.

Daniel in Lions' Den (372 BCE)

The Prophet Daniel was cast into a den of hungry lions by Darius I of Persia for violating a royal edict that no man may pray to any god save the king for 30 days. Miraculously, the lions did not touch him, and he emerged from the den unscathed.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024-16 Nissan, 5784

Sodom Overturned (1714 BCE)

The wicked cities of the Sodom valley were overturned in punishment of their sins. Only Lot (Abraham's nephew), his wife and two daughters were saved.

Levi Born (1566 BCE)

Levi, third son of Jacob and Leah and third of the Twelve Tribes, was born on 16 Nissan in the year 2195 (1566 BCE)

Thursday, April 25, 2024-17 Nissan, 5784

Haman Hanged (357 BCE)

At the 2nd wine party, Queen Esther revealed her identity to the king and began to plead for her

people, pointing to Haman as the evil schemer plotting to destroy them. The king ordered that Haman be hanged, opening the door for the Jews' salvation from Haman's decree.

Friday, April 26, 2024-18 Nissan, 5784

Pharaoh Becomes Aware of Escape (1313 BCE)

Following the Jewish nation's grand exodus from Egypt, Pharaoh, who only gave official permission for the Jews to leave for three days, was informed by agents that they had no intention of returning. Pharaoh decided to mobilize his army with the hope of bringing them back to Egypt.

Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveichik (1993)

On the 18th of Nissan, 5753 (April 9, 1993), Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveichik, passed away at the age of 90. He was the head of Yeshiva University and a towering figure of 20th century American Jewry.

Shabbat, April 27, 2024-19 Nissan, 5784

Purim Fossano (1796)

On this day in 1796, the Jewish community of Fossano, Italy was miraculously saved from the hands of a murderous mob.

Rabbi Ziemba Murdered (1943)

Rabbi Menachem Ziemba was born in a suburb of Warsaw, Poland, in 1883. Rabbi Ziemba was a strong supporter of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, donating personal funds. Five days after the fighting begun, on Shabbat, the 19th of Nissan, the house in which Rabbi Ziemba was hiding was set afire by the SS. When attempting to escape, Rabbi Ziemba was shot dead by the Nazis.