

# Torah Weekly

ד"ר

## PESACH (PASSOVER)

15 - 21 Nissan 5785  
13 - 19 April 2025

### 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF PESACH

*Torah:* Exodus 12:21-51; Numbers 28:16-25

*Haftarah:* Joshua 3:5-7; 5:2-6:1; 6:27

### 2<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF PESACH

*Torah:* Leviticus 22:26-23:44; Numbers 28:16-25

*Haftarah:* Kings II 23:1-9; 23:21-25

### 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF CHOL HAMOED

*Torah:* Exodus 13:1-16; Numbers 28:19-25

### 2<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF CHOL HAMOED

*Torah:* Exodus 22:24-23:19; Numbers 28:19-25

### 3<sup>RD</sup> DAY OF CHOL HAMOED

*Torah:* Exodus 34:1-26; Numbers 28:19-25

### 4<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF CHOL HAMOED

*Torah:* Numbers 9:1-14; Numbers 28:19-25

### 7<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF PESACH

*Torah:* Exodus 13:17-15:26; Numbers 28:19-25

*Haftarah:* Samuel II 22:1-51

## Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

### *Psalm 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)

## Aleph Institute

*Hyman & Martha Rogal Center*

5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

www.AlephNE.org  
info@AlephNE.org

## PASSOVER IN EXILE

We are currently celebrating Passover, the Festival of Freedom, and yet, since the original Exodus and liberation, we have again lost our freedom. The Babylonians destroyed our First Temple, the Romans the Second, and we became a wandering people for millennia.

Even today, the Temple Mount is forbidden to Jewish worshipers. And, as powerfully impressive as the Western Wall may be, it is only a remnant of the glorious Holy Temple that is yet to be rebuilt.

So why do we continue to celebrate the anniversary of our liberation when that very freedom was subsequently lost? There are those who have suggested: "You can take the Jew out of Egypt (and slavery) ... but you can't take Egypt out of the Jew!"

In other words, the slave mentality has remained ingrained in our national psyche.

Yet, back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the holy Rabbi Judah Lowe argued differently. Known as the Maharal, he was a mystic, Halachist, philosopher, and chief rabbi of Prague.

The Maharal writes that, not only did the Jews avoid inheriting a slave mentality from Egypt, but the opposite - the Exodus forever changed the inner identity of the Jew. The Exodus set us free, not only physically and politically, but spiritually and psychologically.

The Exodus was not just a one-off historical event, or a fantastic, dramatic story that we retell every year at our Passover Seders. No. The Exodus was a spiritual revolution which changed the mentality, the mindset, the psyche, and the very nature of a Jew forever. Freedom was wired into our national DNA. We are, by definition, a free people, and nothing and no one can ever change that.

And so, the Season of our Liberation is indeed worthy of eternal remembrance.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory, spiritual leader of Russian Jewry from 5680 (1920) onwards, fought the Communists tooth and nail. They were hellbent on eradicating Jewish practice in Russia, but with unwavering commitment he and his Chassidim kept Jewish schools, shuls and mikvahs going clandestinely. Many paid with their lives, including both my wife's grandfathers.

The Rebbe himself was arrested and sentenced to death, but even in prison he remained resolute. Miraculously, his sentence was commuted to 10 years

of exile in Kostroma, a few hundred miles from Moscow.

Leningrad, 1927. The Rebbe was on the train about to go into exile. Many hundreds of Chassidim came to the train station to bid him farewell. The place was packed with uniformed officers, members of the secret police, and Jewish informants. Yet the Rebbe came out and addressed the crowd. Knowing full well that every word he said would be reported to the Communist authorities, he said:

"May G-d be with us as He was with our ancestors; may He not forsake us nor abandon us . . ." Only our bodies went into exile, but not our souls . . . We must proclaim openly before all that with regard to any matter of our faith - Torah, mitzvahs and Jewish custom - it is not subject to the opinion of others, nor can any oppressive force be used against it . . .

. . . This is our request to the Holy One, may He not forsake us nor abandon us. G-d should give us true strength to be unintimidated by physical pain, and on the contrary to accept it with joy, so that every punishment we receive for supporting a cheder (Jewish school), for learning Torah, for performing mitzvahs, shall increase our fortitude in the holy work of strengthening Judaism. We must remember that imprisonment and hard labor are only temporary things, whereas Torah, mitzvahs and the Jewish people are eternal. . ."

How powerful! What courage, defiance, and unbelievable faith.

What was the Rebbe's bottom-line message? Only our bodies can go into exile, but not our souls. The neshama does not go into galut. They may imprison and enslave our bodies, but the soul of a Jew is always free.

Miraculously, after only 10 days in exile the Rebbe was released and permitted to leave Russia. He spent time in Riga and in Poland before arriving in the United States in 1940, where he re-established the center of Chabad until his passing in 1950.

The Rebbe was not only echoing the words of the Maharal; he was living proof.

Which brings me to April 1943, the very last Pesach Seder in the Warsaw Ghetto. Brave, defiant Jewish fighters courageously fought back against the mighty Nazi war machine from the rooftops, while down below, in the cellars, a Pesach Seder was taking place. They found a white tablecloth to cover the table, and candles. They even managed to bake matzah in the ghetto! Marrow they had enough of; there was no shortage of bitterness there.

Can you imagine the child asking the Mah Nishtanah that night?! Some of the Jews at that Seder in Warsaw survived the war. Most did not. But the faith, the courage, the defiance, and the sense of inner freedom to even attempt to hold a Seder in those circumstances is awe-inspiring.

Or how about the Jews who risked their lives to bake matzah in the concentration camps? I knew one of them personally - Reb Yankel Friedman. He joined the holy Klausenberger Rebbe in the dangerous secret mission to bake matzahs inside the camps.

The Klausenberger Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, lost his wife and 11 children in the Holocaust. He survived and ended up in New York, where he rebuilt his family, and his community. Later he moved to Israel and the Laniado Hospital in Netanya is just one of many institutions he built. He was a giant of spirit and inspired many thousands with his indomitable faith under fire.

And that innate freedom of the Jew is likewise embodied in the story of Pini Nahmani. On Thursday, 25 Adar II 5730 (1970), an Israeli fighter jet was shot down over Syria. The pilot, 26-year-old Pini Nahmani, was imprisoned in the Al Mazza jail in Damascus. He was later freed as part of a prisoner exchange between the two countries.

Pini wrote about his time in prison. With Passover approaching, he and his two fellow Israelis inmates prepared for a Seder. They scrubbed the floor and painted a Seder plate on a piece of cardboard. They had two Haggadahs and some matzah from the chief rabbi of Zurich, Switzerland.

Boaz Eitan, the youngest, asked the Mah Nishtanah, the Four Questions. They ate Matzah and they sang. They sang all their favorite Passover songs; the songs of their youth. They sang so loudly that the prison guards warned them to tone it down or they would be sent to solitary confinement. But they ignored the guards. They felt free and they kept singing.

Pini later wrote that his most memorable and inspirational Seder was the one he celebrated in that Damascus prison.

Stripped of everything, including their dignity, he and his fellow Israelis were determined to remain free men and faithful Jews, despite the torture and the terror. And they did. Miraculously, they lived to tell the tale.

As the Maharal taught, ever since the Exodus, every Jew possesses that



**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

innate, unbreakable sense of freedom. This Passover, may we tap into it and let it liberate us from the drudgery and mediocrity to achieve true, inner freedom.

*By Rabbi Yossy Goldman  
President, South African Rabbinical Association*

## THE STORY OF PESACH

Jacob and his children arrived in Egypt to reunite with (Jacob's son) Joseph, who held the position of second-in-command to Pharaoh, having saved Egypt and its neighboring lands from a devastating famine through his foresight and administration. They settled in Goshen, where they thrived and multiplied abundantly.

As time passed and Joseph's generation faded, a new Pharaoh rose who did not know Joseph or appreciate the Israelites' contribution to Egypt's prosperity. Fearing their rapid growth, Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites, subjecting them to harsh labor and attempting to curb their population by commanding the midwives to kill all newborn Jewish males. When the midwives resisted, Pharaoh ordered that these infants be thrown into the Nile.

Amidst this oppression, a Levite woman named Jochebed gave birth to a son, Moses. Desperate to save him from Pharaoh's decree, she placed him in a waterproof basket and set him adrift on the Nile, where he was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. Moved with compassion, she adopted

the child and named him Moses, meaning "drawn from the water." Moses' sister, Miriam, facilitated Jochebed becoming his nurse.

As Moses grew, he became aware of his heritage and witnessed the suffering of his people. In a moment of righteous indignation, he killed an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite slave. Fearing punishment, Moses fled to Midian, where he married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, and tended sheep.

Meanwhile, the plight of the Israelites in Egypt continued to worsen, and their cries for deliverance reached God. One day (*on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan 2447, or 1314 BCE*), while tending sheep near Mount Sinai, Moses encountered a burning bush that did not consume itself. God spoke to Moses from the bush, revealing Himself as the God of his ancestors and commissioning Moses to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of bondage.

Reluctant due to his speech impediment, Moses was assured by God that his brother Aaron would serve as his spokesman, and he set out to Egypt (*on 21 Nissan 2447, or 1314 BCE*). Together, they confronted Pharaoh, demanding the release of the Israelites so they could worship God in the wilderness. Pharaoh, however, refused to let the Israelites go, prompting God to unleash a series of ten plagues upon Egypt.

Each plague demonstrated God's power over the Egyptian 'gods' and served as a challenge to Pharaoh's hardened heart. The plagues included **1)** the turning of the Nile into blood, **2)** the infestation

of frogs and **3)** lice, **4)** hordes of animals invading the cities, **5)** diseases on livestock, **6)** boils afflicting people, **7)** hail mixed with fire, **8)** locusts devouring crops, **9)** darkness covering the land, and culminating in **10)** the death of the firstborn throughout Egypt. Throughout these trials, Pharaoh temporarily relented under the weight of each plague but quickly reneged once the affliction was removed.

The final plague, the death of the firstborn, finally broke Pharaoh's resistance. He permitted the Israelites to leave Egypt (*on 15 Nissan 2448, or 1313 BCE*), and they departed in haste, not even allowing their bread to rise. God instructed them to commemorate their liberation annually with the feast of Passover, where they would eat unleavened bread and retell the story of their deliverance.

However, Pharaoh soon regretted letting the Israelites go and pursued them (*on 18 Nissan 2448, or 1313 BCE*) with his army to the shores of the Red Sea. Trapped between the sea and the advancing Egyptian forces, the Israelites despaired. But God (*on 21 Nissan 2448, or 1313 BCE*) instructed Moses to raise his staff over the sea, which miraculously parted, allowing the Israelites to cross safely to the other side.

As the Egyptians pursued, the sea closed upon them, drowning Pharaoh's army. Witnessing this miraculous salvation, Moses and the Israelites sang songs of praise and gratitude to God.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, 15 Nissan 5785 - 13 April 2025**

**"Covenant Between the Parts" (1743 BCE)**

On 15 Nissan 2018 (1743 BCE), G-d made a covenant with Abraham, in which he promised the Holy Land to the Jewish people after a period of exile in Egypt. **Abraham Battles Four Kings (circa 1738 BCE)** Abraham rescued his nephew and those of his nephew's cities from the hands of four kings who had taken them.

**Angels Visit Abraham (1714 BCE)**

Three angels visited Abraham on the third day after his circumcision. Raphael healed Abraham, Michael foretold the birth of Isaac in one year, and Gabriel proceeded to destroy Sodom.

**Isaac Born (1713 BCE)**

Isaac, the son of Abraham and one of the three forefathers of the Jewish people, was born on 15 Nissan 2048 (1713 BCE).

**Moses at Burning Bush (1314 BCE)**

*See Above*

**The Exodus (1313 BCE)**

*See Above*

**Daniel in Lions' Den (372 BCE)**

The Prophet Daniel was cast into a den of hungry lions on 15 Nissan 3388 (372 BCE) by King Darius I of Persia for violating a royal edict that no one pray to any god save the king for 30 days. Miraculously, the lions did not touch him, and he emerged from the den unscathed.

**Monday, 16 Nissan 5785 - 14 April 2025**

**Sodom Overturned (1714 BCE)**

The five wicked cities of the Sodom valley were overturned in punishment of their sins. Only Lot, his wife and two daughters were saved.

**Esther Appears Before Achashverosh (357 BCE)**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the fast proclaimed by Mordechai at her behest, Queen Esther appeared unsummoned

before King Achashverosh - a capital offence. The king, however, extended the royal scepter to her, and Esther requested that Achashverosh attend a private wine party with her and Haman.

**Levi Born (1566 BCE)**

Levi, born on 16 Nissan 2195 (1566 BCE), was the third son of Jacob and Leah, and progenitor of the Levites who served in the Tabernacle and Temple.

**Tuesday, 17 Nissan 5785 - 15 April 2025**

**Haman Hanged (357 BCE)**

Queen Esther revealed Haman's plot to destroy the Jews to King Achashverosh during a second wine party, leading to Haman's execution on the gallows he had prepared for Mordechai.

**Wednesday, 18 Nissan 5785 - 16 April 2025**

**Pharaoh Pursues the Jews (1313 BCE)**

*See Above*

**Passing of Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveichik (1993)**

On 18th of Nissan, 5753 (1993), Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveichik, known as "The Rav," passed away at 90. He led Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University, renowned for his profound Jewish thought and legal writings. His classes were attended by hundreds and were preserved in recordings.

**Thursday, 19 Nissan 5785 - 17 April 2025**

**Purim Fossano (1796)**

On this day in 5556 (1796), the Jewish community of Fossano, Italy was miraculously saved from the hands of a murderous mob by a French bomb which landed just in time to scare away the attackers. This day was established as "Purim Fossano" in commemoration of the miraculous salvation.

**Rabbi Ziemba Murdered (1943)**

Rabbi Menachem Ziemba was a revered rabbi and Jewish leader in Warsaw before, and during, World War II. In the Warsaw Ghetto, he secretly founded

schools for Jewish children, and later supported, morally and financially, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He was killed by the Germans on 19 Nissan 5703, after they found his hiding place and set it on fire. He was buried in the Ghetto and was later reinterred in Jerusalem 25 years later. Most of his writings were lost in the Ghetto, but those that survive continue to be studied by Torah scholars.

**Passing of Rabbi Aharon of Karlin (1772)**

In his 36 years of life, Rabbi Aharon ("the Great") of Karlin (5496-5532, or 1736-1772) did much to spread the teachings of Chassidism in Lita (Lithuania-Belarus). Rabbi Aharon was known to pray with great fervor and encouraged others to do the same. He composed the beloved Shabbat hymn Kah Echsof, which is sung at Shabbat tables all over the world, and his mode of Divine service lives on in the Chassidic groups of Karlin (Stolin), Slonim, and others.

**Friday, 20 Nissan 5785 - 18 April 2025**

**Passing of Rav Hai Gaon (1038)**

Rav (Rabbi) Hai Gaon was the last of the Geonim, the brilliant Talmudic scholars who headed the great schools of Babylonia during the five centuries following the compilation of the Talmud. Son of Rav Sherira Gaon, Rav Hai was one of the greatest authorities of his time, and his decisions and guidance were sought after by Jewish communities across the world. Rav Hai served at his post as Gaon for forty years. He passed away on 20 Nissan 4798 (1038), at the age of 99.

**Shabbat, 21 Nissan 5785 - 19 April 2025**

**Moses Departs Midian (1314 BCE)**

*See Above*

**Yam Suf Splits (1313 BCE)**

*See Above*