



Creating The Seder Experience

Rabbi Elan Mazer
Executive Director, Mizrachi Canada

“בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים שנאמר והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים”
(תלמוד בבלי פסחים קטז:)

“In every generation one is obligated to see himself as if he had left Egypt, as it is written “and you shall tell your child on this day ‘because of this Hashem did all this for me, when I left Egypt.’” (Talmud Bavli Pesachim 116b)

Our sages challenge us to find a way to make the ideas and lessons of the Seder night pertinent and applicable to our lives in every generation. The Rambam in Hilchot Chametz U'Matza counts this Halacha as one of the central themes at the Seder, and explains that many aspects of the Seder aim to assist us in experiencing Yitziyat Mitzrayim as if we lived through it ourselves. The four cups of wine and the obligation to lean while eating Matzah are two examples of actions that we do in order to feel as if we are free. Over the years, communities have adopted customs to bring the Pesach story alive, from walking around the table carrying bags on their backs, to whipping each

other with scallions. Nonetheless, we often find it difficult to relate to Yitziyat Mitzrayim, and to make the story truly come alive for our children.

It is clear that the author of the Haggadah was aware of this potential issue, and he left educational tools along the way to aid us in overcoming this challenge. One of these tools always seems to spark fascinating conversations: the four sons. Before getting to the main focus of the Haggadah, we take a moment to realize that not all students learn in the same way. Four different approaches and answers will be required for the unique children; differentiated learning is the

only way that we can hope to engage our children.

A closer look at the historical development of the four sons reveals that not only must we change our approach for each type of child, but that the time and location will further alter our focus and learning strategy. The Jerusalem Talmud and our current Haggadah have very different ways of answering the questions of our four sons, the former having been written several generations prior to the latter. As we know, in our Haggadah, when the wise son asks about the practices of the seder night, we are told that the best way to engage him is to teach about the laws of the Seder. ►

► When the simple son inquires as to why we are celebrating, the suggested response is to briefly retell the story of the exodus – “for with a mighty hand Hashem took us out of Egypt”. The Jerusalem Talmud switches the answers around: the simple son is taught about the laws of Passover, while to the wise son we respond with the story of redemption. What is the difference between these two time periods that caused such a drastic change in the educational approach?

standing, the order was reversed: After Kiddush, the participants would wash and eat Matza, followed by the Korban Pesach meal, and only when the meal was over did the Maggid portion of the night begin.

Why did we change the order of the Seder?

Today, one can only imagine the atmosphere of joy and freedom that was felt in the hills of Jerusalem on Seder night during the time of the Beit Hamikdash; the sovereign nation of

therefore the Maggid portion of the Seder as well as the many symbolic acts that we do were placed before the meal.

The seder at the time of the Beit Hamikdash was an expression of freedom, while our seder today attempts to create a sense of freedom.

Today, when the wise child asks us how best he can understand the Seder Pesach, we point to the Halachot, the laws and rituals, for they are the ultimate tool in creating a meaningful experience. However, when the wise son in Jerusalem asked the same question, he is already experiencing freedom, so therefore our reply consists of the story of the exodus; we give the child context and insight to better understand the experience.

At our Seder this year, we are challenged to think of ways to make sure that the values and feelings of national and individual freedom and celebration are carried on even today.

I believe that with creativity and thought we can be successful in creating the joy that is being a part of a free nation who is proud of their Torah values and will continue to pass them down for generations to come. But we must continue to hope and pray for a time when our freedom will be a natural expression of our experience.

Chag Kasher Ve’Sameach. ♦

We often find it difficult to relate to Yitziyat Mitzrayim, and to make the story truly come alive for our children.

To answer this question, I believe that we must first explore one other major difference between the Seder night that we practice today, versus the Seder night that was done when we were a sovereign nation in the land of Israel during the time of the Beit Hamikdash.

Today, the portion of telling the Pesach story (Maggid) is at the beginning of the night, and only afterwards do we drink a cup of wine, and eat the Matzah, Maror and Korech. The festive Shulchan Orech meal comes very late in the night; we spend a long time discussing Yitziyat Mitzrayim on quite an empty stomach. However, when the Beit Hamikdash was

Israel, sitting all together in their eternal capital in a massive national celebration of freedom and unity. The feelings of freedom were so natural, and the meal was a natural expression of freedom and jubilation. Today, even though sitting around with our families and friends for the Pesach Seder is undoubtedly a special occasion, it cannot match the scale of national celebration that was felt in the hills of Jerusalem during that time. Chazal understood that in order to make the modern-day Seder meal into one of pure celebration of freedom and shared values, the participants would need some time for preparation, and



We are Mizrachi Canada.

Mizrachi believes that the Torah should be at the centre of Zionism and sees Jewish nationalism as a tool for achieving our religious objectives.

Today in Canada, Mizrachi runs educational and community programs, promoting and strengthening the Jewish people’s connection to the land of Israel. Make the connection!

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The Real Punishment Inherent In The Plague Of Darkness

Rabbi Dr. Seth Grauer
Rosh Yeshiva, Bnei Akiva Schools

What was so bad about the plague of darkness? When one looks at all the Makot – each and every Makah was a punishing force that left the Egyptians crying for mercy from the sheer power and severity of the plague, but – why the plague of darkness?

We are told by the Torah: “לא ראו איש את אחיו ולא קמו איש מתחתיו שלשת ימים” – that the darkness was so intense that no Egyptian could even see his friend and the Egyptians couldn’t move about so the plague was certainly nothing enjoyable, but amongst all the plagues I might argue this plague was the easiest and least painful.

To a certain extent, Rashi and many of the other rishonim even looked for reasons behind this plague to justify it. It is almost as if by itself the plague is not punishing enough so our medieval commentators need to find outside justifications for this plague.

Rashi offers two such explanations and justifications:

First, Rashi tells us that there were many Jews who did not deserve to be freed with the Jewish people. There were Jews who had become so assimilated within Egyptian culture and were so entrenched in sin and idol worship that Hakadosh Baruch Hu did not feel they should be redeemed and taken out of Egypt. This could have been either as a punishment for their actions in Egypt or because Hashem felt they had no hope of turning around and coming back to Judaism. Either way, they needed to die before the Jews left Egypt. If God had simply killed them it would have been a terrible Chilul Hashem as the Egyptians would have said, God is killing mitzrim and Jews. Instead, God provided the plague of darkness as an impetus to kill

these Jews in secret under the cover of darkness so that no Egyptians could see this act.

Second, Rashi says that the Jewish people were promised by G-d: ואחרי יצאו ברכוש גדול – that at the end of the exile, you would leave with great wealth. This prophecy needed to be fulfilled and the plague of darkness provided the chance to fulfill this promise. The Jewish people could circulate amongst the Egyptians in order to know where their gold, silver and jewels were so when they later would go to the Egyptians and ask for them, they would know exactly what to ask for.

What seems clear is that the plague of darkness was perhaps not in it of itself a harsh enough plague and difficult enough makah to justify itself without these outside reasons given.

When I was in high school, I read a novel by Joseph Conrad called The Heart of Darkness. The book, originally published in 1903 is today widely read in literature classes, High schools and universities across North America. The story focuses on Charles Marlow, the narrator in the book who as an Englishman takes a foreign assignment from a Belgian trading company as a river-boat captain in Africa. One of the central themes of the book is the darkness experienced by Marlow on this river boat. This darkness represents itself in a number of different ways. Marlow encounters the darkness of the Congo wilderness, the darkness of the specific human cruelty he witnesses and ultimately the darkness that he develops from the knowledge of the capacity within every human being for committing heinous acts of evil and crime. But there is one more type of

darkness that sets in and in many ways envelops Marlow: that is the darkness of being all alone.

Darkness is scary, terrifying and terrorizing not just because one doesn’t know what is coming around a dark corner, but because when one is in the dark, one is all alone.

We live in a society today where people are so afraid of being alone. The whole explosion of our social media world may be because people are terrified of being alone. Facebook thrives on our addiction to being connected to people. Think about the media contests people have had to be the first to reach 100,000 Twitter followers – or even a million followers.

The plague of darkness was so intense and menacing because all of Egypt realized that they were alone.

We are all faced with the challenges and fears of loneliness. But Pesach brings two solutions:

The beauty of Judaism and the importance of a community mean that none of us are ever alone, because we have each other and we care about each other. We are lucky because we do not need to look to Facebook, Twitter or other outlets for companionship and friendship. We all hopefully have families that we care about, but being part of the Jewish people means we have a larger family to ensure that we aren’t alone.

There is a great deal of emotional and psychological darkness in this world. We also need to always remember that one who believes in God is never alone. Belief in Hakadosh Baruch Hu means there is someone out there watching over each of us, protecting us, guiding and directing us and truly walking with us.

May this Pesach bring us all together within our families, our communities and help us build our connection to Hashem so that we truly never experience what the plague of darkness was meant to accomplish. ♦



A Mission Of Hope In A World Of Darkness

Rabbi Andrew Shaw
Chief Executive, Mizrachi UK

I have recently spent several uplifting and memorable Shabbatot with Jewish communities in Hampstead Garden Suburb, Glasgow and Hendon as part of my new role with Mizrachi UK which filled me with hope for the future. However, I write this in the aftermath of the recent horrific terrorist attack in Brussels. People are really worried. From anyone's perspective the world is in pretty bad shape, Islamic terror is spreading, we are desperate, we need help.

However for the Jewish People it's even worse. Over the last few years the terrorist attacks in Israel have been increasing. The missiles from Gaza 18 months ago and the horrific stabbings this year. All of us are upset at any loss of life – but Israel's critics have been going a little bit further in their demonisation of the Jewish state. Whether through the media, in the UN, on social media, on campus, the vitriol and the hatred are shocking.

All this because Israel dared defend itself against thousands of missiles aimed at its towns and cities. And is currently trying to protect its citizens from being murdered in cold blood.

It doesn't take a genius to realize what the problem is, the rapid rise of radical Islam. Yet the world fiddles while western society burns. Christians massacred by ISIS and its collaborators in Nigeria, Sudan and across the middle east. Churches destroyed by radical Islam, and millions living in fear. Yet the

problem for many is the only democracy in the Middle East!

What is the Jewish response to all this – not practically in terms of writing letters and contacting the media, I mean on a more esoteric level. What should we think and feel?

A good place to start is this time of year, Pesach and what it celebrates, the Exodus from Egypt. Imagine being a Jew in Egypt, 210 years of slavery, back breaking labour, you have never known anything different. And then K'heref eyin – In the blink of an eye – we were free – we had been redeemed!

do, it's called Seder night.

The Sfat Emet (a nineteenth century Rabbi) expresses the connection between that midnight of miracles and the rest of Jewish history – which includes 2016 – in the most beautiful manner. He asks why we call the procedure of seder night a 'seder' – the word 'seder' means 'order', a regular, predictable series of events. Strange that we celebrate the most potent series of miracles, the sharpest departures from the normal order, with the name seder, 'order'!

His answer is unforgettable. For the

We as a community need to realize what we are in possession of, and realize that the Creator of the world bequeathed us a mission.

A mighty nation tried to destroy us, enslave us, persecute us – yet we overcame with the help of God. This Pesach and every Pesach we are commanded to retell this story – the mitzvah of sipur yitziat mitzraim – telling the story of the going out of Egypt – zachor et hayom haze asher yatzeichem mimitzraim – Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt – and we

Jewish people, our natural order is the miraculous! We have a seder of miracles. We were forged in impossible circumstances, conceived in a blaze of miracles, born beyond time.

Egypt was just the beginning. Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Spanish Inquisition, Nazis, Soviet Union all tried to destroy us



and all failed. Today we have ISIS, Iran, Hamas, Hizbollah also dedicated to our annihilation. Yet this little tiny nation, which for most of our history had no home, no rights, no friends – survived.

However, it is more than that, much more than that- we have thrived – look at what we have given to the world despite all we have gone through. Let us listen to the words of the second president of the USA, John Adams:

"I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation... fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations."

And then historian Paul Johnson: *"Certainly, the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place. Humanity might have eventually stumbled upon all the Jewish insights. But we cannot be sure. All the great conceptual discoveries of the human intellect seem obvious and inescapable once they had been revealed, but it requires a special genius to formulate them for the first time. The Jews had this gift. To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of human person; of the individual conscience and so a personal redemption; of collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the*

human mind. Without Jews it might have been a much emptier place."

However, I disagree with the statements of Adams and of Johnson for one reason. The Jewish nation had nothing personally to do with inventing the values which ran against the grain of the world around them, and indeed were totally unknown to other peoples.

These values came from God and His Torah, and we were merely the people

**We were forged
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chosen to disseminate them worldwide. Despite all odds, the tiny Jewish people not only outlasted the great Empires of Greece and Rome–the unique ideology of Judaism ultimately triumphed over the paganism of the West.

Directly and indirectly through the Torah, Christianity, Islam and modern democracy, the vast majority of humanity has been profoundly impacted by Judaism and the monumental quest of the Jewish people to perfect the world.

And now since our miraculous return to our homeland, the modern State of Israel is creating solutions and inventing products that are revolutionising the world and helping millions to live healthier and better lives. Tikun Olam is now a national product of the Jewish people.

So what does the world need? It needs our message, God's message, the Torah's message. This is the message that Mizrachi UK are dedicated to promoting through our programmes and through the development of leaders who can inspire and educate.

We as a community need to realise what we are in possession of, and realize that the Creator of the world bequeathed us a mission – a holy mission – to live our lives as bearers of that mission – to be an am kadosh – a holy nation, an am nivchar – a chosen nation – not God forbid because we are better but because we have a job to fulfil.

So yes, the Jewish world is in a difficult and challenging place, but we know that just like in Egypt 3328 years ago – we will overcome because we have an eternal covenant with God which makes us an eternal nation.

Have a wonderful and meaningful Pesach. ♦



The World of Rav Kook: Maror

עולת ראייה פירוש על ההגדה

Matzah commemorates freedom. The basis [of this freedom] is the recognition that all ways of Hashem - the Torah - is a genuine and deliberate expression of our true collective nature - the collective [nature] of the assembly of Israel. Therefore, true freedom should be a development of our innate nature, without the involvement and burden of foreign elements. This though, is only true in terms of our intrinsic nature of our spirit. However we also have debris that has latched on to us, and that does not allow our pure Israelite nature to express itself. Because of this we must also accept upon ourselves a kind of "pleasant" slavery, the service of Hashem, the God of Israel, "Who fashioned me from the womb as a servant to Him". This ability was acquired during our slavery in Egypt, after we were redeemed from all the horrible aspects of slavery, we still kept the pleasant aspect of it, the ability to lovingly tolerate things that oppose what we want and what we desire. This is the concept of the Maror, to lovingly accept the bitter aspects of life, when we internalize that we have before us, a grand mission and a moral duty. This is why we eat the Maror after the Matzah.

Why is it that on Seder night, the ultimate night of freedom, we eat Maror, a food that symbolizes slavery?

Rav Kook explains this puzzling practice by addressing an even more fundamental question: by leaving Egypt we were freed from the oppression of the Egyptians, however we then became subservient to God – can we really consider that freedom?

Rav Kook explains that we must recognize that Hashem's word, the Torah, is not an external entity imposing foreign values on us, rather it is a true reflection of our inner selves. We are most ourselves when we live a life of Torah. However, circumstance may dictate that we do not always

המצה היא זכר לחירות, שיסודה היא ההכרה שכל דרך ד' כתורה היא תולדה נאמנה מכוונת לפי אמתית טבעיותנו הכללית, מצד כללות כנסת ישראל, ע"כ החירות האמתית הוא להתפתח ע"פ הטבע הפנימי בלא עירוב סודות זרים המעיקים. זהו אמנם מצד עצם טבע הנפש, אבל ישנם ג"כ סיגים שנדבקו בנו, והם אינם נותנים לטבע הטהור הישראלי צאת אל הפועל. ע"כ מצדם הננו צריכים לקבל ג"כ את העבדות הנעימה, עבודת עבד לד' אלקי ישראל, "יוצרי מבטן לעבד לוי", שזה הכשרון קנינו ג"כ בעבדות של מצרים, שאמנם אחרי שיסורו מאתנו כל הצדדים הרעים של עבדות ישאר לנו הצד היפה שבו, שעל ידו יוכל האדם באהבה לסבול ג"כ מה שהוא נגד רצונו ונטייתו, שהוא יסוד המרור, לקבל באהבה את מרירת החיים, כשיודע שיש לפניו מטרה עליונה ונעלה מוסרית. ע"כ יבא המרור אחר המצה:

feel like this is the case. So much of reality, culture, events, and society, do not allow us to develop into our true selves.

We need guidance to break free of these external obstacles in order to achieve true self-expression. Who better to direct us than the One who gave us this nature in the first place? Thus, to reach true self-expression we must have the discipline to follow Hashem's Torah. Not as external subjugation, rather as a commitment to ourselves and our full potential.

This is the place of Maror in the Seder, to teach us that certain elements of slavery and discipline can add to the ultimate night of freedom. ◇



Embracing The Freedom: A Message From UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Education has always been at the heart of Jewish life and never more so than at Pesach. Socrates once sounded a fascinating note of caution about education, describing it as “the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” That is to say that while creative educational programmes at home, in school or in the community are important - if they have no long term impact on our lives, they have been of little value.

Pesach Sedarim are precious family gatherings that provide significant educational experiences. Hopefully, we leave our Seder tables better informed, often on an emotional and spiritual high.

But, as with any educational experience, so much depends on the follow-up. There is every danger that our Pesach experiences, however impactful, will, in the course of time, become a distant memory to which we return only at further Sedarim in subsequent years.

Our Sages teach, “Lo Hamidrash hu ha’ikar, ela hama’ase” - Study is not the main objective, rather, the action that arises from it. Once empowered by greater knowledge, we have a responsibility to translate our deeper understanding into meaningful action.

At Pesach we learn the most central and powerful lesson of all - that we

were granted the gift of freedom. But, the lesson itself is an empty one if we fail to embrace that freedom and take full advantage of it. We are blessed to

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live in a country that safeguards our religious freedom in strong and vibrant communities, with no limits on what we can achieve together.

This Pesach, as we sit around our Seder tables, just before we wash our hands for the meal, we will read a passage which blesses the Almighty - “Asher ge’alanu vega’al et avoteinu” - Who has redeemed us and our ancestors? It is a phrase which appears, at the very least, to be in the wrong order. Surely Hashem redeemed our ancestors before us. Why is our own redemption mentioned first and to what redemption is it referring?

Our Sages refer us back to the passage in the Haggadah which points out that, in every generation, it is our duty to regard ourselves as if we had personally left Egypt. Taking this one step further, we recognise that each one of us is privileged to benefit from our freedom, which comes with a responsibility to make a truly positive impact on the world around us.

This year, when you reach that part of the Seder, please stop for a moment and make a commitment, either individually or as a family, for the year ahead. Commit to an extra hour every week of precious family time. Commit to a few hours every month, volunteering for the benefit of those who need our help. Commit to an hour of Torah learning every week. Commit to regularly performing one extra mitzva. Commit to helping people in Israel or on the other side of the world. Make a commitment so that at next year’s Seder, and every subsequent year, you can look back as a family and say: This is how we have made the most of our freedom.

This year, let us guarantee that education will be accompanied by action and freedom by responsibility.

Valerie and all our family join me in wishing you all a chag kasher vesameach.

With blessings and every good wish.◇

Mizrachi Canada is privileged to host the Chief Rabbi for his inaugural visit to Canada between the dates of October 31- November 6th in the Fall.

Stay posted for details!



The Haggadah's Wayward Son Today

Rabbi Doron Perez
Chief Executive, World Mizrachi Movement

The seder night is the quintessential Jewish educational experience where grandparents, parents and children sit together and retell the story of our Exodus from Egypt and the birth of our people.

We are all familiar with the memorable description of the four sons who find themselves at the Pesach seder. This famous paragraph appears at the beginning of the Haggadah narrative and in many ways highlights its central educational message. I believe that determining the identity of the enigmatic wayward son will offer a fundamental insight into one of the major challenges facing the Jewish people and State of Israel today.

The Haggadah states as follows:

"The wayward son asks – What is this service to you? (Exodus 12:26) By saying 'you' he excludes himself. And since he excludes himself from the people of Israel (Klal Yisrael), he has denied a fundamental principle of our faith (Kofer be-Ikar). You in turn should blunt his teeth (give a sharp and blunt answer) and say to him – because of what Hashem did for me when I left Egypt, I do this (Exodus 13:8) – implying for me but not for him. If he (the wayward son) had been there (in Egypt), he would not have been redeemed?"

This paragraph from the Haggadah is based on an earlier source of our Sages (Mechilta of Rabbi Yishmael, Parashat Bo, 18) and is most telling as to who the wayward Jewish son is, and further, what our response to him should be. The Haggadah describes the wayward son as the one who sets himself apart from Jewish people and places himself outside Jewish community life. His

question, "What is this service to you" implies that the service does not obligate him in any way. Issues of Jewish identity—our collective fate, destiny and responsibilities—are seen as something which has no bearing on him. So much so that the Haggadah uses the sharp terminology that since he has excluded himself from the Jewish people, he has denied a fundamental tenet of Jewish faith.

Remarkably, what emanates so succinctly from the Haggadah is the supreme importance of Jewish peoplehood. The community ethic is

The wayward son needs to decide what side of Jewish history he is on.

a core component of our identity and crucial to the meaning of Jewish life.

Pesach is the story of our people. It is where we explain to ourselves and our children what it means to be part of the collective Jewish experience. It is about the history of our people whose birth was forged in the houses of bondage, of mutual pain and suffering in Egypt and continues with our freedom and redemption culminating in the ultimate messianic redemption. It is about our fate as a historic community. The crux of the Pesach story is sharing our common fate as a collective community and participating in the destiny of our people. Failure to embrace this reality excludes one from the Jewish community and therefore from being part of its destiny. Faith is not

independent of fate and Judaism is not independent of the Jewish people. One cannot claim to be either a religious Jew or a universalist Jew without being intrinsically connected to the particular fate and fortune of our people.

This is particularly relevant to one of the great contemporary challenges facing the Jewish people in general and the State of Israel specifically. Over the last fifteen years we have seen a dangerous and systematic delegitimization campaign of the State of Israel, her defenders and supporters. This began with the horrific World Racism Conference in Durban in 2001, continued with the founding of the Palestinian BDS movement (boycott, divestment and sanctions) in 2005 and continued with the damaging Goldstone report of 2009. A global movement has been galvanized to single out Israel unfairly and unjustly and brand it as an Apartheid State with a clear aim of shaking and undermining the moral foundations of her right to exist. This is a Machiavellian attempt to uproot any ethical, historic and spiritual rights of the Jewish people to a sovereign presence in our promised land.

What is most concerning is that some Jews are stridently siding with those who wish to uproot us. Some of these Jews such as Neturei Karta are emanating from the extreme religious right while others emanate from the opposite extreme secular left. These groupings form an unlikely and unholy alliance dedicated to the destruction of modern day Israel. Incredibly, these Jews claim to be proudly Jewish either through their religious or universalistic interpretation of their Jewish identity.

Their tragic mistake though, is that they are excluding themselves from the fundamental tenet of the Jewish community ethic and from our distinct and collective historic experience as a people. They are the wayward sons of our generation who want Judaism without Jewish peoplehood, faith without fate, universalism without bonds of unity with their people.

Having identified the wayward son, we now need to understand the bewildering reality of why it is that the wayward son who denies a sense of camaraderie with the Jewish community, is at the Pesach seder in the first place? After all, if he is so wayward, why does he want to be part of the Jewish experience? The answer is clear – he does want to have a connection to his Judaism – but he wants this to be without any commitment to and embracing of a collective Jewish fate and destiny. But the Haggadah teaches us that he cannot claim to be a good Jew, while at the same time separating himself from the pain and suffering of his own people. Of course, every good Jew must be sensitive to the suffering of

all human beings. All are created in the image of G-d. This is without question a core Jewish value. But how can this possibly override the suffering of his own family, community and people?

Pesach is the story of our people. It is where we explain to ourselves and our children what it means to be part of the collective Jewish experience.

Kindness and charity must never end in the home, but they most certainly begin there.

The answer given to the wayward son in the Haggadah is most telling. We blunt his sharp criticism by highlighting the following important point: “Had you been in Egypt you would not have been redeemed.” The wayward son needs to decide what side of Jewish history he is on. If his worldview does not contain this deep sense of Jewish peoplehood, then he has missed the point of Jewish identity. Our Sages tell us that many Jews chose not to leave Egypt, but rather lost themselves during the plague

of darkness. These individual Jews could not come to terms with Moses’ vision of redemption from Egyptian society: to journey to the homeland of their forefathers and to exercise their divine, religious, historical and moral right to self-determination in their G-d given land. Those who left Egypt committed to this narrative. Those who chose to stay behind rejected it.

Remaining behind in Egypt and perhaps even prioritising the suffering of the Egyptians over the tears and pain of over 100 years of slavery and death of their own people at the hand of the Egyptians side-lined them from future Jewish destiny. Instead of becoming influential protagonists of Jewish history, they became a peripheral footnote.

We are encouraged by the fact that the wayward son is at the seder table. He does want to be part of Jewish history, but does not know how. He makes the fundamental mistake of not appreciating the inextricable link between our faith and our fate, between a Judaism of a religious or a universal nature and the Jewish people. ♦





The Spring Of Man, The Spring Of Nature

Rabbi Eyal Greiner
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Tefachot

The Torah gives us a special commandment: "Keep the month of spring, and make the Passover offering to the Lord, your God, for in the month of spring, the Lord, your God, brought you out of Egypt." (Devarim 16:1). The Torah charges the Sages (Chachamim) with the responsibility of ensuring that the month of Nissan always occurs in the spring. They instigated the leap year in order to synchronize the lunar and solar years and so, once every few years we add an additional month of Adar, thus ensuring that Nissan always occurs in the spring.

We have to understand the full significance of this commandment and what would happen if Nissan would not occur in the spring. Why does the Torah insist that we institute the system of leap years and seasons? The answer is to be found in the verse quoted above: "...for in the month of spring, the Lord, your God, brought you out of Egypt" (ibid). Further explanation is required to

understand this verse.

The word "Mitzrayim" in Hebrew literally translates as "narrow straits," which embodies the essence of its power. Mitzrayim is fully aware of the enormous spiritual strength

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hidden within the Jewish nation and understands that these people have the ability to capture the entire world using their spiritual powers. Their inner convictions and wisdom have the potential to attract the following of all nations. This is a very worrying situation for Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

So how does Pharaoh react? He ensures that the remarkable spiritual potential of the Jewish people will not be fulfilled. He enslaves them, because

slaves do not have time to think. A person who has no time to think could go through an entire lifetime without ever recognizing his spiritual potential. Living within his internal dungeon, he may never realize what he is missing in the upper floors of his soul, what beauty awaits him up there.

Today nothing has changed. Then the Egyptians called it slavery and now it is called 'capitalism'. We are commanded: work, work harder, work from dawn to dusk, build your career, buy an apartment, invest in stocks, just don't think about the meaning of life. If you have time to think about its meaning, you might actually find it...

Pharaoh's strategy worked. When Moshe came to tell the Jewish people about the imminent redemption, the Torah states: "They did not hearken to Moses because of their shortness of breath and because of their hard labor" (Shemot 6:9). Not only had they lost the ability to think for themselves, they



SPOTLIGHT ON: YESHIVAT TEFACHOT

The Tefachot Yeshiva was founded in 2001 by Rabbi Eyal Greiner and Rabbi Avigdor Weizmann. The yeshiva started its activity with ten students, reaching the northern moshav of Tefachot, that had only 35 families living in it, at that time. They have been in a process of growing and developing ever since. 120 students currently learn in the yeshiva, and 80 families now live in Tefachot.

The Yeshiva of Tefachot was founded with the goals of:

1. Creating a unique setting for high school graduates coming from the periphery, with an emphasis on students from the Ethiopian community
2. Strengthening the settlements of Merom HaGalil.

didn't even have the strength to listen to Moshe. Speaking to Pharaoh on behalf of the Jewish people, Moshe said: "Now let us go on a three day journey in the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God" (ibid 5:3). Pharaoh's reaction was typical: "...for they are lax. Therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God'" (ibid 5:8).

If they are still capable of thinking, if they have time to consider the purpose of life then they are not working hard enough! "Let the labor fall heavy upon the men and let them work at it, and let them not talk about false matters" (ibid 5:9). The Egyptians' strategy was clear. The very first buds of spiritual awakening must be crushed. Let the slaves work overtime and then they certainly won't have time to think and we won't have to worry anymore.

The Egyptians' treatment of the Jewish people is paralleled in nature. Winter restrains the powerful forces of nature. Trees shed their leaves and become bare, ants burrow into the ground, and life becomes dormant until the spring. With the arrival of the new season, trees turn green again and new buds appear. Birds rebuild their nests and butterflies emerge from their cocoon. Nature awakens from its

deep slumber and gets ready for a new beginning.

Freedom follows the same pattern. The hidden potential springs forth into reality. Throughout the winter, leaves and buds lie buried deep down in the tree's trunk and roots and are restrained by the forces of winter. With the arrival of spring, nature experiences its Exodus in the form of freedom.

Therefore the Torah states: "Keep the month of spring... for in the month of spring... brought you out of Egypt." The Exodus was not a one-time event to be preserved in the collective memory. Every single year, at the appropriate time, each Jew has the opportunity to go out of Egypt.

Which of us are not restrained by our personal 'Mitzrayim'? Who doesn't feel that he is out of touch with his inner self and unrealized potential? Who doesn't want to be the 'real me' and not just live up to society's expectations? This is the very essence of freedom—to be 'me' and not anyone else.

God brought the Jewish people out of Egypt in the spring. This was no coincidence, rather a Divine message to us: nature and man are intertwined.

Let the Jew witness nature's expression of freedom as it breaks away from winter's restraints. Then he will celebrate the festival of fulfilled potential – the Festival of Pesach. ◇



MIZRACHI
C A N A D A



תנועת בני עקיבא בטורונטו
BNEI AKIVA OF TORONTO



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
TORAH MITZION
BEIT MIDRASH
זכרון דוב

THE COMMUNITY IS INVITED TO AN EVENING OF
COMMEMORATION & CELEBRATION FOR

YOM HAZIKARON & YOM HA'ATZMAUT

.....
WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2016 AT 6:45 PM

BETH AVRAHAM YOSEPH OF TORONTO,
613 CLARK AVENUE WEST, THORNHILL
.....



GUEST SPEAKER: RABBI JEREMY GIMPEL

Jeremy Gimpel, Deputy Director of World Mizrachi, is an educator, politician and presenter of "Israel Inspired", a podcast that has over 12 million views on YouTube.
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Mizrachi champions religious Zionism across the world, promoting the ideology of Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael. For more information: www.mizrachi.ca | 416-630-9266 | [f /mizrachicanada](https://www.facebook.com/mizrachicanada)

KOLOT HAMIZRACH

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