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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In the Passover Haggadah, we say: "Even if we are all wise, all men of understanding, and all know the Torah, it is a mitzva (commandment) for us to tell of the exodus from Egypt." This quote indicates that the point of the Seder is not merely an intellectual experience. For after all, if we are wise and know the Torah, then we also know the story of the Exodus.

Instead, the intent is that the Seder enables us to relive the Exodus, to realize - as we say later in the Haggadah - that "not only our ancestors [were] redeemed from Egypt, but [G-d] redeemed us as well." Every Seder is an opportunity for each one of us to leave Egypt.

What does it mean for us to leave Egypt, when many of us have never seen that part of the world?

Mitzrayim - the Hebrew name for Egypt - shares a connection with the term meitzarim, meaning "boundaries" or "limitations." Leaving Egypt means going beyond those forces that hold us back and prevent us from expressing who we really are. The idea of leaving Egypt reminds us that, in a certain way, we are all slaves.

Each one of us has a soul which is "an actual part of G-d." This is the core of our being, our real "I." But we find ourselves in Egypt, for there are forces, both external and internal, that prevent us from being in touch with this spiritual potential and giving it expression.

The Seder night is a time when these forces do not have the power to hold us back. For Passover is "The Season of Our Freedom." From the time of the Exodus - and indeed, from the beginning of time - this night was chosen as a night on which the potential is granted to express our G-dly core. Every year, at this time, within the spiritual hierarchy of the world, there is "an exodus from Egypt." All restrictions fall away and transcendent G-dliness is revealed.

This spiritual awakening filters down within our souls, prompting us to tap our spiritual core, express our unbounded G-dly potential, and leave Egypt, i.e., to break through any and all restraints.

This experience should not remain an isolated spiritual peak. Instead, Passover should initiate a process of endless growth, empowering us to continuously breakthrough ever subtle levels of limitations and express our spiritual potential at all times.

This concept is reflected in the Lubavitch custom not to recite the passage "Chasal Siddur Pesach" ("The Passover Seder is concluded") which others say at the end of the Seder. The intent of the omission is to emphasize that our Passover experience should be ongoing. Throughout the year, we should look to the Seder as the beginning of a pattern of new growth and spiritual expression.

Freedom in Five Dimensions

By Tali Loewenthal

Our sages speak of the close relationship between the individual and the history of the Jewish people as described in the Torah. The grand events of the slavery in Egypt and the Exodus recounted in Parshas Va'eira can take place within the personal world of each man or woman living today.

One example is the Plagues, prominent in our Parshas Va'eira. On Passover, reading the Haggadah, we chant a list of them, spilling out a drop of wine for each. Then the Haggadah recalls a discussion about them between two ancient Sages, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Eliezer says that each Plague actually consisted of four Plagues. Rabbi Akiva says not four, but five. Sitting at the Seder table, reciting from the wine-stained Haggadah, we hurry on towards the Matza, the bitter herbs and the meal. But what are these two Sages telling us today?

It is at this point that we can discover something about the process of leaving Egypt on an inner, personal level.

The function of the Plagues in history was to break the negative power of Egypt and of Pharaoh, the tyrant who enslaved the Jewish people. Inwardly, the equivalent of the Plagues is our attempt to break through our own situation of enslavement. Who or what enslaves us? Our own negative desires, our own self-centeredness.

In this inner enslavement there are four levels, according to Rabbi Eliezer, and five according to Rabbi Akiva. Understanding that, we ourselves are better able to apply the 'Plagues' in order to release our inner self.

The first level is when the negative within ourselves has so much power over us that it can force us to do something wrong. This is the plain and simple level of daily life, at which a person struggles to gain control his behavior.

The second, more subtle level of enslavement is when the person does the right thing. But he is always worried about what other people are thinking about him. He is trapped by his own concept of society.

A third level of enslavement is yet more subtle. The person has a sense of freedom, and stands above the opinions of other people. Yet he remains limited by his own intellect and understanding. He remains cold, without passion. By contrast Jewish teaching demands from us the ability to go beyond this limitation: "You should love G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." There are situations which demand something more than cold rationality.

The fourth level is that the person can go beyond understanding. He or she acts with self-sacrifice. As far as Rabbi Eliezer is concerned, this is the highest level attainable.

But Rabbi Akiva can still see a possible problem. The person may continue to be trapped by his own sense of righteousness: "I am sacrificing myself! Aren't I wonderful?!" For Rabbi Akiva the fifth level of freedom is when the person is totally free of self.

Then he or she can truly be devoted to the service of G-d, bringing Redemption ultimately not just to themselves but to the whole world.

Slice of LIFE

A Mysterious Experience

By Stan Lapon

In 1954, the Rebbe initiated a campaign to give as many Jews as possible the privilege of eating Shmura Matza, special hand-baked matza, at the Passover seders. Lubavitcher Chasidim around the world eagerly promote this campaign and the Rebbe's emissaries send out boxes of Shmura Matza to hundreds of Jews in their community. This is the story of the ripple effect of one emissary's efforts.

Once upon a time in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, there lived a very kindly and generous Lubavitcher rabbi named Rabbi Yisroel Shmotkin. Every year it was his practice, at Passover time, to mail out boxes of Shmura Matza in order to bring a true feeling of celebration to the Passover Festival. This is the story of four boxes of Shmura Matza.

The first box arrived at the home of a friendless, middle-aged accountant, who lived alone and whose sole companions were his tank of tropical fish. Since tropical fish were not known as big talkers, our accountant often sat at home at night listening to the radio and wondering. He remembered going to the door that afternoon to pick up his mail when he opened the door, a cardboard box fell at his feet. At first he thought it was a medium size pizza that had been wrongly delivered to his home, but when he opened it up and saw the letter inside, a smile came to his face, a rare one for that time in his life, and he said a special thanks to Rabbi Shmotkin, just for remembering him.

The next afternoon, the friendless little accountant again went to the door to collect his daily portion of "occupant mail." Again when he opened the door, another cardboard box fell at his feet. He examined it closely and again found that it was Shmura Matza from Lubavitch House. "Strange," he thought, "one box was a nice, but two seems a bit extravagant on the Rabbi's part."

"Maybe the Lubavitch have more money than I think," he said to himself, "perhaps I have been giving in excess," he noted in his accountant-like brain.

The afternoon after that, our sad accountant again went to the door for his mail. This time he noticed a certain trepidation in his step and a slight hesitation as he opened the door. You guessed it, in fell another box of Shmura Matza. Now you must understand that the accountant was very computer friendly and thought for a moment that maybe he was in some sort of Chassidic computer loop, like when the government forgets that it has sent you your tax refund and decides to send you the same tax refund every week for the rest of your life. "Why," he pondered, couldn't he get into a government refund loop, instead of a Shmura Matza loop. "Just my mazel," he said to himself, "everyone else gets money when there is a mistake, I get Matza." The afternoon after that, he went as usual to get his mail, opened the door and you guessed it, in fell a fourth box of Shmura Matza. "Shmotkin is trying to tell me something," our accountant thought to himself, "but what could it be?"

"Four boxes of Shmura Matza has to be a sign, like the four questions only more expensive," our little friend pondered.

"What shall I do, what shall I do." Finally, after an excess of soul searching, he decided to do exactly as Rabbi Shmotkin had done, to give the Shmura Matza away. Since he didn't know many people, he gave away two of the boxes to people at work, one to a Jewish woman married to a non-Jewish man and one to a Jewish man married to a non-Jewish woman. The third box he took with him to his Seder dinner and the fourth he kept for himself.

The little accountant's Seder dinner was most depressing. His father's wife was quite ill and could barely sit at the table. Her days were not to be long it seemed to all assembled, who nodded among themselves with little knowing looks. When it came time to display and taste the first Matza, the accountant's stepmother brightened up. "Who brought the Shmura Matza to the Seder?" she asked rather strongly

everyone thought.

"Why, I did," responded the little accountant.

"I really want to thank you," she said. "Every day to me is now very precious, and with this unexpected gift, you have done the impossible, for you have made this day somehow ever more precious to me than usual."

Everyone was beaming at the table and somehow a very sad and distant night had turned into a very close knit one.

"Rabbi Shmotkin is doing something right when they gives this Matza away," the accountant thought to himself.

Three days later when he returned to the office, the man he had given the Matza to approached the accountant almost before he had had a chance to have his morning coffee. "You know," he said, "that special Matza you gave me for Passover really fascinated my wife, who isn't Jewish. I don't attend a seder anymore, but when she saw how ancient the Matza looked she made me take down our dusty unused Bible and that very night, it happened to be Passover eve, she made me read out loud the entire story of the exodus."

Moments later, the woman to whom I had given the matza approached me. "I want to thank you for that Matza you gave us for Passover. You know every year my daughter, husband and I go to my parents house for a semi-seder. It's really just a meal, because my husband isn't much interested."

When our daughter opened the Matza box at the house and gave everyone a piece and then she read the rabbi's letter that came with the Matza out loud, you know, my husband said to me, she really likes this service stuff and he agreed to let me send her to Hebrew school. Before that night he was against the whole idea, I don't know what changed his mind, but I think the Matza had something to do with it."

Needless to say, I was in a state of shock for these revelations, and had a small feeling of guilt about hanging on to my own box. Look at the good I could have done for someone else, if I had given all of Rabbi Shmotkin's Shmura Matza away. But then I remembered how I felt when I got my first box and was kind of glad that I had set it aside.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Doubts and Arguments, Part One

This is in reply to your letter of June 20.

I must say that it is one of the most "amazing" letters I have ever received, based on a most amazing conclusion of a person who, after following the Jewish way of life for 17 years, has now decided that it was wrong because he did it for the sake of his wife and family.

Hence he feels impelled to make a radical change, although by his own admission the conclusion is not based on irrefutable proofs, but is solely motivated by "strong doubts" and insufficient knowledge about G-d and the need of observing His mitzvot.

Curiously, as strong as his doubts are about the past, there seems to him no doubt whatever about his future course; so much so that he has already initiated steps to put an end to his past 17 years' life and family.

Surely there is no need to point out that however wise a person may be, it is not always wise to rely entirely on one's judgement, since the wisest person may sometimes make a mistake, especially in a case where one is personally and deeply involved.

Moreover, by your own recognition, your conclusion is based on doubts, albeit strong doubts, but doubts nevertheless. If so, why all this haste to carry out your decision? Surely, before taking steps that from your viewpoint could possibly be destructive to yourself and your family, don't you think you ought first to discuss your doubts and conclusions with knowledgeable friends, both from [observant] and (if you so desire) not from? After 17 years, a little more time wouldn't make all that much difference.

After all, when a Jew is in doubt -- lacking strong convictions about the need to do mitzvot, the logical way of thinking is as follows: If after further intensive study his convictions are strengthened, all the better. On the other hand, should he come to the conclusion that what he was doing was unnecessary, then the most he could regret would be the "inconvenience" of having spent a few minutes on putting on tefillin every weekday morning, or having deprived himself of non-kosher food, having kept Shabbat and Yom Tov [holidays], and so on.

But if he recklessly gives up his Jewish way of life, and eventually, sooner or later, he is bound to realize that the Torah and mitzvot and the Jewish way of life are indeed "our life and the length of our days," both in this life and eternal life -- then he will never forgive himself for having treated it so "lightly."

A WORD

from the Director

This Friday night, Jews around the world will sit down to celebrate the first Passover seder. According to tradition, an unseen guest will also grace the table, together with our relatives and friends: Elijah the Prophet.

During his lifetime, Elijah refined his physical body to such an extent that it accompanied him "in a tempest up to heaven" when he passed away. Since then, Elijah visits every Jewish home during the Passover seder and also attends every brit mila (circumcision) ceremony that is performed. Although we cannot see his physical body, his spiritual presence takes part in our celebrations at these special times.

Elijah the Prophet will also be the one to herald the Redemption, as the Torah states, "For behold, I will send Elijah the Prophet to you, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the L-rd."

As Jews, we anxiously await Moshiach's coming every day. But what about Elijah the Prophet? How can we realistically expect Moshiach to come today if Elijah did not come yesterday to announce his imminent arrival?

One of the answers to this question is that Elijah the Prophet is supposed to precede Moshiach only if the Redemption comes about "in its time" - in accordance with natural law. If, however, the Redemption comes about in a manner in a miraculous way, transcending the laws of nature, it is quite possible that Moshiach can actually arrive first.

So regardless of who will make the first appearance, let us all ponder the Rebbe's words as we celebrate this festival of freedom: "It is absolutely certain, with no doubt whatsoever, that the time for Redemption has arrived. The only thing remaining for us to do is to actually greet our Righteous Moshiach, so that he may fulfill his mission and redeem the entire Jewish people from exile."

A kosher and happy Passover!

J. I. Gutterman

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

The Kitniyot Debate: Are We Not One People?

Question: *I am Ashkenazi (Jew of Eastern European descent) and my wife is Sephardi (an Oriental Jew). She grew up eating rice on Passover, which my family custom would never allow. Every Passover, we have the same discussion: how can it be that one group of Jews can eat rice on Passover and another group can't? Aren't we all part of the same religion? Isn't this an example of how the Torah can be interpreted in so many ways, and there is no one true Judaism?*

Answer: Actually, when you compare the way Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews celebrate Passover, you will be astounded not by the differences, but by the similarities. The discrepancies are so minor and external that they just prove the rule—we are one people with one Torah.

Jews are forbidden by the Torah to eat or even own leavened products on Passover. This means any product made from the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, rye, oats), other than matzah, cannot be eaten or in your possession for the eight days of Passover. Jews living in certain areas took on an extra stringency and forbade rice and legumes on Passover.

The Jews of the Orient, however, did not take on this custom. Perhaps the conditions of growing and storing those products in their lands did not warrant this extra precaution. This means that the Seder menu of a Jewish family from Iraq or Yemen will vastly differ from the fare served at a table of German or Hungarian Jews. The former will eat rice, peas, beans and corn; the latter will not.

But that's just the menu. If you look at every other aspect of the Seder, it is almost identical from one community to another. To illustrate this, imagine the following scenario:

Take a 9th century Persian Jew, and transport him through time and space to 19th century Poland. After traversing the globe and jumping a thousand years forward, he arrives in a time and a land that are totally foreign to him. He walks the streets in a daze, completely lost and out of place.

But take him to a Seder, and he will feel completely at home. His host family may look different in color and dress, and they may eat Ashkenazi foods that are unfamiliar to his Persian palate, but the Seder itself will be exactly the same as his family Seder back home. He will hear the children ask the same four questions that his own children ask him. He will eat the same matzah and bitter herbs, drink the same four cups of wine, and read the same prayers and biblical quotes. Even the songs, while sung to different tunes, will have the same Hebrew lyrics.

Most importantly, he will hear the exact same story, the story every Jewish family has told every year for over three thousand years, the story of our common ancestors who were slaves in Egypt until G-d set them free.

This is nothing short of amazing. Two thousand years of exile has not weakened our inner connection. Dispersal across the globe has not loosened our bonds of shared history and united destiny. With all the fragmentation and factionalism that we all complain about, we are still one people. This is felt at Passover more than ever.

Rather than focusing on the superficial disparities between communities, look at our internal connection. We are all telling the same story. G-d took us out of Egypt to make us one nation, united by the Torah, our common history and our common goal. Some eat rice, some don't, and it matters not. We are one family, the children of Israel.

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

It happened once that Kaiser Rudolph, the King of Bohemia, decided to wage war against a neighboring country. After several weeks of fierce and unrelenting battle the Bohemian forces suffered a military defeat, and the Kaiser himself was taken captive. For many months the Kaiser languished in a tiny prison cell under unendurable conditions, his only hope a swift execution to relieve him of his suffering and humiliation.

One day the Kaiser was looking out the window when he noticed an elderly Jew with a long white beard passing by the jail. The Jew stopped and peered inside, beholding the pathetic figure of the captured monarch. The Kaiser was elated; it was the first time anyone had made eye contact with him in ages. "Come here!" he begged him in a whisper. The Jew walked over to the window. "Don't you recognize me? I am Kaiser Rudolph, King of Bohemia."

"If that is true, the Kaiser has changed greatly in appearance," the Jew replied, clearly skeptical. But the prisoner continued to insist that he was the King, and eventually convinced the Jew of his identity. The old Jew picked up his walking stick and began to beat at the window bars. After a few well-placed blows the bars were loosened. Making sure that no one was watching, the Kaiser climbed out the window and took his first breath of freedom. Quickly, he followed his rescuer back to his house.

The Kaiser wanted to slip over the border immediately and resume his throne, but the Jew demurred. "Your Majesty, it isn't fitting for a king to make a public entrance in such a reduced state. Surely your Majesty will want to bathe and improve his appearance before returning."

The Jew walked over to the closet and took out two small silver trays. On one was a set of hairbrushes, and on the other, a scissors and file for paring the nails. The Kaiser had tears in his eyes as he accepted them gratefully. "I will never forget your kindness," he declared from the bottom of his heart.

At that moment the Kaiser awoke from his dream, his heart pounding and covered in perspiration. A second later the perspiration turned to ice, as his eyes fell on the two small silver trays on the chest in his royal chamber. But there was no time for reflection, as a knock on the door heralded the entry of the King's valet. "Your Majesty, the royal barber is here to see you," he announced. "Let him wait," the Kaiser replied, too disturbed to even think about haircuts.

The Kaiser wondered if there was any connection between the previous day's events and his peculiar dream: The day before, a group of the King's closest confidants had approached him to voice their complaints about Rabbi Yehuda Lowy, the Maharal of Prague. Irritated by the great esteem in which he was held by Jew and non-Jew alike, they had demanded that something be done to punish the flourishing Jewish community of which he was head.

The anti-Semites had insisted that all the Jews be expelled from Prague, but their words had fallen on deaf ears. The Kaiser had heard much about the Maharal's wisdom, and was actually a secret admirer. In the King's opinion, none of the stories he'd been told about the Jews justified taking such a step.

Realizing that they were getting nowhere, the contingent had turned its attention to the Queen, a silly woman who was easily manipulated, and convinced her of the need to implement their plan. The Kaiser would now have to contend with a nagging wife.

The Queen's pleas were indeed insistent. That night, just before he had gone to sleep, the Queen had thrust the already prepared order of expulsion into her husband's hands. The King, wanting some peace and

quiet, had promised to make his decision the following morning.

The King was very confused by the vivid dream, and decided that the only one who could explain it properly was the Maharal himself. A royal messenger and carriage were immediately dispatched to fetch the Rabbi.

The King was waiting expectantly when the Maharal arrived at the palace. "How is it that the Chief Rabbi of the Jews didn't recognize the Kaiser last night?" he demanded. The Maharal looked at him shrewdly. "Your Majesty," he explained, "don't forget that the Kaiser was changed greatly in appearance."

"So you're already aware of my dream!" the King said excitedly. "Can you also tell me what it means?"

The Maharal asked the Kaiser to send his servant for the order of expulsion on his night table. The Kaiser drew in his breath; he himself had already forgotten where he'd put the document. "If your Majesty will destroy this document, he will never again have such dreams," the Maharal promised.

From that day on the King of Bohemia and the Maharal enjoyed a cordial relationship. Needless to say, the enemies of the Jews were defeated, powerless in the face of the Kaiser's obvious admiration for the great Rabbi.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

On the **FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER** we read from the book of Exodus (12:21-51) of the bringing of the Passover Offering in Egypt, the Plague of the Firstborn and the stroke of midnight, and how "On this very day, G-d took the Children of Israel out of Egypt."

The reading for the **SECOND DAY OF PASSOVER**, Leviticus 22:26-23:44, includes: a list of the moadim -- the "appointed times" on the Jewish calendar for festive celebration of our bond with G-d; the mitzvah to Count the Omer (the 49-day "countdown" to the festival of Shavuot which begins on the 2nd night of Passover); and the obligation to journey to the Holy Temple to "to see and be seen before the face of G-d" on the three annual pilgrimage festivals -- Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot.

The readings for the four **INTERMEDIATE DAYS OF PASSOVER** include:

- 1) Instructions to commemorate the Exodus by sanctifying the firstborn, avoiding leaven and eating matzah on Passover, telling one's children the story of the Exodus, and donning tefillin (Exodus 13:1-16).
- 2) A portion from the Parshah of Mishpatim which includes the laws of the festivals (Exodus 22:24-23:19).
- 3) A section describing Moses' receiving of the Second Tablets and G-d's revelation to him of His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which likewise concludes with the laws of the festivals (Exodus 34:1-26); when one of the "intermediate days" of Passover is Shabbat, this is the reading read on that day, and it begins 12 verses earlier, with 33:12).
- 4) The story and laws of the "Second Passover" (Numbers 9:1-14).

On the **SEVENTH DAY OF PASSOVER** we read how on this day the sea split for the Children of Israel and drowned the pursuing Egyptians, and the "Song at the Sea" sung by the people upon their deliverance (Exodus 13:17-15:26).

On the **EIGHTH DAY OF PASSOVER** we read Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17. Like the reading for the second day, it catalogs the annual cycle of festivals, their special observances, and the offerings brought on these occasions to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Eighth Day's special connection with the Future Redemption is reflected in the Haftorah (reading from the Prophets) for this day (Isaiah 10:32-12:6).

CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos Pesach		Pesach Day 2	
	Day 1 March		Day 2	
	30th	31st	1st	
	Begins		Lighting Ends	
Melbourne	6:59	After 7:54	6:53	
Adelaide	6:56	After 7:50	6:48	
Brisbane	5:30	After 6:22	6:21	
Darwin	6:33	After 7:22	7:21	
Gold Coast	5:29	After 6:20	6:19	
Perth	5:58	After 6:50	6:49	
Sydney	6:35	After 7:29	6:28	
Canberra	6:43	After 7:38	6:36	
Launceston	6:49	After 7:46	6:45	
Auckland	7:00	After 7:55	6:54	
Wellington	6:59	After 7:56	6:54	
Hobart	6:48	After 7:46	6:44	
Byron Bay	6:28	After 7:19	6:18	

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

EREV PESACH / PESACH • 14 NISSAN • 30 MARCH

FRIDAY:	END EATING CHOMETZ	11.25AM
	END BURNING CHOMETZ	12.24PM
	MINCHA	7.05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	7.45 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	10.26 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	7.05 PM
	MARIV	7.50 PM
SUNDAY (2ND DAY OF PESACH):	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.26 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
WEEKDAYS:	MINCHA	6.00 PM
	MAARIV	6.55 PM
	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.55 PM
	MAARIV	6.45 PM