

The Rabbi's Passover Message 5776/2016

*Arise, my beloved, my fair one, and come away.
For lo, the winter is past; flowers appear on the earth.
The time of singing is here. The voice of the dove is heard in our land.
Song of Songs 2:10-12*

Dear Friends,

As I write this, the first weeks of April feel far more wintery than one expects in spring. However, the promise of spring can offer us renewed energy and hope. I am sure that is one reason why Pesach (which is also called *Chag HeAviv* - The Festival of Spring) is among the most widely observed of all our holidays. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of the U.K., has pointed out that Pesach is the oldest continuously observed religious ritual in the world.

The reenacting of the passage from slavery to freedom, from degradation to redemption, is expressed not only in our *seder*, but, as spring progresses, it is reflected within nature itself. The journey of our ancestors, which we relive, represents the spiritual journey from darkness to light which many of us must confront at some point in the course of our lives.

Across the centuries, Passover has never lost its power to inspire the imagination of successive generations of Jews with its annually re-enacted drama of slavery and liberation. On our Festival of Freedom, we acknowledge not only our freedom from slavery in Egypt, but a freedom from those forces inside and outside of ourselves that wish to enslave us; freedom from our own inner struggles, freedom from the burden of the challenges that we face.

All these powerful themes, together with the rich ceremonies and celebrations, the various customs regarding food and the *seder* experience itself, all combine to appeal to children and adults alike

I again wish to share with you one of the finest appreciations of Passover I have encountered. It was written by the late noted author, journalist and Jewish social activist, Leonard (*Leibel*) Fein. We were honored to have him as a guest speaker here at CBE a number of years ago.

Fein had served as professor of Politics and Social Policy at MIT and later as professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies at Brandeis. He was the founding editor of *Moment Magazine* and also the founder of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. I hope you will find his message as meaningful as I have. You'll find it at the very end of this file.

Below is information about the tradition of the Selling of *Chametz*. If you are interested in my taking care of this for you, just follow the instructions.

Please note the listing below of our upcoming services during the coming weeks. In addition, I want to invite you to our special **Pre-Passover Sabbath Service this Friday, the 15th**, featuring melodies of Passover, the poetry and melody of the Song of Songs (Shir HaShirim) and a presentation entitled "A Few Ways to Make Your Seder Even More Enjoyable and Participatory."

Naomi and I wish you and your loved ones a joyous Yomtov.

Chag Same'ach,

Rabbi Lewis Mintz

Mechirat Hametz 5776/2016
The selling of *Hametz*

As we do our pre-Pesach, spring clean-out, despite our best efforts and thorough preparation, it is not always practical, nor possible, to remove every bit a *Hametz* from our homes.

As a result, we have the custom to sell, just prior to Passover, whatever *Hametz* might still remain in one's possession.

This sale remains in effect until the end of Pesach.*

If you would like to have the Rabbi take care of that for you, please print and fill out the form below and **return it to the Synagogue by 8:00 P.M. on Thursday, the 21st.**

If you cannot drop it off in person, our fax # is 978-263-8610.

If you wish to scan it, please send the file to rablew@bethelohim.org.

If you are unable to utilize any of the above methods, fill in the form below (with your name printed in the signature line.) and return by e-mail to rablew@bethelohim.org.

Mechirat Hametz - Sale of Hametz

I, the undersigned, authorize Rabbi Lewis Mintz, of Congregation Beth Elohim, acting as my representative, to dispose of all leaven (*hametz*) owned and possessed by me and to lease all places wherein such *hametz* may be found on the premises located at the address noted below, for Passover, 5776.

This sale takes effect as of 11:00 A.M. on Friday, April 22nd, 2016.

Signature: _____

(print name)

Address:

* Check here if you observe 7 days of Pesach

* Check here if you observe an 8th day.

Passover & Sabbath Services

**Saturday, April 23rd, 10:00 A.M.
Service for the First Day of Pesach***

**Friday, April 29th, 9:30 A.M.
Service for the 7th Day of Pesach
(including Yizkor)****

**Friday evening, April 29th, 7:30 PM
Sabbath Service*****

*Conducted by Rabbi Mintz

**Conducted by Cantor Spierer

***Conducted by Congregants

The Work of Passover

The Holiday That Demands Empathy of Us

By Leonard Fein

The Forward

I have long believed that Judaism is a system of vocational education — that is, of education for a vocation, a calling (from the Latin *vocare*, to call). I needn't elaborate here on the substance and texture of that calling. I note only that such questions as *ayeka* ("Where are you?") and such injunctions as *shma* (Listen up!) suggest an active calling — and an expectation of response.

If we accept the idea of vocational education, then we can experience renewed appreciation of Pesach, which is, I believe, the most ingenious element of our curriculum. Pesach is a teaching moment, if ever there was one. In a dozen different ways, it offers essential lessons regarding our collective calling. Again and again I am struck, for example, by the two words *avadim hayinu* (we were slaves), words that could have been but were not framed quite differently, as in *avadim hayu avoteinu v'imoteinu* (our fathers and mothers were slaves). The internalization that is expected of us is not limited to the thundering *b'chol dor va'dor* — in every generation, and so forth. It is an ongoing theme of our seder.

We look backward to the classic redemption in order to be enabled to look forward to the promised redemption. That is, as Arnie Eisen has eloquently taught, our confidence that redemption is possible is based on the precedent we celebrate at our seder. We infer not only a promised land, but also *l'shanah habah b'yerushalayim* (next year in Jerusalem) and *karev yom* ("a day draws near that is neither day nor night"), a promised time. Each cup we raise this night is an act of memory and of reverence. The story we tell, this year as every year, is not yet done. It begins with them, then; it continues with us, now. We remember not out of curiosity or nostalgia, but because it is our turn to add to the story.

Our challenge this year, as every year, is to feel the Exodus, to open the gates of time and become one with those who crossed the Red Sea from slavery to freedom.

Our challenge this year, as every year, is to reach out to all those in every land who have yet to make the crossing and help them enter freedomland.

We know some things that others did and do not always know — how arduous is the struggle, how very deep the waters to be crossed and how treacherous their tides, how filled with irony and contradiction and suffering the crossing, then the wandering.

How can we not know such things? Did we ourselves not wander in the desert for forty years, and have not those forty years been followed by twenty-five centuries of struggle and of quest? Heirs to those who struggled and quested, we are old-timers at disappointment, veterans at sorrow, but always, always, prisoners of hope. Hatikvah — the hope — is the anthem of our people, and the way of our people.

And for all the reversals and all the stumbling-blocks, for all the blood and all the hurt, hope still dances within us. That is who we are, and that is what this seder is about.

For the slaves do become free, and the tyrants are destroyed. Once, it was by miracles; today, it is by defiance and devotion.

Yet this year, as in years past, we scarcely need to be reminded how much work there is yet to do if all are to be free — free from fear, free from abject poverty, free from plague, free from tyranny, free, above all, from fear; how much work there is yet to do, and how frightfully complicated are the decisions that need to be taken along the way. This year, yet again, we see with our own eyes how bloody the struggle can be, and how riddled with doubt. We call especially to mind this year the ongoing slaughter (70,000 dead so far, and counting) in Syria, as also the struggle of people on every continent to achieve greater freedom and dignity than they have had, and we hope and pray that they will finally enjoy the blessings of freedom. And we call to mind, yet again, the endless insult and injury that is both seed and fruit of the bitter conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

But though the path be brambled and twisted, the goal is clear. So when we raise our first cup of wine, let it be for those who suffer still, in the hope and the prayer that they, too, will know the freedom that is our blessing. And let it be for those in every land who give freedom a face and a name, whose lives nourish the blossoms of freedom around the world and enable us to hope.

Let us give thanks for the freedom that is ours, for family and friends, and let us never ever take that freedom, those friends, our families, for granted. Next year, may all who are today denied freedom dwell in the Jerusalems of their longing, united with their loved ones, together, at home, at last.

I wish for you and yours what I wish for myself and mine — the anticipation, the joy, the urgency of memory and the connected urgency of hope, and the sweetness that this holiday enables.