

In their Passover Haggadah, *A Different Night*, Noam Zion and David Dishon tell the story of a rabbi who came to shul one morning as usual to greet the older men who were his minyan regulars. One challenged the rabbi playfully: "Aren't you going to wish me Happy Birthday?"

"Sure, how old are you?" asked the rabbi.

"I'm 45 today," the man said proudly.

"Who are you kidding?" replied the rabbi incredulously, "You must be 75 at least!"

"To be sure," the gentleman said softly. "But still today is when I celebrate my birthday. You see, forty-five years ago I was reborn when the Allies liberated Auschwitz. For me, the gift of life and the gift of freedom have since then been inseparable."

Indeed, it is for the very reason illustrated in the story above – the inexorably linked nature of life and freedom - that we as Jews regard the Hebrew month of Nisan, the month during which Passover falls, as the first of the calendar year as it says in Exodus (12:2): "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months. It shall be the first of the months for you." While the birthday of the world, the anniversary of its creation, may be in Tishrei when the High Holidays fall, it is Nisan that marks the inauguration of our existence as a free people. Beginnings are not just biological or cosmological events but rather spiritual ones as well. We count time always with an appreciation of the freedom that we are so fortunate to enjoy!

This spring we will also celebrate another anniversary of freedom as we commemorate the 70th birthday of the State of Israel next month on Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel's Independence Day), April 18-19. *Lihyot am hofshi b'artzeinu* – to be a free people in a [free] land – has been the hope of our community for thousands of years, and for the past seven decades we have had the enormous privilege of seeing that dream realized. It is for this reason that *L'Shana Ha'baah* – Next Year in Jerusalem! – is the theme of my Passover supplement this holiday season. I hope that some of the readings and activities found below might bring a further spirit of Israel to the Pesach table.

(Those interested in looking at seder supplements of years past focusing on the Four Questions, the Four Children, general seder enhancement, and social justice respectively should feel free to visit BHBE's website: http://bhcbce.org/cpt_sermons/2451/, http://bhcbce.org/cpt_sermons/burning-book/, http://bhcbce.org/cpt_sermons/baseball-seder-plate/, <https://images.shulcloud.com/1254/uploads/Erev-Shabbat-Messages/Social-Justice-Supplement.pdf>.)

I wish you and yours a Chag Sameach – a very happy holiday – filled with all the manifold blessings of freedom!

An early Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Annie Tucker

L'Shana Ha'baah: A Seder Supplement in Honor of Israel's 70th Birthday!

Some Opening Words from Ben Gurion (From A Different Night by Noam Zion and David Dishon)

David Ben Gurion, first prime minister of the State of Israel, described the importance of the memories preserved on Pesach as he argued for the right to a Jewish State in 1947:

“Three hundred years ago a ship called the Mayflower set sail to the New World. This was a great event in the history of England. Yet I wonder if there is one Englishman who knows at what time the ship set sail? Do the English know how many people embarked on this voyage? What quality of bread did they eat? Yet more than three thousand three hundred years ago, before the Mayflower set sail, the Jews left Egypt. Every Jew in the world, even in America or Soviet Russia, knows on exactly what day they left – the fifteenth of the month of Nisan; everyone knows what kind of bread the Jews ate. Even today the Jews worldwide eat matza on the 15th of Nisan. They retell the story of the Exodus and all the troubles Jews have endured since being exiled. They conclude this evening with two statements: *This year, slaves. Next year, free men. This year here. Next year in Jerusalem, in Eretz Yisrael.* That is the nature of the Jews. (Testimony to the U.N. Commission on the Partition of Palestine, 1947)

The Fruits of Israel and Egypt: A Puzzle (From Creating Lively Passover Seders by David Arnow, p. 226-7)

This activity/discussion could be used for karpas, the eating of the spring greens, as it compares fruits and vegetables eaten in Egypt with those eaten in Israel.

This activity requires a trip to the grocery store. Pick up a head of garlic, a cucumber, a leek, an onion, a melon, grapes, figs, and a pomegranate. Put the garlic, cucumber, leek, onion and melon in one basket and the remaining items in another. Before your seder begins, gather your guests and show them both baskets. Explain that you'll be solving a puzzle based on two passages in the Bible in which these groups of fruits and vegetables appear. Read the paragraphs below and the question that comes after. After you've concluded your discussion, you may want to read one of both of the “solutions” that follow. Following the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites camped near Mount Sinai for almost a year. After having received the Torah and dedicated the Mishkan (the portable sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant), they finally began their march to the Promised Land, a distance of only several months' travel. Three days into the journey, they complained bitterly, longing to return to Egypt:

“The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, “If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!” (Numbers 11:4-6)

A few chapters later, twelve spies are sent to scout out the land of Canaan. All except Joshua and Caleb spread evil reports about the land in order to persuade the Israelites to return to Egypt. After the ensuing rebellion against Moses and Aaron, God condemns the people to thirty-nine more years in the desert. What did the spies bring back from Canaan?

“They reached wadi Eshcol, and they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes – it had to be borne on a carrying frame by two of them – and some pomegranates and figs.” (Numbers 13:23)

Why do you think garlic, cucumbers, leeks, onions, and melons are associated with Egypt, while grapes, figs, and pomegranates are connected with Israel? There is more than one satisfying answer to this puzzle! Deuteronomy 8:8 notes the seven choice species of the land of Israel – wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey. Here we are just concerned with those mentioned in Numbers 13:23.

From the Depths to the Heights: Garlic, onions, leeks, melons, and cucumbers mature under or upon the soil. When harvested, they bear the signs of their habitat: they are fully or partially covered with dirt. These crops shared their earthen realm with the Israelites, who were so long mired in the muddy clay of Egypt’s brick pits. Grapes, figs, and pomegranates grow on trees or vines, which elevate them above the ground. This difference represents the journey from degradation to redemption on both the physical and the spiritual plane....

Roots and Responsibilities: Cucumbers, leeks, garlic, onions, and melons are all annuals –they have to be replanted each year. Grapes, figs, and pomegranates are perennials – plant them once and they produce for many, many years. They also take several years before they mature and bear fruit....The land of Egypt does not belong to the Israelites, despite how long they have resided in it....The stay may be long but it is ultimately temporary. So the Israelites put down shallow roots in Egypt, like the plants for which they yearn. For the Israelites, the Promised Land is their ultimate destination, home in the deepest sense. And that is where one really puts down roots. That is where one is sure to be long enough to justify plantings that will take time to bear fruit.

Four Generations in Israel (From A Night to Remember by Mishael Zion and Noam Zion, illustration here by Michel Kichka)

This picture presents a modern version of the traditional Four Children discussed in the Maggid (telling) part of the seder. Have participants try to identify which of the women below represents the wise, wicked, simple, and unable to ask child. What kind of social commentary is the illustrator offering through his art? Would a picture of four generations in America look different? How so? Then read the explanation of the picture found below.



While the Haggadah urges us to create dialogue and continuity from parent to child, the ideological changes in Jewish life over the last 100 years in Israel have often involved revolting against one's parents' ideals in belief, in dress, and even in body image. Each child is identified not by what they ask but by what they read. The so-called wise child, the stereotype of the pre-Zionist ultra Orthodox, is a woman not concerned with a slim figure or stylish eyeglasses. Her daily reading is Psalms. The rebellious child is the Zionist intellectual reading the modern novelist Amos Oz. The simple child is of the third generation, which lacks knowledge and ideology. Her reading matter is a newspaper that says in the words of the Haggadah – “*Ma Zot* – What is this?” Last and still least is the little girl under the table who does not know how to read. She holds her potty training book upside down. Its name- *Pot of Pots* – is a pun on the Biblical love songs read on Pesach – *Song of Songs*.

A Contemporary Dayeinu (From [A Different Night](#) by Noam Zion and David Dishon)

“It Would Have Been Enough...”

Had God upheld us throughout 2,000 years of Dispersion, but had not preserved our hope for return -
Dayeinu!

Had God preserved our hope for return, but not sent us leaders to make the dream a reality – Dayeinu!
Had God sent us leaders to make the dream a reality, but had not given us success in the U.N. vote in 1947 – Dayeinu!
Had God given us success in the U.N. vote, but had not defeated our attackers in 1948 – Dayeinu!
Had God defeated our attackers in 1948, but not unified Jerusalem – Dayeinu!
Had God unified Jerusalem, but not led us towards peace with Egypt and Jordan – Dayeinu!
Had God returned us to the land our ancestors, but not filled it with our children – Dayeinu!
Had God filled it with our children, but not caused the desert to bloom – Dayeinu!
Had God caused the desert to bloom, but not built for us cities and towns – Dayeinu!
Had God rescued our remnants from the Holocaust, but not brought our brothers from Arab lands – Dayeinu!
Had God brought our brothers from Arab lands, but not opened the gate for Russia’s Jews – Dayeinu!
Had God opened the gate for Russia’s Jews, but not redeemed our people from Ethiopia – Dayeinu!
Had God redeemed our people from Ethiopia, but not strengthened the State of Israel – Dayeinu!
Had God strengthened the State of Israel, but not planted in our hearts a covenant of one people – Dayeinu!
Had God planted in our hearts a covenant of one people, but not sustained in our souls a vision of a perfected world – Dayeinu!

No More Maror (From [HIAS Guide: Israel and African Asylum Seekers](#))

As we recall our own experience of slavery, we recognize that there are people still today suffering from persecution and attempted genocide. The State of Israel, in particular, has an important role to play when it comes to welcoming African asylum seekers, the plight of whom is described below. On this holiday which celebrates freedom, we look forward to a time when all will live without the bitter taste of fear.

Israel is home to approximately 45,000 asylum seekers from Africa, who crossed the Sinai desert and entered Israel between the years 2005-2012. 73% are from Eritrea and 19% are from Sudan (mainly from Darfur). In 2012, the construction of a fence along the border with Egypt virtually ended the influx and only around 100 have entered since. Many of the asylum seekers have fled genocide, war, and persecution. Eritrea is deemed to be one of the most repressive regimes in the world. Some religions are illegal and those who express objection to government practices risk incarceration, torture, and death. Many Eritrean refugees are fleeing forced army conscription, which involves slave labor for the Eritrean regime, unrestricted length of service under abusive conditions, and, for those who defect and are caught, imprisonment and torture.

The UN Refugee Convention of 1951, which governs international refugee law, guarantees certain protections to people who are fleeing persecution. The most important of these protections is “nonrefoulement”—the right not to be forcibly returned to the country one fled. Other protections include the right of asylum seekers to not be punished for entering a country illegally, and for their asylum applications to be handled quickly. As one of the first signatories to the UN Refugee Convention, which was written to provide international protections to European refugees following World War II, Israel is both legally and morally bound to protect refugees. Unfortunately, at present, Israel is violating some of these protections.

Israel has granted temporary protection to many asylum seekers in the country, but very few have been granted asylum. Israel did not begin to process the asylum claims of Sudanese and Eritrean asylum

seekers until 2013, and most claims have still not been considered. Of the claims that have been considered, less than 0.5% have been found to be “legitimate.” The rest of those considered have been determined to be migrants who entered Israel illegally for economic opportunity, and who therefore are not entitled to refugee protection under international law. Asylum applicants from Eritrea and Sudan are granted asylum at very high rates in other developed countries (82% for Eritreans, 68% for Sudanese). Given these numbers, it is highly likely that Israel is denying asylum to thousands of people who are fleeing persecution.

The Israeli government provides asylum seekers with a “Conditional Release Permit,” which grants them the right not to be deported, but it does not allow them access to welfare or medical services. The Ministry of the Interior has made it very difficult for people to renew their permits, demanding that they are renewed frequently, and limiting the locations and office hours of the offices that process renewals. This has led to the arrest of dozens of individuals who did not have valid visas. While this permit is not a work visa, the Israeli government does not prosecute employers who employ individuals with these visas, de facto allowing asylum seekers to work in Israel. The Israeli government recently passed new laws creating new obstacles that severely restrict the ability of many asylum seekers to work. Asylum seekers typically work in the construction, cleaning, and restaurant sectors.

The Holot Residential Facility is one of the most controversial and visible parts of Israel’s management of the African asylum seeker population. Holot is a large “open” detention center, run by the Israeli Prison Service. It is surrounded by barbed wire and located in the desert, an hour away from the nearest city, Be’er Sheva. Holot has the capacity to hold up to 3,300 people. Its residents are not allowed to work or leave the facility at night. In addition to Holot, several hundred asylum seekers are detained in Israeli prisons. 3 Israel claims that the legal basis for the detention of so many people comes from the “Anti-Infiltration Law” of 1954, which was amended in 2012 to allow for the jailing of unauthorized migrants for up to three years, without trial. The Israeli High Court struck down that amendment, and since then, there has been a legal back-and-forth between the Knesset (which continues to try to enshrine some version of detention into the anti-infiltration law) and the High Court (which finds, each time, that to hold someone without trial for so long is unconstitutional). In the meantime, new guidelines passed in September 2015 allow the Israeli government to jail any single male “infiltrators” in Holot for one year, regardless of their arrival date.

Israel was built by immigrants and refugees. In addition to Israel’s legal obligation to asylum seekers as a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, the deep historical connection to the origin of this law and to the experience of refugees should govern how Israel responds to others fleeing persecution. African asylum seekers are a vital part of Israel’s economy, taking the types of low-wage jobs that Israelis do not want. Rather than importing foreign workers from Asia, Israel could grant work permits to African asylum seekers, simultaneously solving deficits in the workforce and offering the opportunity for this population to live in safety and with dignity.

Some Closing Words from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (From [Rabbi Jonathan Sacks’ Haggadah Shel Pesach](#))

As at the conclusion of the prayers on Yom Kippur, so here – at the two supreme moments of the Jewish year we pray *Leshanah ha-ba’ah bi-Yerushalayim*, “Next year in Jerusalem.”

Nothing in the imaginative life of peoples throughout the world quite compares to the Jewish love for, and attachment to, Jerusalem....It is said that Napoleon, passing a synagogue on Tisha B’Av, was struck by the sounds of lament coming from the building. “What,” he asked one of the officers, “Are the Jews crying for?” “For Jerusalem,” came the reply. “How long ago did they lose Jerusalem?” “More than

seventeen hundred years ago.” Napoleon was silent for a moment and then said, “A people that can remember Jerusalem for so long will one day have it restored to them.” So it has come to pass in our time.