



Around the Shabbat Table

Bo 5766
February 2006

Mr. Beryl Kwitkin, Principal, Rabbi Nathan Rosenbaum Religious School of Temple Beth-El in Bellmore, NY, and Mina Kwitkin, a former Jewish teacher, now an ESL Adult Educator at Nassau BOCES, in Carle Place, NY.



Shalom!

Usher in the most unique day of the Jewish week by greeting those around your *Shabbat* table with . . .

Shabbat Shalom! -- Ah Gutten Shabbos!

Introduction

(In last week's *parasha* God brought seven plagues upon ancient Egypt - bloody waters, frogs, vermin, wild beasts, pestilence, boils, and hail.)

In this week's *Torah parasha* of *Bo*, God brings three additional plagues upon the land of Egypt because Pharaoh still refused to allow the Israelite slaves permission to worship Him in the desert. God instructed Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh and again Moses said, "Let my people go that they may worship the Lord (in the desert)." Pharaoh again refused to let the Israelites go. He reconsidered when his courtiers told him that Egypt was "lost".

Pharaoh said that only the Israelite men could go worship their God. When Moses insisted that all the Israelites (all the men, women and children) must go to worship God, Moses and Aaron were expelled from Pharaoh's presence.

God commanded Moses to hold his rod over the land of Egypt. An east wind brought the eighth plague, locusts, which destroyed all grasses and fruit trees which had survived the previous plague of hail. Pharaoh hurriedly summoned Moses and Aaron, admitted that he was "guilty", asked for forgiveness and for God to end the plague of locusts. The plague of locusts ended but "God (again) stiffened Pharaoh's heart and he would not let the Israelites go."

God instructed Moses to lift his arm towards the sky and a thick darkness (ninth plague) covered Egypt for three days. Pharaoh again summoned Moses, this time agreeing to let all the Israelite adults and children go to worship God in the desert but without their flocks and herds. Moses refused his offer. Again, God “stiffened Pharaoh’s heart...”.

God announced to Moses the tenth and final plague, the slaying of all first born Egyptian males (and cattle). Moses told the Israelites how to prepare for this final plague. Each Israelite family took a young male lamb without blemish, slaughtered it, and then placed some of its blood upon the two doorposts and lintel of its home. The Israelites were to eat this roasted lamb together with unleavened bread (*matza*) and bitter herbs at a special evening meal.

God passed through the land of Egypt and slew all first born Egyptian males. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron for the last time and told them that all Israelites (adults *and* children *and* their flocks *and* herds) were to leave Egypt immediately. Moses instructed the Israelites to “borrow” from the Egyptians objects of silver and gold, and clothing.

After living in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years the Israelites departed in a mass Exodus during the “night of vigil”.

The concluding section of *parashat Bo* explains how the Israelites, once they enter the promised land, were to observe the Passover holiday.



Questions for Your Family's Discussion

As your family shares *Shabbat* meals together, here are some questions for discussion - the sharing of ideas, opinions, attitudes, and feelings.

Questions are designated into two categories:

“**A**” questions are for adults to think about. They are more abstract and may need to be refined to make them more accessible for children.

“**C**” questions are suitable for children to think about.

“A” - Was it necessary for all the people of ancient Egypt to suffer before the Israelites were liberated? Explain your answer.

“C” - Is it fair for all students in your class to be punished for what only one student did?

Explain your answer.

“A” - Why did all the Israelites (men and women and children) have to go worship God?

“C” - Should Jewish children pray to God or is that something only for adults?

“A” - Why did God repeatedly “harden Pharaoh’s heart”? Explain your answer.

“C” - When someone forces you to do something, is it easy or hard to do it? Explain your answer

“A” - What attitudes, ideas, feelings do you bring to your family’s yearly observance of the Passover holiday? The Passover **Seder**? Explain your answers.

“C” - What can you do to make the holiday of Passover and the Passover **Seder** “more fun”? Explain your answer.

Some Texts to Wrestle With

1) “*Let My people go so that they may worship Me.*” (Exodus 10:3)

“A”- Must Jewish people be “free” before they can they “worship” God? Explain your answer.

“C” - Why is it important for Jews to be “free”? What things can “free Jews” do that those who are not free can’t do? Explain your answers.

2) “*We will all go, young and old: we will go with our sons and daughters ...for we must observe the Lord’s festival.* ” (Exodus 10:9)

“A” - How can all Jewish people be involved in participating in Passover’s idea of “freedom”?

“C” - How can Jewish children be involved in celebrating the Passover holiday?

3) “*And you shall explain to your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.’* ” (Exodus 13:8)

“A “ - Why do *parents* need to explain to their *children* the importance of the Passover holiday? Why should *parents* explain to their *children* the importance of Passover and freedom?

“C “ - Explain the connection you have to the holiday of Passover. Why do you like / dislike Passover? (Don’t include food in your answer.)



Towards an Action Agenda

1) The following verse from this week’s parasha, “And so it shall be a sign upon your hand and as a symbol on your forehead that with a mighty hand the Lord freed us from Egypt.” (Exodus 13:16), has been interpreted by our rabbis as the reason for the wearing of *tefillin* (two black boxes with straps, each containing Torah verses which talk of this mitzvah). *Tefillin* are traditionally worn by Jewish adult males, though today some adult Jewish women also commit themselves to putting on *tefillin* for the *shacharit* (morning) service.

Putting on *tefillin* is a daily reminder of when God freed the Israelites from ancient Egyptian slavery through the use of His “outstretched arm”.

a) If you regularly put on *tefillin*, read the Torah verses of Exodus 13:9, Deuteronomy 6:8, and Deuteronomy 11:18 to reinforce your doing this daily prayer ritual / *mitzvah*.

b) If you don't put on *tefillin*, consider making the daily commitment to wearing *tefillin* during the *shacharit* service, noting that this ritual / *mitzvah* (commandment) appears in four different locations in the *Torah*, testifying to its importance.

2) Another verse from this week's *Torah parasha* is, “This day shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it (Passover) as a festival to the Lord throughout the ages: you shall celebrate it (Passover) as an institution for all time.” (Exodus 12:14)

It is never too early to start thinking about preparing for your Passover *seder*. Look at six verses from this week's *parasha* (Exodus 12:12, 26, 27, 39 and Exodus 13:8, 14) which appear in the Passover *haggadah* and prepare to discuss them at your *seder* to help those assembled remember the yearly celebration of the Passover experience.

***Todah rabah* for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas with you on this *Shabbat*.**

***Shabbat Shalom!* - Mina & Beryl Kwitkin**



Please join together in learning with other families by sharing your family's discussions and ideas by posting them on our web site. Simply respond with your thoughts and ideas to RavADS@bjeny.org

Around the Shabbat Table is a project of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York Nassau/Queens Center. If there is any way we can be of service, please contact Rabbi Arnold D. Samlan at the BJE Nassau Queens Center, 516-876-6535, or see our web site: www.bjeny.org

This project is supported through the generosity of Joyce & Fred Claar.

BJE is an agency of UJA-Federation of New York