

Pesach 5775

BS"D Parashat Pesach 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

To be read aloud by the leader of the seder right after the main course has been eaten...

Next Year in Yerushalayim

Part A: A frum family living in any one of the great Torah centers in the world; they could even be your next door neighbors in Boro Park, Flatbush, etc.

The home of Reb Sender and Mrs. Rayza is impeccable; the result of the great time and energy, not to mention money, which the expeditious, skillful and mercurial *ba'alat ha'bayit* (woman of the house) has devoted to it.

The sofas and arm chairs in the sitting room, which look so inviting, are covered with uncomfortable thick plastic to insure that the upholstery retains its "new" look.

The five-meter long dining table is covered with the finest Irish linen tablecloth. In the middle of the table stands the imposing sterling silver candlesticks handed down from mother to daughter for generations. The china is the finest Rosenthal, with each plate delicately rounded off with a band of gold. The silverware has been put away in favor of gold-ware, in honor of the great night.

On the table, under a hand-embroidered silk cloth, lay the matzot. On the insistence of the two sons learning in the recently-opened Yeshiva Taharas Ha'Torah in Las Vegas, (in order to bring the voice of Torah even to the entrance of

Gehennom), the matzot are from the first 18-minute batch, guaranteeing that no naughty piece of dough could be hiding in any of the rollers. The hand matzot were personally chosen by the Rebbe of the shteibel where the family davens (after leaving the central shul, which was costing too much). The Rebbe assured the boys that the matzot were bubble-free, with no overturned edges.

The wall-to-wall carpet is as deep as the grass in the beautiful garden. Over the table hangs the family's pride and joy – a multisided crystal chandelier, personally chosen by Rayza on the family's last visit to Prague.

Reb Sender is wearing his new *bekeshe*, the one with the swirls of blue, with a gold buckled *gartel*. Rayza has just said the *Shehechianu* blessing over her \$3000 dress imported from Paris. The boys are handsome in their wide-brimmed black hats, and the two girls will make beautiful kalas when the time comes, dressed in their very expensive dresses.

The seder goes better than expected. Words of Torah, beginning with an invitation to the hungry to join them in the meal, (while there is not a needy person for 50 miles); a lively discussion develops on the characters of the "Four Sons"; the afikomen is "stolen" by the youngest daughter, who, for its return, has succeeded in extorting from Abba a vacation in Aruba.

Songs of thanks to Hashem for freeing the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt are recited, for it is a mitzva on this night for each person to consider himself as if he and she were slaves in Mitzrayim.

Birkat Hamazon is said, as is the second part of Hallel. *Chad Gadya* puts the final touch on the mitzvot of the night. Now, just as Hashem destroys the "Angel of Death" in the song, father jumps up and, gathering the family in a circle, they all break out in a frenzy of song – "*Leshana ha'ba'a*

Be'Yerushalayim" – next year in Jerusalem. Again and again around the table "*Leshana ha'ba'a Be'Yerushalayim*" is sounded. Louder and louder do their voices resonate, until their song merges with the same melody bursting from the neighbors' homes, cutting a path into the highest realms of heaven.

Without warning, Mama collapses into a chair, crying real tears. The singing stops. Father runs over and asks why she is crying, just now, at the apex of the beautiful sacred night?

"What do you mean next year in Yerushalayim? What about the table, the chandelier, the deep carpet, the Rosenthal China! How can we leave all this behind?"

Taking her hand, while gently dabbing the tears away, in a voice full of compassion, Reb Sender says to his beloved wife, "Darling, don't cry. IT'S ONLY A SONG!"

Part B: Pesach in the Holy Land

Ten thousand kilometers to the east, in Eretz Yisrael, lives Reb Sender's brother, Kalman. Kalman moved to Eretz Yisrael many years previously, and was blessed with a beautiful family and an adequate apartment and income. His son, Yossi, will not be home for the Seder night, since he is doing his army service within the Hesder yeshiva system. The parents are not overly worried, because Yossi himself told them that he is in a safe place in the north, and that next year they will all be together for the Seder.

At 12 noon, on the 14th of Nisan, Erev Pessach, Yossi and three other soldiers from the same yeshiva were called to the company commander's room, where they were informed that they had been chosen for a mission that evening, on the Seder night. They were to cross the border into Hezbollah held territory in Southern Lebanon, to man the outpost bunker – hill 432.

Yossi knew the hill well; he had been there several times in the past year. It was sarcastically called a “bunker” but in reality it was a foxhole, large enough for four soldiers. Their assignment was to track terrorist movements and destroy them on contact. It was tolerable except when it rained causing the bottom of the hole to be soggy and muddy. However, today, the four hoped that it would rain, even though chances were small, since it was late in the season. On the 14th of every Hebrew month the moon is full, which presents a greater danger when crossing into enemy territory, so rain would be a mixed blessing.

At 5 PM, they were given the necessary equipment. In addition to the weapons and ammo, the army rabbinate provided them with 4 plastic holders each containing 3 matzot and all the ingredients necessary for a Seder, as well as 4 plastic bottles of wine, sufficient for 4 cups, and, of course, Haggadot.

At 6 PM, they waited at the fence for the electricity to be turned off, in order to cross into hostile territory. Yossi held in his hand a map of the mine field they would have to cross. “It was so strange,” Yossi thought, “this is the area assigned to the tribe of Naftali, and we have to enter it crawling on our stomachs.”

At 6:15 PM the small aperture in the gate opened and they passed through. As they had hoped, it was raining, and the thick fog was to their advantage.

At that moment, ten thousand kilometers to the west, it was 11:15 AM, and Yossi’s two cousins were just entering the mikva to prepare for the Pessach holiday. They exited on a spiritual high, having purified themselves in body and soul to sanctify the holy name of HaShem.

The 4 soldiers reached hill 432 after walking double time for 5 kilometers. They removed the camouflage and, settling in,

pulled the grassy cover over them.

Each soldier was assigned a direction. Talking was forbidden. If the murderers were sighted, a light tap on the shoulder would bring them all to the direction. After settling in, they began to pray Ma'ariv, and began the Seder. It was finished within a half hour, and miraculously the four cups of wine had no detrimental effect on their senses.

At 8 PM in New York, Reb Sender and his two sons returned from shul to begin the Seder. They were met with an uplifting scene. The table, the cushions to lean upon, the crystal wine decanter for the four cups of freedom, even the maror looked sumptuous, after not eating since lunch.

It was then 3 AM in Eretz Yisrael, and the four soldiers were waging a heroic battle against boredom and sleep. The minutes crawled by, and at the first approach of light they exited their outpost and returned through the minefield and electric fence to the base. After reporting to the officer in charge, the four entered their tent, and collapsed on their cots without removing clothing or shoes, because in an hour they would have to begin the Shacharit service.

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The Hagada instructs every Jew to see himself and herself as if they were enslaved in Egypt and were freed by the hand of HaShem. The most effective way is to stand before a mirror and imagine that you are looking at a Jewish slave.

After reading the aforementioned stories of the two brothers, stand before a mirror and ask yourself two questions: Which of the two brothers and their respective families are living a life closer to the word and spirit of the Torah? Where do you and your family fit into the story?

Chag kasher vesamai'ach!

Nachman Kahana

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