



MIDRASH OF THE FOUR CHILDREN: PASSOVER AS METAPHOR

The Exodus from Egypt – *Yetziat Mitzrayim* in Hebrew – may be the most fertile metaphor in all of Judaism.

Moshe used the idea of freedom from slavery to remind employers to give laborers a Shabbat day off. Our Talmudic sages understood “speaking of the Exodus” as a metaphor for planning political action against the second-century Roman occupation. Our Chassidic teachers spoke of *mitzrayim*, the narrow place, as a state of spiritual constriction, and invited us to expand spiritually. Black American slaves in the 19th century understood their anti-slavery movement as a new Exodus. Vancouverite Laurel Dykstra, in her book *Set Them Free*, invites citizens of First World countries to reflect on their participation in oppressive Pharaoh-like societies.

Whatever one’s political or spiritual state, it seems, the story of the Exodus can speak to it. In fact, the Passover Haggadah, quoting the Mishnah, states explicitly that we must find the story personally meaningful. “In each and every generation, a human being is obligated to see himself or herself as if he or she had exited Egypt.” If we read the midrash of the Four

Children carefully, noting both the children’s questions and the parents’ answers, we can see that it reinforces this responsibility.

The “wise child” grasps the essential point that Pesach offers morally relevant teachings and asks only



about the details of enacting the rituals. So you, the parent, must explain down to the last detail, the “afikoman.”

The “wicked child” refuses to reflect on the relevance of the Exodus theme. Sure that he or she needs no psychological liberation, and knows of no people needing material or political liberation, the “wicked child” asks only what Pesach could possibly mean to others. And

you must explain the point is to ask about one’s own self -- about “me.”

The “simple child” knows the Seder is symbolic of something important, and asks for a starting point in understanding it. So you can begin by explaining the metaphor of God’s “strong hand.”

The “child who does not know how to ask” is not cognitively capable of understanding metaphor. So each year “on that day,” you must “tell” the story literally as a story of “when I was exiting from Egypt.”

If you can grow a metaphor, explore the Exodus metaphors in your life this year! What new *avodah* (sacred service) have you taken on? What old *chametz* (fermenting stuff) are you clearing out? From what *mitzrayim* (narrow place) have you been freed – or are you freeing others? On what new *nisi’ot* (journeys) are you setting out? What *mahn* (manna) has appeared in your desert? And what new *Torah* (teaching) have you grasped?

-- Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan

Image source:
www.santacruzshag.com



KEREN OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW MEMBER SHABBAT AND HALF-TORAH CELEBRATION

Please join us on Shabbat April 28 at 10 a.m.! As we read Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim, new members will be honored with an aliyah and introductions. Reb Laura will offer a dvar Torah. A Kiddush lunch hosted by the Membership Committee and the Or Shalom Board will follow.

OR SHALOM'S ANNUAL RETREAT

"Gathering Around the Mishkan" with guests Rabbi Marcia Prager and Hazzan Jack Kessler, Victoria Day Weekend, May 18-21, at Camp Hope, Hope, BC. Be part of this special Or Shalom community gathering with wonderful programs for the young and not-so-young. Detailed information and registration form enclosed!

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION DEADLINE:
MAY 1

VISIONING!

Mark your calendar: Sunday May 27 Mid-afternoon community meeting. Using our many voices together, we'll address the question: How would we like Or Shalom to look five years from now? Facilitated by Harriett Lemer; sponsored by the Visioning Committee and the Board.

Pauline Leah Rankin, friends and family, invite you to join us on May 5, 2007, to celebrate her 50th birthday. Yes, that is the actual day!

SHABBAT AND HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Pesach Festival Services: Tuesday April 3, 10 a.m., includes Hallel and musical instruments. Tuesday April 10, 10 a.m. includes Hallel and Yizkor.

Tikkun Leyl Shavuot: Tuesday May 22, 9:00 p.m. Ma'ariv as twilight falls, followed by a study session over pot-luck dessert refreshments.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services: April 27 & May 25, 7 p.m. at Or Shalom. Every last Friday of the month, join the Or Shalom community in a Kabbalat Shabbat service followed by a veggie-fish potluck dinner. Sing, eat and schmooze in an intimate setting. **The April 27 service will begin with a teaching by Reb Laura about the structure and meaning of the Kabbalat Shabbat service.**

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult Education Shabbat: On April 7, a special Torah service celebrates this year's studies! Students from the leyning class will read all 5 aliyot, and students from the "Kabbalah at Noon" class will deliver the dvar Torah. Passover Kiddush sponsored by leyning student Fran Ritch.

Rambam's Ladder: Julie Salamon's book *Rambam's Ladder* (Workman Publishing, 2003) uses Maimonides' time-tested principles of giving to explore personal and corporate tzedakah in the 21st century. (Available at amazon.ca) Join Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan and Helen Waldstein for discussion of the book. Wednesdays May 2, 9, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at Or Shalom.

All-Family Lag Ba'Omer Celebration: May 6, 10 a.m.-Noon. Details TBA

"Walking with God: Jewish Spiritual Direction" with visiting Rabbi Shawn Zevit. Inspirational music, teaching, and exploration. April 14, 7:30-9:30pm, Peretz Centre

Revelation Then and Now: A Pre-Shavuot Spiritual Journey. With Dr. Mordehai Wosk. Wednesday May 16, 7:30-9:00 p.m.



FAMILY, YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre Trip: Wednesday, April 18, 4-6 p.m. Youth in grades 5-7 and their parents are invited to join our Hebrew School and B'nei Mitzvah class on a fieldtrip to VHEC to see an exhibit on Vancouver's Schindler Jews.

Bnei Mitzvah Tzedakah Project: Our class is fundraising for Covenant House, a crisis intervention centre for youth aged 13-25. On Shabbat April 21 the class will give a special presentation during the Torah service. Come and find out how you can support this tikkun olam project.

Family Shabbat: Saturday, April 14, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Youth of all ages participate with the congregation in a child-friendly Shabbat morning service. Older youth: to participate in the play, arrive by 10:30 a.m. Younger children: to hear the story and learn a song, arrive by 11:10 a.m. Childminding is available downstairs. Bring an offering for the Potluck Kiddush lunch!

Fantastic Family Shabbaton: at Or Shalom, with special guest Rabbi Steven Silvern, June 8-10. How can everyone from tots, youth, teens, parents, elders, and others develop spirit together as a sacred community? Come learn with Rabbi Steven Silvern, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Chair of the ALEPH Board. Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat service includes a talk for adults about youth in spiritual community. Saturday morning Family Shabbat, in which youth and adults make midrash. Sunday morning square dancing, ice cream sundaes and more. For all ages!



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

www.orshalom.ca, 604-872-1614

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