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by Sheina Begun

When the war came to our home in Kharkov, Ukraine, in 1941, my family ran away to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and then about five years later we escaped again, in the hopes of leaving the Soviet Union and seeing the Rebbe. We went through Poland, Germany, and France, and then spent 18 months in Cuba before coming to the United States. But then, a month before we left, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe passed away. My father, Rabbi Tzemach Gurevitch, was beside himself; he couldn't eat or sleep. It was terrible to see. Finally, we came to America in March of 1950, when I was 12 years old.

Six years later, I got engaged. My future husband, Yaakov, was originally from Brazil, and because life as a religious Jew was so hard there, he hoped to bring his parents to America. Having made our decision, we went to seek the Rebbe's blessing. I remember the moment vividly. In front of the Rebbe's desk stood two chairs for visitors, and we were standing across from the Rebbe, right behind those chairs. He gave us his blessing on our marriage and then said that he would like us to be his emissaries in Brazil. I almost fainted. I held onto the chair, but I didn't say anything. We had gone through so much to come to America, and now the Rebbe was asking us to keep on going.

"Don't worry," the Rebbe reassured me, after seeing that I had gone white, "it's going to be good for you." I accepted what he said but it was a daunting assignment, and I felt terribly anxious.

We paid for our tickets to Brazil on our own, using the money we had received for our wedding. The Rebbe had suggested that we look at several cities before deciding where to settle, so at first, we went to Rio de Janeiro where there were some other religious Jews.

It was the time of the famous "Carnival" when we first arrived, and I thought it was a wild country. Sitting alone in our hotel room, I wondered what I was doing in such a foreign, far-off place. "I'll get lost here," I thought. "I'm not prepared for this. What do I even have to offer?"

Soon after arriving in Rio, we started a day school in our home. My husband went around to different neighborhoods gathering children to study Torah, and I would make them hot lunches.

This was hard for me to do since I never was much of a cook – as a girl I had always preferred studying, having missed out on so much while growing up. Before we left, my mother asked, "How are you going to Brazil without knowing how to cook?"

"Well," I replied, "I'll follow a cookbook." The problem was that not many kosher ingredients were available in Rio at the time, so it was not useful. Till today, that book has hardly been used.

We could not buy any kosher bread, milk, or meat. My husband would slaughter chickens in the house and I would pluck and kosherize them. I began baking bread three times a week; and any milk we managed to get was sour by the time it arrived at our house. Because the chicken was only for Shabbat, we just about became vegetarians.

For the first few years, I wanted to move back. Later, once we moved to S. Paulo, the Rebbe had told my husband that we should establish "a Little Jerusalem" here, but times were so hard that it didn't seem possible.

My husband was the first rabbi in Brazil who was actually born there, so he spoke Portuguese fluently and was well liked too. He gave classes to university students, and when couples who were far from Judaism – some of them were even communists – asked him to officiate at their weddings, he would encourage them to observe the laws of family purity.

Because of this contact, many of these people's children became religious, and then their families for generations after. Some were reluctant to send their children to our school, but my husband would explain that their children could be religious and still have successful careers. Today, there are so many doctors and engineers who studied in our school, alongside Torah scholars and rabbis.

It was only about a decade later that I came to recognize that this really was the place we belonged. Now, I can look back and see the eternal mark we left on people. Things seemed to be impossible, but we had a mission and were undeterred, and Hashem did the rest. When you bring Judaism to other people, it's such a great feeling: I can't thank the Rebbe enough.

In 1991 or '92, a few months before Passover, I didn't feel well. I went to the doctor, who found a growth that was causing some internal bleeding, making me weak and dizzy. I would need an operation, and a long recovery period, but because I was anemic I first had to wait for my blood count to improve. That meant the operation would be just before Passover. People from our community would be coming to us for the Seder and throughout the holiday, as they did every year. With me ill,

Dedicated to the Rebbe on the occasion of his 121st brithday

whose teachings and example are a never-ending source of life for all mankind. May we continue in his path and complete the mission with which he has charged us: to make the world conscious of the imminent Redemption and to prepare the

who was going to prepare for them?

The annual women's International Conference of Chabad Emissaries was coming up, so my husband suggested I ask the Rebbe for his blessing there. I attended a special address by the Rebbe, after which we formed a line to approach him. There were so many other women there, though, that waiting in line began to make me feel faint.

When my turn came, I handed a note to the Rebbe in which I told him that I wanted a blessing to delay my operation so that I would be able to prepare for Passover. The Rebbe gave me a blessing and I quickly walked away. Then, wouldn't you believe it... when I came back home, I started to feel better. No longer feeling weak or dizzy, I was strong enough to delay the operation until after Passover. The doctor thought that I was taking a risk by postponing, but he agreed. When he examined me after Passover, he found that — to his utter disbelief — the growth had started to retreat on its own, eventually disappearing entirely, thank G-d. I managed to prepare for Passover as I always did, and in the end, I never had to operate at all. Mrs. Begun has been the Rebbe's emissary in Brazil, with her husband, for nearly 70 years.



Command Aaron and his sons, saying, "This is the law of the burnt offering; it is the burnt offering...and the fire of the altar shall be burning on it (Lev. 6:2)

Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator explains: the word "command" is used "to encourage and hasten immediately, and for future generations." When a person performs the same action every day it becomes routine, done by rote. He thus needs special encouragement to ensure that he will have the proper intentions. (Chatam Sofer)

And he shall lift up the ashes left from the burnt-offering which the fire consumed on the altar (Lev. 6:3)

A person wishing to witness a fiery, all-consuming service of G-d need not search among the elite; let him better look among the simple Jews who serve G-d with all their heart, for there he will find a true, holy fire. (The Magid of Mezerich)

A fire shall continully be kept burning upon the altar; it shall not go out. (Lev. 6:6)

A person who studies Torah with a friend awakens an eternal G-dly fire. "It shall not go out" - this merit will stay with him forever. (Hayom Yom)

There were two types of fire in the Sanctuary and Holy Temple: one that burned on the outer altar, and one that burned in the menora inside. The priest whose job it was to light the menora did so with a flame taken from the outer altar. This teaches an important lesson: The outer altar is symbolic of our Divine service with other people; the kindling of the menora alludes to Torah study, as it states in Proverbs, "The Torah is light." Thus in order to merit the Torah's light it isn't enough to concern oneself with one's own spiritual progress; the concern should be extended to others as well. (Likutei Sichot)







LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In the Passover *Haggada* we read: "'And the L-rd took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great awe and with signs and with wonders' (*Deut 26:8*). 'And the L-rd took us out of Egypt' – not through an angel and not through a seraph and not through a messenger, but directly by the Holy One, blessed be He, in His glory, and by Himself."

Why did G-d take us out Himself rather than have His angels do it. If the objective was simply to free us from Egyptian bondage, wouldn't we be just as free had He sent angels to free us? There is obviously something deeper happening here.

G-d freed us for a reason, to be His partner in creation, to finish what He started, to fulfill His ultimate goal, that we develop this world into a place that His Presence could dwell openly.

G-d is ever present, however, nature was created so that it hides His presence. How then is it possible for us, mere creations, to change nature?

This is why G-d Himself redeemed us, because for us to effect creation, we had to be raised above creation. Angels can't reach that high so He did it Himself.

While we have physical existence, there is a part of us that trancends creation.

The Haggada elaborates this point, because the central theme of the Seder is not only the Exodus from Egypt, but also the ultimate redemption, the coming of Moshiach, when G-d's Presence will be revealed. Through our efforts we hasten his coming. What gives us this ability? The fact that Hashem raised us above creation.

How does one feel free when life is so difficult, and there are so many responsibilities? It seems that we are affected by creation not the other way around.

Freedom does not mean that life is free of challenges, rather that we recognize that G-d Himself put us into our situation and it is not a challenge at all. It is an opportunity that He is giving us to effect creation.

You might ask me, "How could someone like you feel free when you are not able to move most of your body? How do you remain positive and happy in your predicament?

I choose to see it that way. You can too! Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitzblogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Some Things Never Change!

Some things never change. Like matza! Year after year, matza always tastes the same. You'll never see a matza box with the words "new and improved," or advertising an "all new recipe" or "enhanced formula." Flour and water can't taste much different than – flour and water.

Change is taking place in the world around us so quickly that if you blink you might miss it (whatever "it" is!). So it's reassuring to know that there are things in our lives and in the world that are stable. They were the same yesterday as they are today and the same as they'll be tomorrow.

This consistency can be found in the Rebbe's assertion that ours is the last generation of exile and the first generation that will experience the long-awaited redemption for all humankind.

Long before the Rebbe accepted the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch over 70 years ago his thoughts were already absorbed with the idea of Moshiach and the Redemption.

In 1956, in a letter to then president of Israel Yitzchak ben Tzvi, the Rebbe wrote: "From the day I went to *cheder* (primary school) and even before, the picture of the final Redemption started forming in my mind – the Redemption of the Jews from their last exile, a Redemption in such a way that through it will be understood the sufferings of exile, the decrees and the destruction ... And all will be in a way that with a complete heart and full understanding it will be

said on that day, 'Thank you G-d for chastising me.'"

The thread joining all of the Rebbe's public addresses is the drive to do another *mitzva* (commandment), to study another Torah concept, to help another person, to hope and pray with a little more feeling in order to hasten the Redemption.

This effort intensified when the Rebbe, with prophetic vision, and quoting an ancient Jewish text, declared that "the time for the Redemption has arrived," a time of complete health, peace, prosperity, harmony and knowledge, a perfect world

Day after day the Rebbe said that we are poised on the threshold of the Redemption. The Rebbe pointed to events taking place around the world, as well as technological advances, as indications of, or precursors to, the Messianic Era.

The Rebbe encouraged everyone: "Open your eyes" to the reality of the Redemption. Make the Redemption your reality.

As we celebrate the Rebbe's 121st birthday this Sunday, 11 Nissan/April 2, and a few days later the birthday of the Jewish people on Passover, let's strive to experience true liberty, to really open our eyes to the reality of the good and G-dly in everyone and everything around us. This new vision, together with an additional mitzva, will surely bring the ultimate change to the entire world, the change from exile to Redemption, with the revelation of Moshiach, NOW!

SLICE OF LIFE

From Sante Fe to Tanzania



The pre-Seder "first course" at Chahad Santa Fe Jewish Cente by Rabbi Berel Levertov

We had just completed an inspired community Passover Seder at the Santa Fe Jewish Center - Chabad, in New Mexico. Most of the 135 guests who enjoyed the meaningful Seder had left, and the last few people were lingering and schmoozing. It was past midnight but we couldn't just go to bed. After reading about the fifteen steps of freedom, we were awake and energized.

Something in the back of my mind told me that I wasn't done for the night. I had a niggling feeling that there were still more Jews in Santa Fe who had not participated in a Seder at all. It was possible that there were Jews in the downtown Plaza area, not far from our Chabad center, who hadn't fulfilled the basic mitzvah of eating matzah. In fact, it occurred to me that most were not even aware that it was Passover.

I enlisted two of the lingering schmoozers. Judah from Brooklyn and Liv the violinist. We grabbed a box of matzah and a Haggadah and set out, walking towards the Plaza downtown area in search of Jews.

The main grounds of the Plaza yielded no results. The only place still open was a basement bar. I have walked past it many times, and never felt compelled to check it out. But who knows? Maybe there's a Jew waiting there, I thought. We descended the stairs and asked around, but there were no Jews at the bar on Passover night.

I was relieved.

As we made our way back to the shul, we stopped at one more bar, which was getting ready to close for the night. Looking through the window, we saw two people. We stepped in, and asked the bartender and his friend if either of them were Jewish.

"I am half," said one.

Which half?

"The better one. My mom's Jewish."

We were delighted. "That makes you 100 percent Jewish," I said. "You know, like Moses."

We started chatting. I learned that his name was

Aaron, "Like Moses's brother," I told him.

He didn't know what it was that made this night different from all other nights, and he most certainly had not partaken in a Seder.

I pointed to the box of matzah that we had brought with us. "This is special hand-baked shmurah matzah. Poor man's bread," I told him. "And we're going to have the most important part of the Seder right here, right now."

Curious to know more, Aaron followed our lead. We cleared the chametz off a table, he washed his hands, recited the blessings, and fulfilled the mitzvah of eating matzah on Passover.

I wondered what he thought about his first Passover experience. It felt meaningful to him, he said. He thanked us. And would we let him keep the Haggadah and the kippah, so that he could continue his Seder at home?

We did. Then we headed back to the Jewish Center to continue cleaning up and preparing for the morning services.

by Danny Denburg

We stood at the baggage carousel in Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and waited for our boxes to slide down the ramp. We waited and waited, and waited some more. People came and people went. Boxes and suitcases came and went, but not ours. We tried not to panic. How will we celebrate Pesach without our matzah and wine?

It was just days before Pesach, when Eli and I arrived in Dar es Salaam with suitcases of canned food, brochures, Judaica, and more than a dozen mezuzahs. We traveled from the US to help the Jews living and visiting in Tanzania with Passover seders. Our trip was arranged by Rabbi Bentolila, the Chabad representative in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We shlepped all that we could, but the matzah, wine, and chickens were to arrive separately from Nairobi.

"If it's not on this flight, it'll come on the next. Or the next. Or the one after that," said the man behind the lapelled uniform. But timing was critical. We searched for an airport official who might have more information. Something in our boxes had sprung a leak (maybe a broken bottle of wine or an unsealed package of chicken), we were finally told. Whatever the source of the pink liquid dripping from our boxes, it was enough to warrant the customs officials to hold it back and investigate. Indeed, they promised, it will arrive on a later flight. We held our breath, and planned to come back later that evening.

We set up camp at the Nargila restaurant, a casual diner owned by an Israeli woman which has become a magnet for local and wandering Jews. That would be the site of our seder and our temporary Chabad House for the next few days. Tanzania has just about two dozen Jews at most, we were told. It is known mostly as the gateway to the famed Mount Kilimanjaro and the acclaimed Serengeti reserve. Big on tourism. Not so big on Jews.

Late that evening we hurried back to the airport praying that our precious cargo would arrive. We joined a crowd of backpackers and businessmen, which once again began to thin out as the carousel was emptied. Panic began to creep back into our hearts. Time was running out.

Just then we saw a stream of pink liquid flowing down the carousel ramp, and we knew our wine and chickens were on their way.

Relieved, we broke out in a little Chasidic dance. This brought back some of the crowd. One couple stood watching with a look of astonishment, which we soon found out was mixed with relief. This Jewish couple had missed their flight back to Israel. With no way back to Israel before Pesach, they were horrified to be stuck in Dar es Salaam for Passover. With no wine, matzah, or family, how would they make a seder? The sight of two dancing Chabad rabbis, with our boxes of matzah and wine set them at ease

Armed with all we needed for a festive Pesach seder, we hurried back to the Nargila restaurant to begin the process of kashering their kitchen. Ida. the owner, brought along some of her friends to help with this arduous process. As we lit up our blowtorches, they lit up their hookas, and together we koshered the kitchen and talked late into the

Passover eve, as we set the tables for our grand seder, we sorted through the boxes of matzah in search of enough unbroken pieces to place under the seder plate. Many hours bouncing around airports and airplanes can break even the toughest, thickest, matzah.

Digging through our boxes and suitcases, we realized that we had forgotten to pack prayer books and prayer shawls. For tonight we were set, but prayers tomorrow would be another story for another day.

The two dozen Jews we expected swelled into sixty guests. It gave new resonance to the verses we read about how our ancestors back in Egypt multiplied so quickly. Here, two thousand miles south of Egypt, the Jews were multiplying just as

We sang and we ate and we asked, "why is this night SO different from all other nights?"

The next morning we pulled our jet-lagged, tired, and spent bodies out of bed. Last night's uplifting seder gave us inspiration for what lay ahead – a *shul* without prayerbooks.

We tuned into our repertoire of Niggunim. Soul stirring Chasidic melodies with no words, just ay ya yays. Our congregants all joined in. No Hebrew knowledge required and no books necessary. You just need a soul and ay ya yay.

We concluded our services with Tanzania's very first Priestly Blessing – Birchat Kohanim. Passover seders are celebrated differently in Jewish communities, but Jews are blessed by the Kohanim with the very same words and the very same tune everywhere in the world. In Tanzania

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The Rebbe

of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Translated and adapted from a letter of the Rebbe 11 Nissan, 5723 (1963)

Passover is the first day of Jewish independence, and the first festival in the history of our Jewish people.

It is first in rank and significance, for it brought the liberation of our people from enslavement and made it possible for them to live a free and independent life as a nation, governed only by the Torah and its commandments dictated by

As such, Passover is especially meaningful for our Jewish people, and for every Jew individually, at all times and in all places. For this reason also, every aspect of the festival and every detail attending the historical Exodus from Egypt, has a special significance in the way of a timeless message and practical instruction for the individual, the community and our people as a whole.

One of the important details of the Exodus is the haste with which the Exodus took place. When the hour of liberation struck, the Jewish people left Egypt at once, losing not a moment, or, as our Sages express it – not even a "heref ayin," "the blink of an eye."

They add, moreover, that if the Jewish people had tarried and missed that auspicious moment, the opportunity of the liberation would have been lost forever.

This seems incomprehensible. For it was already after the Ten Plagues, which prompted the Egyptians to virtually expel the Jews from their land. The situation was thus "well in

Why, then, do our Sages teach that if that moment had been missed, the whole liberation would have been in jeopardy?

Above all, what practical lesson is contained in this detail, so that the Torah makes a point of revealing it to us with particular emphasis?

The explanation is as follows: When the end of the road of exile is reached, and the moment arrives for the liberation from the "abomination of Egypt," the opportunity must be seized at once; there must be no tarrying even for an

instant, not even to the extent of "blink of an eve."

The danger of forfeiting the opportunity lay not in the possibility of the Egyptians changing their mind, but in the possibility that some Jews might change their mind, being loathe to leave their habituated way of life in Egypt, to go out into the desert to receive the Torah.

The practical lesson for every Jew, man or woman, young or old, is:

The Exodus from Egypt as it is to be experienced in day-to-day life, is the personal release from subservience to the dictates of the body and the animal in man; the release from passions and habits within, as well as from the materialistic environment without.

This release can only be achieved by responding to the call of G-d, Who seeks out the oppressed and enslaved and promises, "I shall redeem you from bondage... that I may be your G-d." As at the time of the first liberation, true freedom is conditional upon the acceptance of the Torah and mitzvoth (commandments).

This call of freedom never ceases. The Exodus must be achieved every day; each day the opportunity beckons anew.

Unfortunately, there are individuals who tarry and consign the opportunity to the "three solemn days" of the year, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur; others, at best, postpone it for Shabbos and Yom Tov, still others, who recall and experience the Exodus in daily prayer, fail to extend it to every aspect of daily life.

What is true of the individual, is true also on the community and national levels, except that on these levels the missing of the opportunities is, of course, even more far-reaching and catastrophic.

As in the days of our ancestors in Egypt whose exodus was not delayed even for a moment, whereby they attained full liberation of the body and full liberation of the spirit with the acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, which was the purpose and goal of the Exodus.

May G-d grant that every Jew seize the extraordinary opportunity of the present moment, to achieve self-liberation and to help others in the same direction; liberation from all manner of bondage, internal and external, and above all, liberation from the most dismal bondage – the idea of "let's be like the rest."

And when we return to the ways of Torah and mitzvoth in the fullest measure, we will merit the fulfillment of the promise: When the Jewish people return, they are redeemed at once, with the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

Among the best-known of these: "The wolf will dwell with the lamb; the leopard will lie down with a young goat"; "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather in the exiles of Israel." About 250 years ago, as the time for Moshiach drew closer, the Baal Shem Tov instituted a custom which underlines the connection between the redemption and the eighth day of Pesach: on that day he would partake of the

festive meal of Moshiach. (Timeless Patterns in Time)

66 A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is a Jewish custom to say daily the chapter of Psalms corresponding to one's age. This coming Sunday, 11 Nissan. is the 121st birthday of the Rebbe. Jews worldwide will begin saving Psalm 122 in the Rebbe's honor.

The heading before Chapter 122 explains that King David is singing the praises of Jerusalem and tells of the miracles that happened there.

Psalm 122 is one of the 15 Shir HaMaalot (Song of Ascents). It is dedicated to Jerusalem, speaking of the excellence of the city and the desire of all Jews to come there on the pilgrimage

In verse six we read: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may those who love you find tranquility." The Me'am Loez explains this means that we should pray not only for the sake of the city, but we should pray as well for tranquility among those who love Jerusalem. This is because Jerusalem and the Second Holy Temple were destroyed only due to baseless hatred. The antidote to hatred is love, and to baseless hatred is unconditional love.

Malbim explains that if one asks after the peace of Jerusalem, her peace depends on the tranquility of those who love her. The peace of Jerusalem depends on whether there is inner tranquility between those who love her. This is because the primary essence of Jerusalem is the unity of the Jewish people, and if this is so then if strife and struggle arise between her people and there is estrangement, there will be no peace found for the city. There is a difference between peace and tranquility, because 'peace' indicates an external peace and 'tranquility' an inner tranquility. Thus the Psalm says that through Israel having inner tranquility, this will bring about the external peace of Jerusalem.

In verse seven we read "May there be peace within your walls, serenity within your palaces." This verse is instructing us that when there will be peace within "your walls" – amongst ourselves – our enemies will be unable to gain dominion over us and we will have true serenity.

As a gift to the Rebbe on his 121st birthday, let us all increase in acts of goodness and kindness which will surely bring inner tranquility and peace amongst our people. And then G-d will certainly bring the ultimate peace and tranquility and serenity of the Redemption, may it happen NOW!



The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rehhetzin Chava Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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The eighth day of Pesach is traditionally associated

with our hopes for the coming of Moshiach. For this reason, the haftorah read on that day contains many prophecies which refer to the era of the redemption.

MOSHIACH