

Rabbi Lewis' Message for April, 2013

Every year before Passover, I pull out my haggadah and go through it page by page in anticipation of the seder. I like to add new readings every year. As a result, my haggadah is bursting at the seams. After I add in the yearly readings, I take all the other haggadot and mark the insertions with new page numbers. Needless to say, it is confusing when I announce we are turning to page 20B because that was the only way I could insert the page without having to change all the page numbers that followed.

I could retype the whole thing and make sure the page numbers are clear and in sequence, but if I did that, I would miss the names that are written in my haggadah. The names of family and friends are penciled in by particular readings I assigned them over the years. Many of those people are gone now, but every year on Pesach, they live again when I open my haggadah. We all laugh as we remember how my father always assigned my Uncle Marty the role of the simple child. We recall the year when my nephew was finally old enough to explain the items on the seder plate. We remember friends who used to come to seder because their names are still in my book.

The haggadah tells us: In every generation, we are required to see ourselves as if we personally had gone out of Egypt. We don't know if the Red Sea ever parted or if the Jewish people ever really left Egypt en masse, but it doesn't matter. What might be considered a historical myth is still our spiritual reality. I read somewhere recently that a myth is not something that never happened but something that happens over and over again. There is a spiritual truth in this holiday and that truth never gets old. That is why Passover is a holiday that is both new and old every year. It carries memories of the past but also holds hope for the future. It is a story of moving from *avdut* (slavery) to *herut* (freedom). That message remains one that resonates with us every year.

Passover comes during the month of Nissan, which is considered the first month of the Hebrew calendar (even though it is what we consider the new year, the holiday Rosh Hashanah comes in the seventh month). It offers us an opportunity to begin a "new year" again and to try once again to live with the hope inspired by our ancestors.

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