

## Chag Sameach--חג שמח

The Parasha that I read this morning seems to be very technical when you first read it. It is about purity and impurity and having a second chance to do the passover offering. Specifically there were individuals that were impure and who ask Moshe for a second chance to have the Passover because their impurity made it technically impossible to bring the passover offering. Let me give you some of the background to this moment.

As you may know Jacob had a son named Joseph. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery to Egypt and he lived there for many years and rose to become the second most important man in all of Egypt. Not only did he help Egypt survive a terrible famine but he also made sure his family was protected from starvation. In order to protect the family Joseph moved his entire family to Egypt. When Joseph's father Jacob dies he makes Joseph promise he will bury him in Israel, in the cave of Machpelah. Many years later, when Joseph was on his death bed he too wanted to be buried in Israel. However, he was an Egyptian hero. For comparison it would be like Stephen Harper requesting to be buried in Scotland. So as you would think it would be a completely impossible for him to be buried outside of Egypt at the time. Realizing that his first burial would be in Egypt, Joseph made the children of Israel swear that they would bring his bones out with them to Israel at the time of the Exodus. According to the Midrash, an early medieval Rabbinic Text, as all the other Israelites were collecting gold and silver as payment for the work in Egypt, Moses was busy finding the bones of Joseph. He had to go to the valley of the kings, where the great pyramid of Luxor is located, you know the one that was replaced by an inflatable one in the original *Despicable Me*. There in the Valley of the Kings, one could find many sarcophagi and Moses did not know which one belonged to Joseph. Moshe called out, "Joseph, where are you, the time that Hashem promised is here." And one of the sarcophagi began to shake.

So from that point forward, the Jews are going to carry two special boxes through the wilderness. One is the arch of the covenant, the one famous in Indiana Jones, Raiders of the Lost Ark. The other one was the casket of Joseph. The wilderness, the covenant and the casket all have symbolic meanings as well. The wilderness represents, the journey of the Jews and a place where it is hard to find directions. The covenant represents a guide or a map in how to find directions. Lastly, the bones of Joseph represent the history of the Jewish people, which is a motivating factor.

Now we understand why it was so important to give the men carrying Joseph's coffin a second chance to celebrate Pesach. It is so important for these men to get a

second chance because they did such an honourable job and for doing this they too, deserve to celebrate passover. Even more so, Passover is a holiday about celebrating our becoming a nation and being free to chart our own destiny. These men are carrying the symbol of the history that motivates us in moving forward in that destiny. It also represents the faith that just as Gd looked out for Joseph and especially at the sad moments in his life. He realized that those moments had important purpose for his life mission, so too the challenges that we face on the journey ahead are also part of Hashem's plan for us. These individuals carried what symbolized so much of what Pesach was about, it would be completely wrong not to give them a second opportunity to celebrate this important holiday and ceremony.

One of the takeaway lessons from this story is the need to carry our history forward with us. The seder specifically asks us to see Gd's hand over the course of the history of Egyptian slavery and the many similar events in the 3000 years between the exodus and today. We as a people have learnt how important it is to live with our history as part of our present.

An example of how we carry history forward is Massada. Ever since the day, of IDF leader Moshe Dayan, the soldiers at the end of basic training or also know as Tironoot close their ceremony with the words "Masada shall not fall again." One of the reasons Massada fell the first time was because there was so much fighting between different groups of Jews. I imagine that when the soldiers stand atop Masada, and they say the that meaningful phrase, it is very emotional for them, it means a lot to both them and Israel. The soldiers are basically saying we will not let Massada fall again, we will stand up for our country, we will not let our differences or quarrels with each other allow us to be vulnerable to the attacks of others. It also says that we are willing to defend our country to the last man and woman, but we cannot let it fall again.

Here is some information about Jerusalem, Where we stand right now. David Transferred from Hebron to Jerusalem where everyone was allowed, basically just free land. It soon becomes a symbol of the nations unity. While David lived in Jerusalem they built the temple, unfortunately David was not allowed to build the temple because he was a warrior, which meant he was impure because of blood on him. He could not build, due to the fact that Hashem wanted Jerusalem's temple to be built on a foundation of peace.

The idea of a special mitzvah of the laws of charity to spend 9% of your crops on food was to be brought to Jerusalem which made the city a center of Torah, Charity and group celebration. This was very important because all of the 9% of food throughout Israel, had to go to Jerusalem, and due to that Jerusalem became a very popular and active place. In fact it became more than that, it became the educational and cultural center of Israel. It was a place that unified 12 separate tribes into one nation and a city that symbolized the eternal spiritual connection between the Jewish People and Gd.

It should also be noted that since David, the warrior was not allowed to build the Temple. However his son Solomon was. This means that Jerusalem was to eternally symbolize peace.

Lastly, as this is the holiday of Pesach, I want to quote Israel's first prime minister who gave this speech to the Peel Commission almost 70 years ago, on why history is so important to the Jews. Ben Gurion said

300 years ago, there came to the New World a boat, and its name was the Mayflower. The Mayflower's landing on Plymouth Rock was one of the great historical events in the history of England and in the history of America. But I would like to ask any Englishman sitting here on the commission, what day did the Mayflower leave port? What date was it? I'd like to ask the Americans: do they know what date the Mayflower left port in England? How many people were on the boat? Who were their leaders? What kind of food did they eat on the boat? "More than 3300 years ago, long before the Mayflower, our people left Egypt, and every Jew in the world, wherever he is, knows what day they left. And he knows what food they ate. And we still eat that food every anniversary. And we know who our leader was. And we sit down and tell the story to our children and grandchildren in order to guarantee that it will never be forgotten. And we say our two slogans: 'Now we may be enslaved, but next year, we'll be a free people....next year in Jerusalem

To conclude, this is a very prodigious paasha as you can tell from what I have said. It teaches us of both the importance of Torah and History. Just as our ancestors carried the the ark of the Torah and the ark of history through the desert, so to I have to carry forward both of these lessons. This bar mitzvah trip manages to fulfill both of these tasks. I have studied to read the Torah at the Western Wall and we have also had the wonderful opportunity to visit our history and heritage. We all need to remember to carry our history and our Torah with us or we will have nothing to

celebrate or remember. I have to remember that now that I am a Bar Mitzvah I will have to dedicate myself to the study and discovery of Torah and Our history, it is what has formed us and our souls and our nation. Our history is what makes us history.

Enjoy the rest of Passover,

Thankyou