



# Haggadah Companion

Inspiring Insights to Share  
at Your Passover Seder

# Matzah, Leaven, and Attaining Freedom

by Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt

Leaven and matzah share the same ingredients – grain and water. Only leaven has had time (18 minutes to be precise) to rise and matzah has not. Leaven is essentially matzah that has been puffed up by air. And yet, leaven – in particular bread – is so much more attractive and enticing than matzah. Bread is simply matzah that looks and tastes better.

We become enslaved to life's luxuries, not its necessities.

Before Passover, we spend time searching our homes for this leaven. The evening before Passover, we get it all out into the open and then the next day we burn it. And for seven days we don't eat or even possess leaven.

Leaven represents personal slavery and matzah represents personal freedom. We become enslaved to life's luxuries, not its necessities. I have yet to meet someone addicted to eating broccoli or drinking water, addicted to spending time with their children. As the Beatles said, "The best things in life are free, but you can save them for the birds and bees." We become addicted to the leaven, those things which look good, appeal to our desires, urge us to engage in them – but ultimately offer nothing more (and often much less) than the "best things in life." I have met plenty of people addicted to chocolate. Chocolate provides less nutrition than broccoli – and yet we desire them in inverse proportion to their value.

A few days before Passover, we search our hearts for "leaven" as well. We look inside of ourselves to see where we are enslaved.

Let me give a very relevant example: smartphones. I wake up in the morning and my beloved is next to my bed; it's my alarm after all. My first thought is not how can I thank God for the gift of life today, rather let's see the life changing messages on Whatsapp. No, not "let's see", rather "*I need to see, I MUST see*". The news might be next. What's happened overnight? My world has surely changed in cataclysmic ways. I absolutely, positively HAVE to know...

So, without any possible option otherwise, I check Whatsapp and the news, as well as my emails; one person has Whatsapp'ed me a very unfunny meme and I have emails from Amazon, Google and LinkedIn and, lo and behold, the news tells me that the world is exactly the way I left it the previous evening. The addiction offered me something so exciting and glamorous – and delivered only disappointment.

Passover is a time when freedom is in the air. A time not to just think about freedom but to embrace freedom and, indeed, be free.

So, on the eve of Passover, we have searched our homes for leaven and have it all on the table. We have journeyed inside and found our areas of spiritual enslavement. And now we burn it all.

## We become enslaved to life's luxuries, not its necessities.

For me, burning my leaven means making a decision that for seven days I am not interested slavery. For seven days I am going to look in a different direction. For seven days, I am going to be free of this way of life that enslaves me. On other days of the year it would be madness to think this possible. To make a decision to change habits of a lifetime and for the decision to last forever. But Judaism believes that the spiritual season of Passover is propitious for such overnight changes in direction.

Try suddenly stopping smoking for seven days, with an eye on it lasting forever, at another time of year. Or being completely disinterested in your desire for sugar. Or try to decide you are not going to follow the thoughts of anger when they come. Will it happen? The coming week of Passover, there is a guarantee that it will. Our willpower is magnified and we can be different and then live with those changes as long as we decide to do so. If we genuinely burn our leaven, it will be gone.

This Passover, my smartphone is going in my drawer for seven days. And I can't tell you how exciting that sounds to me! Wow – seven days of freedom from my taskmaster.

So, spend some time during the next few days making a list of your slaveries, your addictions. I suggest you write them all down (password protected!) and then pick two or three to break free from on Passover. I usually print a piece of paper with them on and burn that paper with my leaven. On the eve of Passover, make your decision. You are going to be free for the next seven days. Stick to your guns and watch Passover work its beautiful magic.

# Why Tonight Is Called a Seder

by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

The Hebrew word “*Seder*” means order. It hints to the idea that everything that happens to us is not coincidence or happenstance. What we experience in our lives, in truth, has *seder*, order, even when it may not seem apparent to us. Our

lives are overseen by the Master of the Universe. And it’s this awareness we are aiming to discover on *Seder* night.

– Based on the *Maharal of Prague*

# Karpas: Dipping the Vegetable in Salt Water

by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

In the Hebrew language, every letter also represents a number, a word, and a concept.

For example, the letter *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, has the numerical value of one. *Aleph* is also a word which means to champion, or to lead.

The second letter of the alphabet, *bet*, has the numerical value of two and also means house – *bayit* in Hebrew.

Hebrew letters are actually linguistic repositories for numerous concepts and ideas. Words, too, become not only an amalgam of random sounds, but precise constructs of the conceptual components of the object with which the word is associated.

When we analyze the word *Karpas* and break it down to its four component parts – its four letters of *kaf*, *reish*, *peh* and *samech*, – we discover an encoded message of four words which teaches a basic lesson about how to develop our capacity for giving.

The first letter of *Karpas* means the palm of the hand. The second letter means a poor person. When taken together these two letter/words speak of a benevolent hand opened for the needy.

**The Jewish people, though awash in the tears of bondage, were able to preserve their ability to give.**

But what if you are a person of limited means, with precious little to give? Look at the second half of the word *Karpas*. The letter *peh* means mouth, while the final letter *samech* means to support. True, you may not be capable of giving in the material sense, but you can always give with your words. Words of kindness and concern. Words of empathy and understanding. Words that can lift an impoverished soul and provide a means of support where nothing else will do.

We dip the *Karpas* in saltwater. Saltwater recalls the bitter tears shed in Egypt. But there is more. The Jewish people, though awash in the tears of bondage, were able to preserve their ability to give. Rather than succumb to the morass of self-pity, they were able to maintain their dignity through giving.

|           |        |                         |
|-----------|--------|-------------------------|
| <b>Ka</b> | Kaf    | Palm of hand            |
| <b>R</b>  | Reish  | One who is impoverished |
| <b>Pa</b> | Peh    | Mouth                   |
| <b>S</b>  | Samech | To support              |

# Charoses: Never Give Up Hope

by Slovie Jungreis Wolff

*Charoses*, a sweet mixture made of apples, walnuts, wine and cinnamon, symbolizes the mortar used by the Jewish nation to make bricks while enslaved.

But there is also a deeper and most beautiful meaning to the apples on our Seder plate.

*Charoses* symbolizes the apple trees under which the Jewish women gave birth. They concealed their pain so that they would not be detected by the Egyptians. The slavery and suffering had stripped the men of hope. They separated from their wives and thought that bringing children into such a dark world was pointless. It was the women who never gave up.

They chose to give birth beneath the apple trees which first produce fruit and then protective leaves. They declared with perfect faith that they would do the same. First they would give birth to their fruit and undoubtedly they would be sheltered from Above.

The women sweetened the bitterness of harsh slavery. When tasting the *maror*, the bitter herb, we dip it into some *charoses* to remember this courageous message. Life is both bitter and sweet. The bitter is tempered through hope. Faith keeps us going.

# Yachatz: Why Break the Matzah

by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

Why do we break the matzah in half at the start of the Seder, the ritual known as *Yachatz*? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l (1903-1993) offered a unique answer. When the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt there were those slaves who found themselves in better conditions than others. Some had the privilege to work for more merciful masters and lived under better conditions; others found themselves in much worse circumstances. Those who were fortunate to have more would break their bread and share it with those who had less.

On the night of the Seder, we emulate the ways of our predecessors and we do the same. We are teaching that this is the way of loving kindness to share with others, even in the most dire of conditions.

We find ourselves in an unprecedented time. These are days of crisis. Often the common response in such scenarios is to behave selfishly. Our natural instincts tell us that we need to take care of ourselves and our own family members. We have all seen footage and reports of people hoarding food

and toilet paper etc. in the panic and stress of this situation.

We are challenged during these days to be people of loving-kindness and maintain a deep sense of solidarity toward one another even under harsh conditions. During the pandemic we have witnessed endless examples of heroic kindness. This has always been our path, symbolized by breaking the matzah in half.

**We are challenged during these days to be people of loving-kindness and maintain a deep sense of solidarity toward one another even under harsh conditions.**

# Food for the Body, Food for the Soul

by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

The Seder begins with an invitation. We cannot truly rejoice with our family while we forsake those who are not as fortunate. "All who are hungry, let them come and eat with us; all who are needy, let them come and observe the Passover with us."

"All who are hungry" and "All who are needy" – what is the difference between them? Aren't the needy those who have no food, the very same ones already described as the hungry?

It appears the text is suggesting that there are two different kinds of deprivation to which we need to be sensitive. The hungry are those who lack physical nourishment. It is their stomachs which need to be filled. The needy are those who desperately require spiritual sustenance. It is their souls that beg to be sustained so that their lives may have meaning.

There are only two blessings which have their source in the Torah. The first is on food. When we complete a meal we are commanded "and you will eat and you will be sated and

you shall bless the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 8:10). The second is for the study of Torah – "For I will proclaim the name of the Lord [the Torah], and you will ascribe greatness unto our God [with a blessing] (Deuteronomy 32:3).] Why precisely these two? Because a human being is a combination of body and soul and both of these components require nourishment in order to survive. Food is what allows us to live; Torah is what gives us a reason for living. Food sustains our bodies; Torah wisdom sustains our souls. Both are essential. That is why both require a blessing.

And that is also why we invite two kinds of disadvantaged. The hungry are those who lack food. For them we provide physical nourishment. The needy are those who seek meaning to their lives and who thirst for the peace of mind that comes from faith and commitment to Torah. Let both be a part of our Seder and become sated.

## Bread of Affliction, Bread of Freedom

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

At the beginning of the story we call matzah the bread of affliction. Later on in the evening, though, we speak of it as the bread of freedom they ate as they were leaving Egypt in such a hurry that they could not wait for the dough to rise. Which is it: a symbol of oppression or liberty?

Also strange is the invitation to others to join us in eating the bread of affliction. What kind of hospitality is it to ask others to share our suffering?

Unexpectedly, I discovered the answer in Primo Levi's great book, *If This is a Man*, the harrowing account of his experiences in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. According to Levi, the worst time was when the Nazis left in January 1945, fearing the Russian advance. All prisoners who could walk were taken on the brutal death marches. The only people left in the camp were those too ill to move.

For ten days they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. Levi describes how he worked to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them dying. He then writes: "When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to

relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of twenty-three, with typhus) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working. And so it was agreed."

Only a day before, says Levi, this would have been inconceivable. The law of the camp said: "Eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbor." To do otherwise would have been suicidal. The offer of sharing bread "was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from *Haftlinge* [prisoners] to men again."

Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us. That is how we turn affliction into freedom.

# What Pesach Means

by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

What does the word *Pesach* actually mean? Most commonly it is translated to mean 'pass over', which relates to the episode of God miraculously 'passing over' the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. However the great commentator on the Torah, Rashi (Exodus 12:13), offers another explanation: *Pesach* means love. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine preferred this explanation.

On the final night the Israelite slaves spent in Egypt, when they sat confined in their homes, the verse says that God 'pasach' over their homes. What does 'pesach' mean? Not passed over. Rather, the Jew felt surrounded by God's love. They felt the Divine's warm embrace.

This is the true meaning of the festival and one we wish to infuse within our souls at the Seder. Even if one sits alone this year, or away from close family and friends, one must know that they are not alone; God is right there at our side.

The Exodus was distinct because of an act of faith by our

ancestors. Two million people entered a desolate and barren desert, where there was neither food nor water for such a multitude, clinging only to the belief that God would provide for them.

Early in the Haggadah a new name of God is introduced: '*HaMakom*', which translates as 'place' ('*Baruch Hamakom Baruch Hu*'). Why the change of name? When we speak of God as *HaMakom*, the Midrash explains it to mean "God is the place of the world." This teaches that God embraces everybody and never deserts anyone.

The Torah attaches a mighty title to this festival: '*Leil Shimurim*', a 'Night of Watching' (Exodus 12:42), a term which conveys the essence of the celebration: God is watching over us.

The story of leaving Egypt, the centerpiece of the Seder's celebration symbolizes the absolute, unwavering trust in God that is the foundation of spirituality.

# The Four Questions

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The Haggadah speaks of four children: one wise, one wicked or rebellious, one simple and "one who does not know how to ask." Reading them together the sages came to the conclusion that 1. children should ask questions, 2. the Pesach narrative must be constructed in response to, and begin with, questions asked by a child, 3. it is the duty of a parent to encourage his or her children to ask questions, and the child who does not yet know how to ask should be taught to ask.

There is nothing natural about this at all. To the contrary, it goes dramatically against the grain of history. Most traditional cultures see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. "Children should be seen, not heard," goes the old English proverb. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. In Judaism the opposite is the case. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow.

Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a *faith based on*

*asking questions*, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself. "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" asked Abraham. "'Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people?" asked Moses. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" asked Jeremiah. The book of Job is largely constructed out of questions, and God's answer consists of four chapters of yet deeper questions: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? ... Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? ... Will it make an agreement with you and let you take it as your slave for life?"

In yeshiva the highest accolade is to ask a good question: Du fregst a gutte kashe. Isadore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, "My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, 'What did you learn today?' But my mother used to ask: 'Izzy, did you ask a good question today?' That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist."

Judaism is not a religion of blind obedience. Indeed,

astonishingly in a religion of 613 commandments, there is no Hebrew word that means “to obey.” When Hebrew was revived as a living language in the nineteenth century, and there was need for a verb meaning “to obey,” it had to be borrowed from the Aramaic: *le-tsayet*. Instead of a word meaning “to obey,” the Torah uses the verb *shema*, untranslatable into English because it means 1. to listen, 2. to hear, 3. to understand, 4. to internalize, and 5. to respond. Written into the very structure of Hebraic consciousness is the idea that our highest duty is to seek to *understand* the will of God, not just to obey blindly. Tennyson’s verse, “Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die,” is as far from a Jewish mindset as it is possible to be.

Why? Because we believe that intelligence is God’s greatest gift to humanity. Rashi understands the phrase that God made man “in His image, after His likeness,” to mean that God gave us the ability “to understand and discern.” The very first of our requests in the weekday Amidah is for “knowledge, understanding and discernment.” One of the most breathtakingly bold of the rabbis’ institutions was to coin a blessing to be said on seeing a great non-Jewish scholar. Not only did they see wisdom in cultures other than their own. They thanked God for it. How far this is from the narrow-

mindedness than has so often demeaned and diminished religions, past and present.

The historian Paul Johnson once wrote that rabbinic Judaism was “an ancient and highly efficient social machine for the production of intellectuals.” Much of that had, and still has, to do with the absolute priority Jews have always placed on education, schools, the bet midrash, religious study as an act even higher than prayer, learning as a lifelong engagement, and teaching as the highest vocation of the religious life.

But much too has to do with how one studies and how we teach our children. The Torah indicates this at the most powerful and poignant juncture in Jewish history – just as the Israelites are about to leave Egypt and begin their life as a free people under the sovereignty of God. Hand on the memory of this moment to your children, says Moses. But do not do so in an authoritarian way. Encourage your children to ask, question, probe, investigate, analyze, explore. Liberty means freedom of the mind, not just of the body. Those who are confident of their faith need fear no question. It is only those who lack confidence, who have secret and suppressed doubts, who are afraid.

## The Wicked Son

by Rabbi Henry Harris

Our sages draw a connection between the words *rasha* (wicked) and *ra’ash* (noise or commotion). The prophet likens the *rasha* to “the driven sea, incapable of quiet” (Isaiah 57:20) - more frenetic than foe. What does that mean?

With inner calm and quiet, we navigate life’s waves. We face obstacles and conflicts, but through an uncluttered mind the divine gift of wisdom finds its way to our heart. We fall, and we learn.

When our minds are noisy – filled with stress, anger, fear – divine wisdom is drowned out. We solve difficulties often by creating new ones. We’re destructive, not villainous. This is the *rasha*.

Consider the *rasha*’s question. The Hagaddah says, “What is this service to you?” – “to you” but not to him. Because he excludes himself from the community, he denies the essence [of Judaism].

Insecure and prone to despair, the “wicked son”, the

*rasha*, isolates himself; he’s dismissive. “I feel low. Lofty commandments aren’t accessible to me. I’ll tear them down.” He might even want to come close; he doesn’t know how.

Lost in the noise, he doesn’t see how his misunderstanding contradicts the essence of Judaism and holds him back. He believes that a relationship with God is for those who feel exalted. Since he doesn’t feel that connection, he mistakenly concludes that he’s excluded, shut out.

But the truth about Judaism – and the fundamental lesson of Passover – is that God’s love for us is unconditional. Feeling low and unworthy is more a testimony to our noisy mind than God’s. No matter how low, how far, how unworthy we might feel, God doesn’t waver. He just asks that we consider His view of us and make an effort.

Our job is to see beyond the wicked son’s noisy mind; he’s more “temporarily unsettled” than villain. The four sons at the Seder are not defined personalities anyway; they’re aspects in



in every child, in every one of us. At times we are full of wisdom, and other times we close down, insecure, trapped by our inner noise.

So we stand up to the wicked son with compassion.

"Blunt his teeth," says the Haggadah, "and tell him, 'It is because of this [service] that God did for me when I left

Egypt.'"

"You're mistaken," we say. "It's not a function of how exalted we feel that makes us worthy of leaving Egypt. It's a function of *this* – the act of sincere service and effort – that enables us to go."

## Pharaoh's Hard Heart

by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

In the book of Exodus, the Torah reports that the Egyptian court magicians were able to duplicate the first two plagues. For this reason Pharaoh was convinced that he was facing a force with which he could at least contend.

However, the great biblical commentator Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) explains that a close reading of the text reveals that in truth the Egyptian magicians were no match for Moses and his brother Aaron. In fact, the best the Egyptians could do was to turn a small bottle of water into blood. They certainly couldn't transform the mighty Nile into a bloody waterway. Yet despite these feeble attempts to duplicate the plagues, Pharaoh continued to cling to his conviction not to free the Jews – despite Moses' warning of even more dire consequences.

There is a little bit of Pharaoh in us all.

Life is a battle. We all want to do what is right and good. But it's such a struggle. And when locked in this pitched battle, we often give in to our impulse towards rationalization. Rationalization affords us a respite, as it enables us to justify actions which deep down we know are not for us.

This remarkable ability, when viewed from a distance, would often be laughable if it weren't so destructive. Like Pharaoh and his magicians, clinging to straws, we seek to excuse some actions and justify others, while hurtling unchecked towards our own self-destruction.

Sometimes the pattern is like this: You consider a course of action, carefully weigh all the options and permutations, and finally arrive at a conclusion. Your decision has been made and you're off and running. At first the going is smooth,

**Unlike Pharaoh, we can refuse to shut our eyes – and have the courage to sacrifice our egos, before we sacrifice ourselves.**

but soon you find that you keep stubbing a toe. Then you twist an ankle, injure a knee, throw out your back, and eventually run face-first into a brick wall which everyone saw but you.

Dazed and bruised, you ponder a most ancient riddle: "Where did that come from?" The answer may well lie in the fact that the only thing harder than admitting you've made a mistake is running headlong into the consequences. Such was Pharaoh... and such is life.

To admit that the sum total of all our careful calculations and detailed planning is nothing more than a brilliantly charted course to failure is simply too much to bear. Our egos just won't allow us to hear of such nonsense. So we don a pair of designer blinders sporting the Pharaoh logo and rush off into the grasp of everything we wanted to avoid.

Or, unlike Pharaoh, we can refuse to shut our eyes – and have the courage to sacrifice our egos, before we sacrifice ourselves.

(excerpted from the *Passover Survival Kit Haggadah*)



# Rabbi Akiva in Bnei Brak

by Slovie Jungreis Wolff

Our Haggadah speaks of a famous Seder that took place in Bnei Brak. There were many great rabbis sitting together. One rabbi mentioned is Rabbi Akiva, who was actually the younger scholar hosting the elders. The rabbis spoke about the exodus until their students came in to say, "Rabbis, it is time to recite the morning Shema prayer!"

**This Seder invite Rabbi Akiva into your hearts. He will give you strength. He will empower you with courage.**

This Seder invite Rabbi Akiva into your hearts. He will give you strength. He will empower you with courage.

Rabbi Akiva lived in the darkest of times. The holy Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. The Romans had conquered the land. The spirit of the Jewish nation had been crushed; their soul trampled upon. Studying Torah and doing mitzvot were met with imprisonment, torture and death. Soon the long and bitter exile would begin. The Jews would be put into chains and sold in the Roman slave market. Who could think about joining a Seder in such darkness? Who could feel inspired and speak about the exodus in Egypt when despair was in the air?

This is exactly why the sages met in the home of Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Akiva was the eternal optimist. He refused to surrender to depression. Where others saw the end of the road, he saw the beginning of the journey. His eye was always on the future. His heart was eternally filled with faith.

We meet Rabbi Akiva once again when he is walking with his peers up to Jerusalem. When they reached Mount Scopus, they tore their garments from grief at the sight of devastation. As they reached the Temple Mount, a fox emerged from the place that had been the Holy of Holies. The rabbis started to weep. Rabbi Akiva laughed. "Why are you laughing?" they asked. He explained that while they see the destruction of the sacred, he sees the fulfillment of prophecy. Just as the first part of prophecy had been fulfilled, that the Temple would be destroyed, now we must look forward to the second part of the prophecy – the rebuilding of our Temple and return of our people.

We must gather now round the table of Rabbi Akiva. It takes courage to keep a positive spirit. The sages assembled by the spirit who would keep hope and faith alive. As long as we do not get stuck in the blackness of yesterday we can emerge into the brightness of tomorrow. Is it easy? No, it takes all you've got. But if you are able to spend the night recalling the exodus, reinforcing within the understanding that there is a God who watches over you, cares for you, and takes you out of your personal Egypt, you will make it. We must tap into the eternal optimism of Rabbi Akiva.

When the students came in to say it is time for the morning Shema they were transmitting a message to us, today: Don't give up. Don't fall into despair. The darkest part of the night comes just before dawn.

The morning Shema is a prayer of clear-cut faith. There are no hazy doubts. It is bright and unobscured. We proclaim our unwavering belief with one voice.

We will stand up again. We will feel joy again. We will rebuild.

# Plague of Darkness

by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

The Torah says that the plague of Darkness was so severe that “one person was unable to see the person right next to them.” The spiritual master, the *Chidushei Harim* says

that the worst plague is when we fail to see our fellow human beings who are abandoned or in pain and we fail to reach out to them.

# Dayeinu: Who Packed Your Parachute

by Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Charles Plum, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Communist prison. He survived that ordeal and one day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, “You’re Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam and you were shot down!”

“How in the world did you know that?” asked Plumb.

“I packed your parachute,” the man replied, “I guess it worked!”

That night, Plumb couldn’t sleep. He kept wondering what this man might have looked like in a sailor uniform. He wondered how many times he might have passed him on the ship and never acknowledged him. How many times he never said hello, good morning or how are you. Plumb was a fighter pilot, respected and revered, while this man was just an ordinary sailor. Now it grated on his conscious.

Plumb thought of the many lonely hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the fabric together, making sure the parachute was just right and going to great lengths to make it as precise as can be, knowing that somebody’s life depended on it. Only now does Plumb have a full appreciation for what this man did. And now Plumb goes around the world as a motivational speaker asking people to recognize who is packing your parachute.

**We all have family, friends, mentors and neighbors whose efforts shaped who we are today. Freedom means knowing that we didn’t get here on our own.**

Have we thanked those who contributed to the lives we are blessed to live? Imagine if our kindergarten teacher got a note from us thanking her for nurturing us with love. Imagine if our high school principal, our childhood pediatrician, our housekeeper growing up who cleaned our room, out of the blue got a gesture of gratitude showing that we cared enough to track them down and say thank you after all of these years. Did we express enough appreciation to the person who set us up with our spouse, gave us our first job, safely delivered our children?

We all have family, friends, mentors and neighbors whose efforts shaped who we are today. Freedom means knowing that we didn’t get here on our own. This Passover, let’s sing our own personal dayeinu and repair our ingratitude by saying thank you to those who packed our parachutes.