Ramah at your Seder Table:

A collection of activities and discussions from some of your favorite Camp Ramah in the Poconos educators



A Note from the Director

Rabbi Joel Seltzer

In Parashat HaHodesh, the section of the Torah which first describes the ritual of Pesach and one that is traditionally read on the Shabbat following Rosh Hodesh Nisan we read:

"הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֹאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים, רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לְחָדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה"

"Ha-Hodesh hazeh lakhem, Rosh Hodashim - rishon hu lakhem, l'hodshei haShanah."

"This month shall be for you, the head of the months; it is the first for you, of all the months of the year." (Exodus 12:2)

Meaning, that according to the Bible, Rosh Hodesh Nisan is indeed the beginning of the calendar year, and it isn't until the time of the Rabbis of the Mishnah that we learn about 'other' *Rashei HaShanhah*, such as the holiday we now all refer to as Rosh HaShanah.

A Hasidic commentator, the Slonimer Rebbe reads this verse slightly differently...

"HaHodesh haZeh Lakhem - Rosh!"

"This month shall be for your head!"

This month, and the holiday of Passover in particular, shall be a time of thinking, a time of introspection, and therefore a time of redemption. After all, why is it that the Passover Seder remains the most observed Jewish ritual in the world? It certainly isn't because of the food!

It is because a Seder has always been an opportunity to remove ourselves from the chaos of the day-to-day, and instead to focus on the things that matter: on our families, our friends, our people, our story, our heroes, our triumphs, our tribulations, our God, and what, if any role we have to play in the continually unfolding drama of redemption.

It is in this intellectual spirit that Rabbis and educators from Camp Ramah in the Poconos offer you our first edition of:

"Ramah at your Seder Table" - a collection of activities and lessons that we hope you can share at your families Seder; and in so doing you can elevate your experience, and your Rosh!"

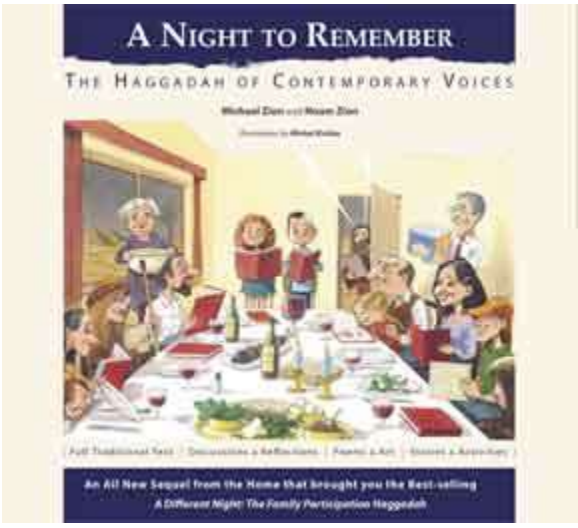
With Warmest Wishes for a *Chag Kasher v'Sameach* (though not necessarily in that order),

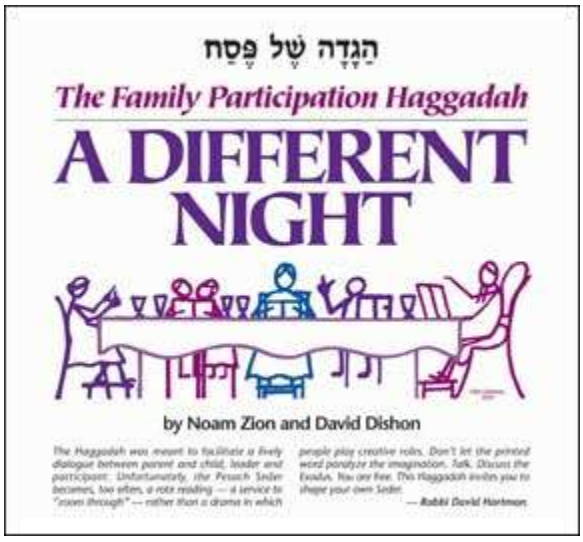
Rabbi Joel

Haggadah Options for your Family

The following Haggadot are all good options for Seders for the whole family:







Images of the 4 Sons for your Seder Table

Rabbi Joel Seltzer

(Arthur Szyk 1934 Lodz)



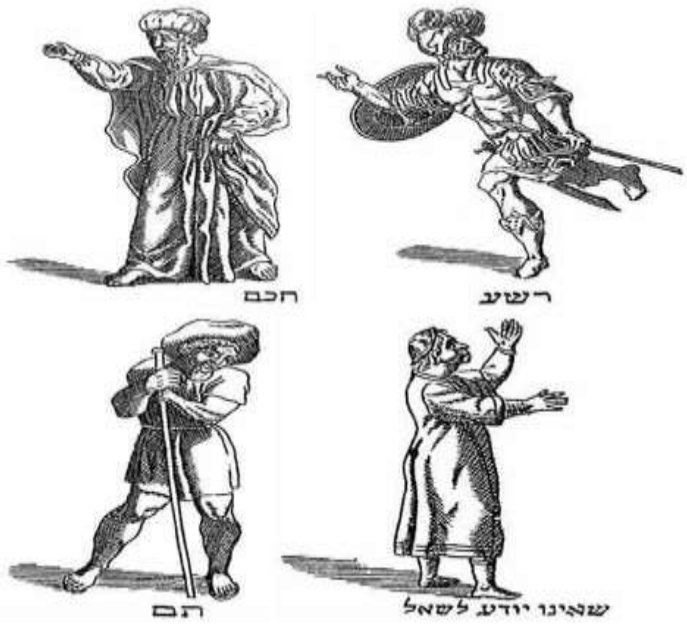
Notice how in this haggadah the Wise Son is dressed in traditional religious garb, while the Wicked Son represents the secular aristocracy. Furthermore, the Simple Son looks like a blend of religious and secular, while the Son who does not know how to Ask, is dressed like a fully secular socialist.

What would be a modern version of this interpretation? What are the categories that define us today as Jews? Religious? Secular? Progressive? Traditional?

By Boris Dubrov



1695 Amsterdam



Here again we see how historical context informs our concepts of good, evil, simplicity etc.

The Wise Son is dressed in traditional Sefardic garb, which represents the make-up of the Amsterdam Jewish community in the 17th century.

The Wicked Son however is dressed as a Roman soldier, representing militaristic evil and oppression.

The Simple Son and the Son who does not know how to Ask are depicted as simple, secular and agricultural.

The Marx Brothers as the Four Sons by Dick Codor 1981

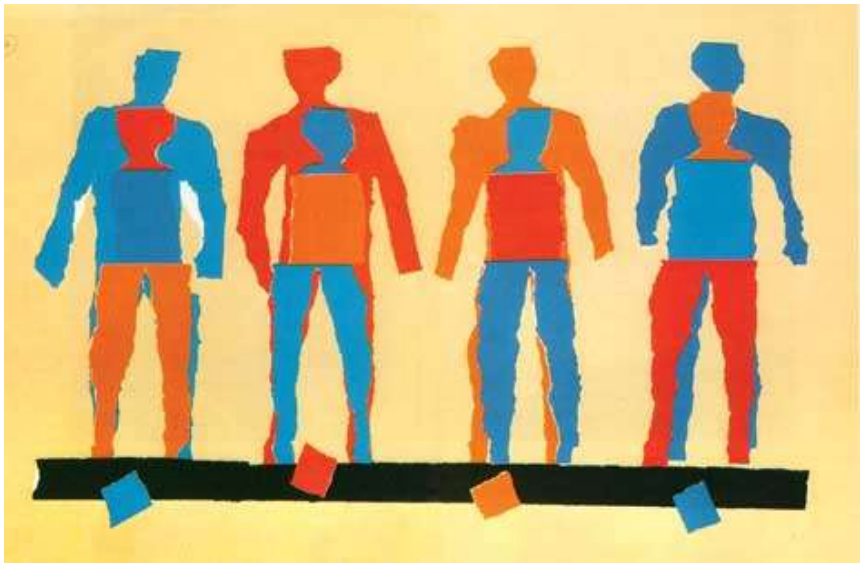


Tzvi Livni 1955 Israel



Here we have a Haggadah from the early period of the State of Israel. Notice how the Wise Son is dressed like a kibbutznik, how the Wicked Son is leaning away from the construction of the land, the Simple Son is a recent oleh, and the Son who does not know how to Ask is a religious child.

David Reisenger Rabbinical Assembly Haggadah: 1982



In this image, the Four Sons are depicted as part of all of us.

In what ways do you feel at times wise, wicked, simple, or disconnected?

Seder Games for All Ages!

Dr. Andrea Lieber, Rosh Hinuch

1. Seder Plate Game

At the Seder, we tell the story of our journey to freedom using symbolic foods on the Seder plate as props. Each prop is a "prompt" that reminds us of a particular part of the story.

If you could create a Seder plate to tell your family's story (or your Ramah story), what SIX foods would be on it and why? Explain what each one means—how it prompts key elements of the story you want to tell.

2. The Fifth Question

The Seder is built around 4 scripted questions.
If you could add a fifth question to the Haggadah, what would it be?

3. *Pe'ulat Erev Pesach:* "Egyptian" Auction

Materials required: tickets, poker chips or pretend dollars; 5-10 Passover-related items for auction, real or imaginary, wrapped or hidden in a paper bag.

- Divide Seder guests into two teams.
- Each team gets an equal amount of tickets, chips or pretend dollars.
- "Auctioneer" describes an item up for bid; provide clues, but don't reveal what it is!
- Be tricky—make something yucky sound amazing, and something cool sound not so great.
- Teams confer privately about what the item could be, whether they want to bid on it, and how far to go to win it.
- As the bidding progresses, the auctioneer can continue to give clues.
- The item goes to the team that bids the most!

You can auction 1-2 items at each cup of wine to spread the fun throughout the Seder and to get people out of their seats.

Ideas for auction items: Lifetime supply of *matzah shmurah*, toy frogs, two *zuzim*, chocolate Seder plate, inflatable matzah ball, extra *hanutiyah*, shankbone, 2 all expense paid nights in Pharoah's palace….

4. Find רמה in the Haggadah

Be the first to spell RAMAH in Hebrew (*Reysh, Mem, Hey*) from the words on each page of your Haggadah (example: **R**achtzah, **M**aror, **H**allel).

5. *Ramahfikomen*!

The traditional Seder can't conclude until you find the Afikomen….

This year, after you've tasted the "freedom" of the afikomen, it's time for the *Ramahfikomen*! Give the kids at your Seder table a small gift to take to camp this summer…some new stationery, a cool shower caddy, a pillow, a book or a card game. Ask your family members what they love about Ramah, and what's special about the kind of freedom they experience at camp!

Group Participation

Larry Abrams

As an English teacher, I find it natural to enrich the Seder in two ways:

A. Enable the participants to take risks with the language as they read out-loud for an "audience" - the rest of the Seder members.

Most of us never really have a chance to read something out-loud in a context outside of school or work. This is a chance to get away from the robotic reading that infects so many Seders, making them snoozers.

It's a good idea to have some participants and children do a little pre-work. They should first practice their lines from the Haggadah. Give them a copy of the paragraph that they'll be tackling. Encourage them to use an accent if they have one, and tell them to avoid the "robot-voice." I always tell my students that the best oral readers are able to read three to five words ahead of what's coming out of their mouth. Read as if you're auditioning for a play!

B. Engage people by allowing them to fill in the blanks using four simple sentences. Create a sign that has the following four lines:

I learned _____.
I relearned _____.
I thought about _____.
I wonder _____.

As the Seder starts, explain that at periodic times you will pull a name from a hat. The chosen person needs to use one of the sentence starters as a way to comment upon what's going on in the Seder, either presently or in the past. These can be great conversation starters, but if nobody has a follow-up, that's okay too!

Miriam's Cup

Staci Boiskin

A tradition that I did not grow up with, but my children know and hopefully will continue to use in the future with their families, is to have a special Miriam's Cup. This cup should be used after the second cup of wine, before washing your hands. Raise a cup of water and celebrate the women who were Jewish Superheroes in the past.

Celebrate the role of women in Judaism today. Drink water! Play with tambourines at the table! It is a chance to get up, dance around the table and have some fun and movement (especially fun for young kids).



Creative Karpas

Sharon Bromberg

One major tradition that we adopted several years ago from Noam Zion applies to *Karpas*. The Seder is based on a Roman symposium (think a combo meal/meeting/lecture/debate/class). The symposium involves lots of talking, lots of food courses, and lots of wine. The *Karpas* section of the Seder represents the salad or appetizer course of the meal. Yes, it should represent Spring, and yes, it should be vegetables upon which we make the blessing of "*borei pri ha-adama*" (that God is the Creator of the fruit of the ground), but there is no reason we need to stick to one tiny sprig of parsley.



In our home, we have turned *Karpas* back into a course. At one Seder we have a vegetable based soup: carrot soup, potato-leek soup, sweet-potato soup, or what we call "Karpas" soup, which is a delicious purée of leeks, potatoes and a lot of parsley. At the other Seder we enjoy our dipping, as we dip cut up carrots, celery, peppers, etc. as well as potato chips and "Terra Chips" into salsa, eggplant, and other vegetable dips.

This helps to reenact the symposium, helps give us some time to reconnect before getting into the serious discussions of the Seder, and most importantly, helps us ask questions without hearing the inevitable "when do we eat?"

Important Discussions

Sharon Bromberg

Usually when we think of the story of leaving Egypt, we most connect the story with Moshe. Nevertheless Moshe is not spoken about in the Hagaddah. Do you think he should be mentioned? Why or why not? Is there anything we learn from his not being mentioned?

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Unfortunately, each year, when we look around the world, we can find people who newly understand the concept of freedom or newly understand the concept of oppression. How does that expand our own understanding of the story of *Pesach*? So often in the Torah and in our prayers, we are reminded that we were slaves and were freed. Why are we constantly reminded? Why is it so important for us to remember? What does it mean to us as a people? What stories do we have as a family that we tell over and over that are equally as central to who we are? To what we are and what we want to be?
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Passover Parodies

Rachel Korman

If I Only Had Some Chrain (tune of "If I Only Had A Brain")
by Martin Eiger, Passover 2009

We are sitting at the Seder,
More food is coming later,
But now I am in pain.
It would help my digestion,
I could get through all four questions
If I only had some chrain.



The hosts would speed it up if they knew,
We'd get through the Dayenu
And not do each refrain.
It would ease my neurosis,
I'd enjoy all this harosis
If I only had some chrain.

Oh I would tell the tale,
I'd recount the plagues and parting of the sea.
How glorious and wondrous it would be.
We'd drink some wine
And then we'd dine.

But now my stomach is off-kilter.
The fish is too gefilte.
The parsley sprigs seem plain.
I'd be happy eating lotsa
Food. I'd chow down all the matzah
If I only had some chrain.

Passover Bingo

Michelle Markowitz

To play "Passover Bingo" you mark off the box with a sticker when you personally read that word or phrase out loud (if someone else reads it, they check off the box, but not you). The winner is the one with all the boxes checked! This works for Seders where the participants take turns reading from the Haggadah out loud.

Passover Bingo

Check off the box when you read the following words out loud:

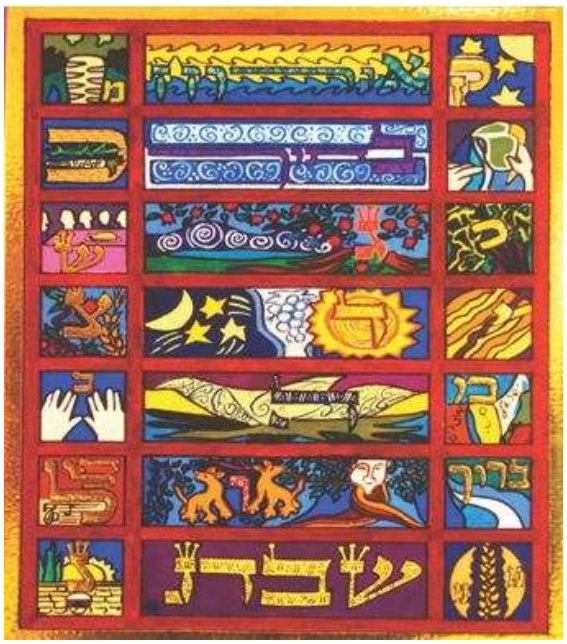
Unleavened	Slaves	Pharaoh	Wine	Four
Egypt	Passover	Redeemed	Fathers	Suffer
"In every generation"	"With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm"	Affliction	Servant	Mercy
Plaques	Wicked	Seder	Exodus	Jerusalem
Hashem	Free	Bitter	Maror	Nights

The Lovell Haggadah

Rabbi Micah Peltz

Last year, we welcomed Rabbi Matthew Berkowitz as our artist-in-residence just before Passover. He shared his beautiful illuminations of the Haggadah with our community, some of which are currently on display in the TBS lobby. Below are a few of these rich illuminations, and some questions about them that were inspired by Rabbi Berkowitz's own commentary on them that appears in "The Lovell Haggadah." Sharing and discussing these pictures at your Seder table is a wonderful way to stimulate conversation and thought about the meaning of the holiday for your family- children and adults alike.

The Order of the Seder



For young children:

-Look at the order of the Seder as listed at the beginning of your Haggadah. Can you identify all 14 parts of the Seder in this picture?

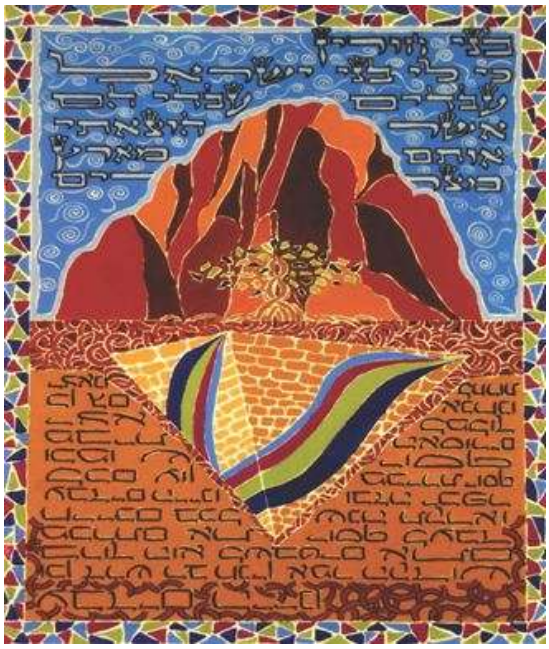
For teenagers and adults:

-The middle seven rectangles are meant to represent the seven days of creation. What is the connection between the order of creation and the order of the Seder?

-The word Seder means order. How do you keep order in your life? How do routines and rituals- religious, familial, or personal- define your day?

-Author Frank Herbert once said, "Seek freedom and become captive of your desires. Seek discipline and find your liberty. "What do you think this means? Do you agree with it?

We Were Slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt



For Young Children:

-What do you see in this picture?

-What does the mountain remind you of?

-Now turn it upside down. What do you see now?

-What does the pyramid remind you of?

For Teenagers and Adults:

-Right side up this illumination shows us Mount Sinai, representing the giving of the Torah, and upside down it shows us a pyramid, symbolizing slavery. How do these two experiences connect to one another?

-The colors on the pyramid represent Joseph's coat of many colors. Read and discuss the follow midrash that relates the story of Joseph and his brothers to slavery in Egypt:

Rav Hanina expounded: "The Holy Blessed One, said to the tribes, 'You have sold Joseph into slavery. By your lives, every year you will recite, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh,' and thereby atone for the sin of selling Joseph.' And just as Joseph went forth from imprisonment to royalty, so we too have gone forth from slavery to freedom…"
(Midrash Tehillim, Mizmor 10)

Telling the Story on Multiple Levels- Moses, Plato, and Superman Comics

Rabbi Eric Yanoff

"One is required to tell the story of Passover according to one's own 'da'at.'"

Da'at:

-Intellectual ability (traditional 4 sons)
-Personal interest/context

The "four sons" are different ways of telling the same story.
In addition to the traditional story, using Torah and Midrash, we have:

1. Personal
2. Superman
3. Plato's "Simile of the Cave"
4. The Prince of Egypt

Personal:

"Each person is required to understand the Passover story [in the personal, first person] as if he or she *personally* was taken out of Egypt."

What are your plagues?
What are your miracles?

Moses Leaves Egypt; What happened in Midian?

Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsman… He struck down the Egyptian..
Moses was frightened, and thought: "The matter is known… Moses fled from Pharaoh. He arrived in the land of Midian…

- Exodus 2:11 - 15

(Moses' periodic despair as leader:)
"I cannot carry all this people by myself, for it is too much for me. If You would deal thus with me, kill me rather, I beg You, amnd let me see no more of my wretchedness."
-Numbers 11:14-15

(Experience with death as transformative:)
"I was riding on the bus… that k-killed the dog."
"It's over now. It's alright."
"It's not alright! It's really not!... I'd like to go for a walk somewhere."
******
On that hill, silently and solemnly, Superboy promised himself and who or whatever else might hear his thoughts that his life would be devoted to the preservation of life; that he would use his powers whenever possible to save and improve the conditions of life and of living things everywhere; that under no circumstances would he ever be responsible for the loss of a single conscious life; that falling in any of these affirmations he would renounce his powers forever. There could be no nobler mission for a superman.
That evening… Jonathan looked up from his book and said, as much to his son as to his wife, "Well, Martha, looks to me as though the boy's ready.

So how can you see what
your life is worth
or where your value lies?
You can never see through
The eyes of man
You must look at your life
Look at your life through
heaven's eyes.

"Through Heaven's Eyes"
From *The Prince of Egypt*



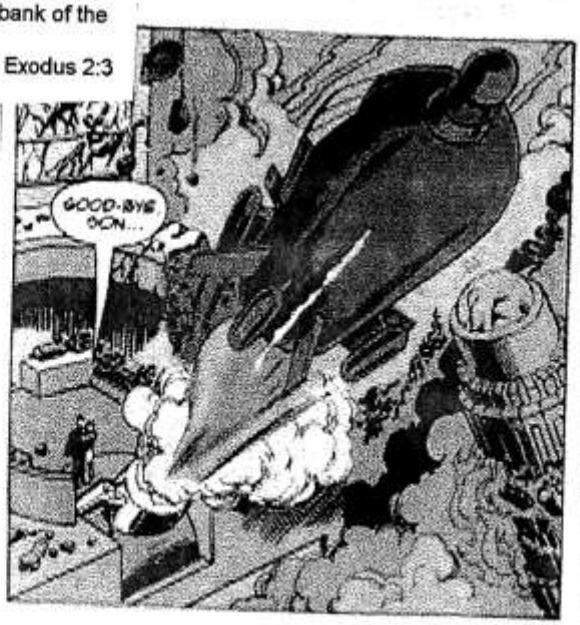
A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. . . Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not. . . rise up. . . ."
- Exodus 1:8-10



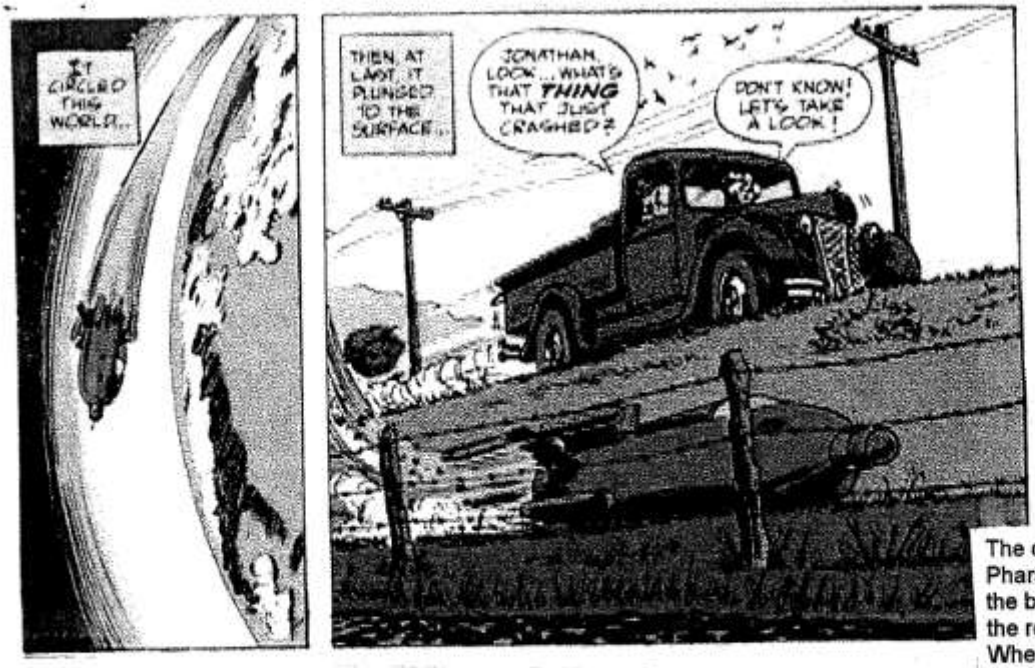


[Note "-El" endings of names: Classic Biblical motif in naming.]

She got a wicker basket for him . . . She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.
- Exodus 2:3

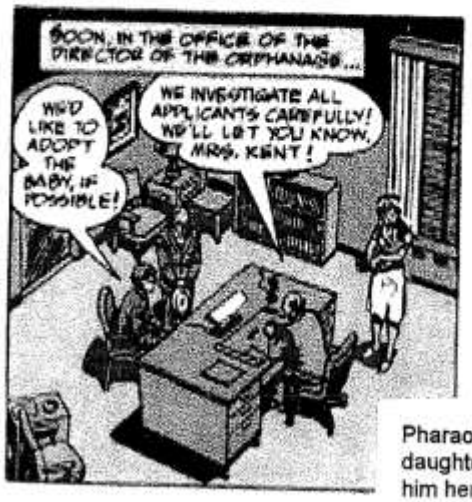






The daughter of Pharaoh. . . . spied the basket among the reeds. . . . When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying.
- Exodus 2:5-6





Pharaoh's daughter. . . made him her son.
- Exodus 2:10



[cf. *Prince of Egypt* midrash: Miriam's prophecy to Moses.]

Plato's Simile of the Cave

"Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been **prisoners** there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off, behind and higher up, a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at puppet shows between the operators and their audience, about which they show their puppets…[D]o you think our prisoners could see anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them?

"Suppose **one of them** were let loose, and suddenly compelled to stand up and turn his head… dragged up the steep and rugged ascent… dragged out into the sunlight…

"Then what do you think would happen…If he went back to sit in his old seat in the cave?... [Everyone else] would say that his visit had **ruined** his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting."

It is generally understood that the Children of Israel stayed in the desert for forty years – a generation – because the mentality of slavery was so ingrained that they could not imagine a reality outside of their captivity.

MOSES!

The Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt…"

– Exodus 4:19

(At the Red Sea:)

As Pharoah drew near, the Israelites caught sight of the Egyptians advancing upon them. Greatly frightened,… they said to Moses…, "What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, saying, "Let us be, and we will serve the Egyptians, for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness?"

- Exodus 14:10-14

With Wishes for a Chag Sameach, from our Ramah Family to yours!