

## THE LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Ira Weinstock

*This poem is dedicated to those Beginners who have joined their fate with the Jewish people by converting to Judaism.*

From Abraham who looked at the heavens  
And saw the wonders of G-d  
To Einstein who studied the heavens  
And knew the wonders of G-d

From Moses a prince of Egypt who  
Became a shepherd to a people  
And forged a nation  
To David a shepherd who became a King  
And led a nation  
To Ben Gurion a humble immigrant  
Who led the rebirth of a nation

From Maimonides who wrote "The Guide to the Perplexed"  
To Buber who wrote "I and Thou"

From the Psalmists who stirred the hearts of a nation  
To Dylan who gave a voice to a nation

From Sarah the mother of a nation  
To Golda a mother to a nation

For over four thousand years we have  
Been linked together in a wondrous chain  
And now we the members of the Beginners Service  
Bequeath the chain to you.

*Ira Weinstock is the Director of Economic Development for the Business Outreach Center Network and Adjunct Professor of Political Science and Sociology at Touro College.*

## CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

### ENGAGEMENTS

Ilene Freier & David Brookler  
Mazal Tov to mother Judy Freier  
Susan Hecht & Lonny Bardash  
Amy Nelkin & Michael Kase  
Neve Peretz & Mark Marmer



Patty & David Stark, on the birth of a girl, Elena Sophia  
Mazal Tov to grandparents Valerie & Charles Diker

### BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Yoel Chaim Gilman  
Mazal Tov to parents Chana [Pat] & Zev Gilman  
Akiva Jacobs  
Mazal Tov to parents Batya & Eddie Jacobs  
and grandparents Vicki & Rabbi Shlomo Riskin  
Ari Joshua Morse  
Mazal Tov to parents Michele & David Morse  
Ariel Yehudah Leib Spivack  
Mazal Tov to parents Sharona & Steven Spivack  
Carolyn Sussman  
Mazal Tov to parents Deborah DeWinter  
& Philip Sussman  
Avraham Zvi Thau  
Mazal Tov to parents Devorah Altman Thau  
& Rabbi Brian Thau

### CONDOLENCES

Bayla Sheva (Betty) Brenner, on the loss of her father,  
Michael Jacobs  
Reuven Wannenmaker, on the loss of his mother,  
Esther Wannenmaker

Judith Weil Epstein, on the loss of her father, Fred Weil

### TZEITCHEM L'SHALOM/FAREWELL (To live and/or study in Israel)

Nathan Robb

### THANK YOU

Iris Cahn for coordinating SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA  
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Holiday Beginners Services (belated)  
To all the players who performed in the Beginners Purim  
Schpiel. Special thanks to Bill Greenbaum for  
writing, Emma Lardner for directing and Stewart  
Ashkenazy for music.

### CONGRATULATIONS

Mordechai Beilis for being honored for 20 years of  
service at the Board of Education of New York City  
Drs. Dawne & Matthew Eichen and Nan & Peter  
Levy for being honored at the Annual Dinner of  
NJOP

### MARRIAGES

Dr. Elena Mako & Jonathan Rieu  
Chava Ahuva Attal & Sam Sokol

### BIRTHS

Megan (Fisher) & Ilan Aboody, on the birth of a girl,  
Sara Chana  
Chava & Natan Aharon, on the birth of a boy,  
Yonatan Shlomo  
Sara & David Berman, on the birth of a girl, Talia  
Rachel (Parker) & Dr. Robert Jetter,  
on the birth of a girl, Hannah Avigayil  
Elizabeth & Steve Lancman, on the birth of a boy,  
Joshua Eitan  
Lorena & Dr. Samuel Moche, on the birth of a boy,  
Daniel Noah  
Beth & Joshua Schwartz, on the birth of a girl,  
Eden Ketzia

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**

**Sat April 8, 2006 - 10th of Nisan Tzav SHABBAT HAGADOL**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Mincha ..... 6:15 PM  
 Shabbat Hagadol Drasha ..... 6:40 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:09 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 7:15 PM

**Wed April 12, 2006 - 14th of Nisan TA'ANIT BECHOROT EREV PESACH**

Morning Services ..... 6:30 & 7:30 AM  
 Latest time to eat Chametz ..... 10:06 AM  
 Latest time to burn Chametz ..... 11:20 AM  
 REMEMBER TO MAKE AN ERUV TAVSHILIN  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:14 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:20 PM  
 Begin seder after ..... 8:03 PM

**Thu April 13, 2006 - 15th of Nisan PESACH**

Morning Services ..... 8:00 and 9:00 AM  
 Daf Yomi ..... 6:30 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:15 PM  
 Yom Tov candles after ..... 8:14 PM  
 Maariv ..... 8:14 PM  
 Begin seder after ..... 8:14 PM

**Fri April 14, 2006 - 16th of Nisan PESACH**

Morning Services ..... 8:00 and 9:00 AM  
 Daf Yomi ..... 6:30 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:15 PM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:09 PM  
 Shabbat candles before ..... 7:16 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:20 PM

**Sat April 15, 2006 - 17th of Nisan PESACH (CHOL HAMOED)**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 8:00 & 9:00 AM  
 Daf Yomi ..... 5:35 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:20 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:16 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 7:25 PM

**Sun April 16, 2006 - 18th of Nisan PESACH (CHOL HAMOED)**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 8:30 AM

**Mon April 17, 2006 - 19th of Nisan PESACH (CHOL HAMOED)**

Morning Services ..... 7:00, 7:30 & 8:30 AM

**Tue April 18, 2006 - 20th of Nisan PESACH (CHOL HAMOED)**

Morning Services ..... 7:00, 7:30 & 8:30 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:13 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:20 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:25 PM

**Wed April 19, 2006 - 21st of Nisan PESACH**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:15 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 8:00 & 9:00 AM  
 Talmud Class ..... 6:40 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:25 PM  
 Yom Tov candles after ..... 8:20 PM  
 Maariv ..... 8:20 PM

**Thu April 20, 2006 - 22nd of Nisan PESACH**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:15 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 8:00 & 9:00 AM  
 Talmud Class ..... 6:40 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:25 PM  
 Maariv ..... 8:20 PM  
 Yom Tov ends ..... 8:20 PM

**Fri April 21, 2006 - 23rd of Nisan**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:16 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:23 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:30 PM

**Sat April 22, 2006 - 24th of Nisan Shmini**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Talmud & Bible Class ..... 6:20 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:20 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:23 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 7:30 PM

**Tue April 25, 2006 - 27th of Nisan YOM HASHOAH**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM

**Fri April 28, 2006 - 30th of Nisan ROSH CHODESH**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 7:40 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:24 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:31 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:35 PM

**Sat April 29, 2006 - 1st of Iyar Tazria-Metzora**

**ROSH CHODESH**  
 Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:35, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Talmud & Bible Class ..... 6:25 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:25 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:31 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 7:40 PM

**Tue May 2, 2006 - 4th of Iyar YOM HAZIKARON**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM

**Wed May 3, 2006 - 5th of Iyar YOM HAATZMA'UT**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 7:50 AM

**Fri May 5, 2006 - 7th of Iyar**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:26 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:38 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:45 PM

**Sat May 6, 2006 - 8th of Iyar Achrei Mot-Kedoshim**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Talmud & Bible Class ..... 6:35 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:35 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:38 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 7:45 PM

**Fri May 12, 2006 - 14th of Iyar**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:33 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:45 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:50 PM

**Sat May 13, 2006 - 15th of Iyar Emor**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Talmud & Bible Class ..... 6:40 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:40 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:45 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 7:55 PM

**Tue May 16, 2006 - 18th of Iyar LAG B'OMER**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM

**Fri May 19, 2006 - 21st of Iyar**

Morning Services ..... 7:10 & 7:50 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:40 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:52 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 7:55 PM

**Sat May 20, 2006 - 22nd of Iyar Behar-Bechukotai**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Talmud & Bible Class ..... 6:45 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:45 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:52 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 8:00 PM

**Fri May 26, 2006 - 28th of Iyar YOM YERUSHALAYIM**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 7:50 AM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:41 PM  
 Candle Lighting ..... 7:58 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 8:05 PM

**Sat May 27, 2006 - 29th of Iyar Bamidbar**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 8:30 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 7:45, 9:00 & 9:45 AM  
 Talmud & Bible Class ..... 6:55 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:55 PM  
 Maariv/Shabbat Ends ..... 8:58 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 8:05 PM

**Sun May 28, 2006 - 1st of Sivan ROSH CHODESH**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 8:30 AM

**Mon May 29, 2006 - 2nd of Sivan MEMORIAL DAY**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 8:30 AM

**Thu June 1, 2006 - 5th of Sivan EREV SHAUVOT**

Morning Services ..... 7:00 & 7:50 AM  
 REMEMBER TO MAKE AN ERUV TAVSHILIN  
 Candle Lighting ..... 8:03 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:22 PM  
 Maariv ..... 8:52 PM

**Fri June 2, 2006 - 6th of Sivan SHAUVOT**

Morning Services ..... 4:55 & 9:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 7:08 PM  
 Daf Yomi ..... 7:23 PM  
 Mincha ..... 6:45 & 8:13 PM  
 Earliest Candle Lighting ..... 6:47 PM  
 Shabbat candles before ..... 8:04 PM

**Sat June 3, 2006 - 7th of Sivan SHAUVOT**

Daf Yomi ..... 7:15 AM  
 Morning Services ..... 8:00 & 9:00 AM  
 Bible Class ..... 6:59 PM  
 Talmud Class ..... 7:14 PM  
 Mincha ..... 7:59 PM  
 Maariv ..... 9:04 PM  
 Yom Tov ends ..... 9:04 PM  
 Daily Mincha & Maariv ..... 8:10 PM

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Beginners Shabbat Luncheons**  
 Saturdays 12:30 PM- \$15  
 May 6, June 10

**Beginners Schmooze**  
 Mon, 8:15 PM- Free  
 May 1

**All Night Shavuot Learn-In**  
 Thurs., June 1, 11:30 PM - 7:00 AM

# BERESHITH "IN THE BEGINNING"

A Newsletter  
for Beginners,  
by Beginners

Vol. XIX No. 3

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נס"ד

# בראשית

## SHABBAT HAGADOL - THE GREAT SABBATH

*Rabbi Samuel Biber*

The Sabbath immediately preceding Pesach is known as "*Shabbat Hagadol*" -- the Great Sabbath. According to Jewish tradition, on the Sabbath preceding the Exodus, every Jewish family in Egypt took a lamb and dedicated it as an offering to be sacrificed in the name of the ONE GOD, the God of their forefathers -- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since the lamb was sacred to the Egyptians as one of their gods, it took great courage for the Israelite slaves to challenge the idolatrous belief of their masters. This final Shabbat in Egypt became known as the Great Sabbath because the Children of Israel declared not only their courage, but, more importantly, their faith in God and proved themselves worthy of becoming God's people.

Perhaps the name Great Sabbath came from a phrase from the concluding section of the book of Malachai, which is read as this Shabbat's Haftorah. (Haftorah is the Prophetic portion read on every Shabbat and on Holidays upon the conclusion of the Torah reading.) Malachai, according to tradition, was the last of the prophets, and the theme of this biblical book, like that of all the books of the prophets, is that

## FROM INTELLECTUAL SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

*Tami Reid*

I became religious about six years ago. Before that, I had no knowledge of Shabbat and only a vague understanding of the holidays -- we fasted on Yom Kippur, lit a menorah on Chanukah and ate matzah on Passover. While we did not eat real bread on Passover, we certainly ate other chametz.

Mostly, the holidays meant a visit to Brooklyn, to the home of my father's parents, where my sister and I would have the rare opportunity of seeing our two cousins who also lived out of state. I remember sitting around my grandparents' table during the Seder. I even remember where I sat -- tucked in the corner. At my grandparents' Seder, we would go around the table, everyone reading one paragraph of the Haggadah in turn. My cousins were both great performers and singers. They also had the benefit of a day school education. I remember feeling very

## REFLECTIONS ON PESACH

*Ariella Sofia*

My first thought about Pesach this year is it's hard to believe it went by so fast. All those preparations. First locating the chametz which lurked seemingly everywhere in my apartment. It was obvious in the boxes of pasta, but even in my tamari sauce? Then the cleaning. A new definition for Spring: that's the time when an observant Jew becomes intimately familiar with every square inch of his/her stove.

Now plan a menu for the first night's seder. Out to the supermarket for "kosher l'Pesach foods. I can't wait for Mashiach to come. Haven't any of these vendors learned that a sophisticated shopper can't live by salt, pepper and paprika alone? The hour for candlelighting is approaching. Rush, rush, prepare an eruv tavshilin so there will be food on Shabbat which arrives right after the second day of Yom Tov. Somehow it all comes together

God's love for Israel is an eternal love. If, however, Israel is to merit that love, the people must follow God's ways.

In the book of Malachai, we learn that the prophet lived in a time when a spirit of skepticism, cynicism and rebellion prevailed among the Jewish people. The priests had grown careless in the discharge of their duties, and the Temple service was neglected; morals were lax and divorces common. The people were not only remiss in the payment of tithes, they were sordid, callous, deceitful and ruthless in their dealings with their fellow men. They oppressed the employee by withholding his wages, ignored the widow and the fatherless and turned aside the stranger. The people had no reverence for God and no respect for man. The family unit was disintegrating. A wide gulf separated parents and children.

Jewish society had fallen so low that, as a result, even the pious people had become despondent. Doubt and disillusionment paralyzed the hearts of men. In their despair, the people felt that it was vain to serve God and wondered what reward they would actually receive.

Malachai, however, reassured them that while the Great Day of Judgment and Retribution is coming, there is still time to repent. Additionally, Malachai instructs those who had despaired of living life according to religious tradition that once they returned to God in truth, they would understand that God has truly remained faithful to his side of the covenant.

Malachai announces that God will send Eliyahu (Elijah) "the prophet before the coming of the great, awe-inspiring day of the Lord. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachai 3:22-24). Perhaps you recognize the name Eliyahu/Elijah in association with Passover. On every Seder table one can find the *Kos shel Eliyahu* or Elijah's Cup that is filled with wine towards the end of the Seder as a symbolic welcoming of the prophet. In our tradition, the prophet Eliyahu is not only a prophet of zeal, thunder and earthquake, but also the leader and mentor who hears "the still, small voice" (Rosh Hashanah prayers). He is the prophet who will decide the difficult legal questions that remain unanswered since the days of the Talmud and throughout the ages. Eliyahu will help the helpless and heal men of their impurity, and he will be the reconciler who will bring harmony into the home and into the world. And when the home is no longer divided against itself, the estrangement between the young and their elders will disappear. Eliyahu is therefore the harbinger of the days of the *Mashiach* (Messiah) who will turn humankind to God.

As described by another prophet, Yechezkel (Ezekiel), the Messianic era is to be an era of true freedom. Yechezkel foresaw that at the end of the Babylonian exile there would

be a Jewish *Nasi*, a prince, ruling over the Jews in their own land. Yechezkel stresses, however, that "the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance to thrust them wrongfully out of their possession; that My people be not scattered every man from his possession" (Yechezkel 45-16; 46-18). In his vision of his people's return to their own homeland, the prophet Yechezkel speaks of a prince, not of a king. He is to be the head of the national council, and the representative of the people. He is to use the people's offerings, as a sacrifice for the entire community, in public worship, and thus there would be a return to the holiness of worship so that Israel might remain a holy people.

To symbolize Israel's new birth of freedom, the prophet Yechezkel recalls the Biblical command to celebrate freedom by offering the Pesach Sacrifice. The prophet also stresses the unity of Israel. Passover is indeed a holiday of unity. Not only was the Exodus the most unifying event in Jewish history, but the observance of the Passover holiday required that, while the Temple stood, all Jews travel to Jerusalem for the *Korban Pesach*, the Pascal offering. In fact, in many cases, it was also necessary for families to join together to eat the entire Pascal offering.

When the prophet Malachai concludes that "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachai 3:24), he is defining where it is most important for us to be unified -- in our families.

When we come together this Passover, let us all remember what makes our nation "great" -- that the prophet who foretold the restoration of Israel, regarded the aim and task of his prophetic and pastoral mission as educating individuals, not only to be religious -- but to be members of a united community.

*Rabbi Samuel Biber is the Executive Director of the Northwest Home and Rehabilitation Center of Chicago and the Rabbi of Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob Synagogue Mechitza Minyan.*



small and shy during those Seders, and I always passed when my turn came to read. In truth, I probably could not have told anyone what the Passover story was about.

In our teenage years, however, my grandparents became ill. My grandfather went into a nursing home. My grandmother passed away, and my grandfather shortly thereafter. There were no more Seders in Brooklyn, and for my own immediate family, that really meant there were no Seders.

Then my cousin Bryan, the oldest of our generation, married a woman who was Modern Orthodox. He and his wife decided to host the Passover Seder and bring together the two families. That first Seder was held in their dormitory apartment while Bryan was in medical school. I remember arriving with an ice tea in hand and his wife telling me that I would have to leave it outside. I said it was kosher, but she pointed out that kosher and "kosher for Passover" were not the same thing. I had no idea what went into making something "kosher for Passover" – the only place I had ever seen such words was on the matzah box.

During the course of the next year, I began to learn more about Judaism with my other cousin, Carolyn. She had also chosen an observant lifestyle several years before and had spent time in Israel studying. Through my discussions and explorations with my cousin, I came to better understand how grand and significant a holiday Passover really was. I also began to see how much was involved in preparing for the holiday. Most importantly, however, was that I began to understand that most of the ritual of the Passover Seder is about teaching the next generation. In time, my sister joined me in learning about Judaism. It seemed ironic, we two who had sat so quietly and were so shy at our grandparents' Seder so many years before, were now full participants. My sister, who is the youngest of the four cousins, used to refuse to even read the "Four Questions" in English at our grandparents' Seder. Today she can read those very questions in fluent Hebrew!

Not only was I learning more about the laws and traditions of the holiday, but I found that this knowledge opened up a treasure trove of long forgotten memories. Many of these memories were actually of Passover Seders at the home of my mother's parents. I could picture myself sitting next to my sister on my Bubby and Zeidy's couch under the mirror. The table was set with all the Passover dishes--the seder plate and the cup of Eliyahu. I clearly remember Ziggy, as we called our Zeidy, opening the door--unlocking all the locks on that Brooklyn apartment door was no mean feat--and letting in Eliyahu the prophet. I was so sure the cup had been drunk from. These found memories were clear as day to me, and I was filled with happiness that I actually had such abundant and detailed

memories of the holiday. Some day, I look forward to passing these memories on to my own children. More than just memories of Passover, I realized that my Bubby and Zeidy, who had passed away when I was quite young, had been observant. I am proud to say that I am now following in their footsteps.

My father's parents had not been observant, and yet I am also proud to say that they instilled a strong enough Jewish identity into our family, with the result that all four of their grandchildren have committed themselves to a Torah lifestyle. Our children will not have to rediscover memories of incomprehensible childhood Seders. For them the Seder will be, thankfully, very much an integral part of their lives.

My cousin Bryan and his wife continue to host the Seder. They now have two daughters, and last year their eldest serenaded us with the "Four Questions." Perhaps this year, her little sister will have a turn. My other cousin has two children who are just behind them, ready to take their turns as youngest child reader. My sister too has gotten married, and, please G-d, next year their child will also join us at the Seder (though I doubt he/she will be ready to recite the Haggadah).

The Sages stress that Passover is a holiday for teaching the children. I see the very act of teaching the children as an act of my being educated. Passover is an especially good time for this, as it is the ideal opportunity to share a love for Judaism with family and good friends.

*Tami Reid, a nanny by profession, lives in Monroe Township, NJ.*

with a few moments to spare. My kitchen is wrapped in aluminum foil and looks like it just stepped out of a Woody Allen movie. My guests are due any minute.

I go over to the candles, pick up a match. A scratching sound, the acrid smell of sulfur as the match tip bursts into flame. "Baruch attah..." Despite fatigue, my smile comes from deep inside me.

This is the second year I've actually conducted a seder myself. That makes two years in the past seventy that there's been a proper traditional seder in my family. The second seder is at someone else's house, so I get to relax and give more attention to the Haggadah. What a beautiful piece of writing this is! More than writing really. It's song too, and above all dialogue—dialogue in the Haggadah itself, dialogue with the Haggadah and dialogue with the other people at the table.

The section about the four sons is my favorite part. I discovered this year that it's because even within the same evening I feel like each son a little. I can formulate questions like the wise son, ask general questions like the

simple son, and sometimes count on others to open up a line of inquiry like the son who isn't even able to ask a question. And when I get to the multiplication of plagues the Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiba discuss, I'm even like the evil son wishing to separate myself from the whole thing.

Through it all, I'm acutely aware of how incredibly important it is for a Jew to be actively involved in the process called "being Jewish," and also how important questions and challenges are in the scheme of things. Judaism does not demand (like other religions do) that its members be passive, blindly obedient followers. There's room for a minority opinion here.

Even a week of celebrating the season of our liberation seems too short. But then, looking back, now so many days into the counting of the Omer, I think -- no, perhaps it wasn't fast enough. After all, ahead lies a greater miracle still: Shavuot, the time of the giving of Torah.

*Ariella Sofia is a long-time graduate of the Lincoln Square Synagogue Beginners Service. This article was originally printed in Bereishith May 1982.*

*Illustrations by Wendy Dunn*



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*Readers: This is your newsletter and we'd like to hear from you. Article contributions are always welcome.*



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