

Passover Reminder

By Hadassah Bat Haim

The Red Sea coast, much nearer to the ancient Land of Goshen than to Tel Aviv, is not much different to look at now than it was when the first Israelites set foot on it more than three and a half thousand years ago. Then Moses led his oppressed and exploited people away from the wrath of the Pharaoh, through the miraculously parted water to this inhospitable shore to a rabble of slaves, household servants, scribes, laborers and farm hands, dragging along their frightened women and children, totally unused to fending for themselves, the grim rocks and sand - swept plains must have been very discouraging. There were about six thousand of them altogether including the elderly, the halt and the sick. Almost impossible to see in them the promise of the great nation they were to become.

This year, as every year since the Six Day War gave modern Israel access to the route of their ancestors, the same number or more, present day Israelis walk over the same ground. All along the edge of the Red Sea tents and improvised shelters house, temporarily, the descendants of these historical trekkers, who are celebrating the arrival of their forefathers to that very area. Some camping outfits are so sophisticated and the field kitchens so comprehensive that the festive meal is as elaborate as it would be in a five story hotel. Some travelers make do with their sleeping bags and a packet of matza in their rucksacks.

Finding Manna
Our own tents are pitched two metres from the calm, shimmering water. This is a great advantage for the dishwasher (me) as the plates and cutlery can be scoured with sand and rinsed off in the sea. Dinner, netted by local fishermen less than an hour ago, is grilling over charcoal. We should really be eating the quail that sustained the Children of Israel through their forty years of wandering but over the last three millennia and more particularly over the last fifty years these have been almost hunted out of existence.

However, manna is still available for anyone who gets up early and knows where to look. Just before sunrise it can be gathered, white, resinous and as sweet as honey, from the tamarisk trees that are a feature of the Sinai no less now than they were at the time of the Exodus.

In our decadent way we have brought most of our supplies from the cities in which we live at other times. One of the kids is cutting up the bitter herbs on a flat stone while another is pounding apples and honey into haroset. Salt water is not a problem to find as it rolls gently into all our pots while we are not looking.

Night comes early in these regions and by six o'clock the descending sun is setting fire to the mountains behind us. For a brief moment the minerals in the rocks catch the light and reflect back a bouquet of brilliant blues and greens. But the predominant color is red and the flaming peaks, mirrored in the water, cast a glow that shimmers all around us and seems to enclose us in a rosy haze. No speculation as to where this stretch of water got its name. Then suddenly it is dark. The mountains loom black and sinister, but the stars which seem to hang lower here than in town are brighter than diamonds. The moon throws a gleaming path that stretches from our camps to the camps of the watching Egyptians on the other side.

Sand in All

We lay out six white towels tidily on the sand, weighted down at the corners by bottles of wine. Our neighbors, half a mile down the beach, have a starched white linen tablecloth and the electric light connected with their car, shines on crystal and silver. We like to think that our more modest feast is nearer to those first meals that the Israelites ate giving thanks for the miracles that got them so far. Their bowls were wood and clay and ours are plastic and paper and their wine came, goat flavored, out of skin containers, but our food is less simple. However, we have not brought, as some campers have, a battery operated icebox. We have not even brought chairs, so we arrange heaps of sand into couches and cover them with blankets, then we are able to recline as luxuriously as Roman senators. One condition we share with our more elegant friends and our ancestors-

sand in everything. In the wine, in the salad, in our hair and our clothes, even in the hot wax of the candles we have instead of the old oil lamps.

The familiar story has a sharper significance down here in the desert. Egypt is not much more than a stones throw away. The children ask the questions to which we all know the answers and we listen as though it were all new. Those dangers are past. We are free, in our own land but the struggle is not yet over. The old heroes and sages are very close to us and when we fill an earthenware beaker for Elijah no one would be surprised to see him charging up to drink it. Chariot, six white horses and everything.

Significance of Passover.

We move over to the driftwood and debris bonfire and before we have finished our singing the neighbors come around to join us. The coffee is sprinkled with ashes but good. We wonder how our predecessors managed without it. A couple of Bedouin float silently out of the darkness and accept a cup each. This is the way our progenitors looked. Lean and swarthy, wrapped in voluminous folds and hooded to keep out the chill of the desert night.

The kids want to know why we can't stay down here forever. They would willingly give us lessons and washing and sleeping in beds. But the rest of us could not sustain a long sojourn in the wilderness. We follow the trail probably marked out by Moses, Aaron and Joshua as we speed to urban complexity in a few hours, over the way that once took forty years. We come back to telephones and T.V dinners but we remember the stillness we have left behind. The Passover ritual binds us not only to celebrants, some secret, some open, some free and some still in jeopardy all over the world: it also links us to our beginnings.

CHICAGO (WNS) -- The Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago April 6 became the first community agency to deliver major funds for Project Renewal in Israel. The Chicago community group presented \$1 million to Project Renewal.

Mc Nevada State Bank says:

to our neighbors
in the
Jewish Community



"Large enough
to serve you,
small enough
to know you."



PASSOVER
GREETINGS

With Us, You're #1*

 **NEVADA STATE BANK**
Your Community Minded Bank

4th and Carson Streets • 3345 Maryland Parkway • 3480 West Sahara Avenue
6100 Spring Mountain Road • 3780 East Flamingo Road
Phone: 383-4111 / Member FDIC

HAPPY
Passover
TO OUR JEWISH FRIENDS

OPEN 24 HRS
365 DAYS A YEAR

STRIP STORE

Rx **Rexall** PRODUCTS

PRESCRIPTION SPECIALISTS

- FILM • GREETING CARDS
- GIFTS • SUNDRIES
- SUNGLASS • VITAMINS

ONE OF NEVADA'S LEADING
COSMETIC RETAILERS

ESTEE LAUDER	ULTIMA
GERMAINE MONTEIL	JEAN PATOU
FRANCES DENNEY	NINA RICCI
ELIZABETH ARDEN	ARAMIS
LANCÔME	PACO RABANNE
BORGHESE	KANON
GIVENCHY	BRAGGI

Russell Stover CANDIES

THE STRIP	COMMERCIAL CTR.	DOWNTOWN
382-1733	735-5189	382-1441
STRIP & DAKEY 1700 LAS VEGAS BLVD. SOUTH LAS VEGAS	953 E. SAHARA LAS VEGAS	4th & FREMONT 400 E. FREMONT LAS VEGAS