

## I Love Pesach in the Springtime

BY RABBI BERNARD S. RASKAS

Pesach always comes at the right time of the year. The timing of Pesach in our lives is superb. In the first place, Pesach always arrives as the symbol of spring. The winter is hard and the freeze lasts a long period of time. In a very real way, we are frustrated as we look out at the world.

It is exactly at this time when we have this mood that Pesach comes to remind us that winter is just about over. At the Seder the use of the green parsley is a symbol of the freshness of the coming spring. On the seventh day of Passover we read from the Song of Songs: "For, lo, the winter is past, the flowers appear on the earth and the time of singing has come."

With the rebirth of nature, faith is rekindled, joy returns to our lives and we feel like singing. The blooming of the flowers, the cheerful chirping of the birds, the gladness of the sunshine, is an irresistible message of hope and good cheer. It were as if God has performed for us another act of the drama of creation.

In the spring it is the easiest time of the year to believe in God as we witness the powers of recreation. Since this year Pesach occurs in April the following poetic passage expresses this mood very well:

"For shall we not believe God lives  
Thru such awakening?

Behold, how the Lord each April gives  
The miracle of Spring."

Another reason Pesach comes at the right time of the year is that during this season the world seems to be disheartened about the future of freedom. Every year at this time men's spirits seem to drag as they face the immense problems that are associated with bring-

ing freedom to all of God's children. Observe the way the race situation has just suffered a serious setback in Alabama and in the North the issue becomes more tangled by the hour.

And we ponder, just where are we heading? Note the way we are becoming increasingly involved in the struggle for freedom in El Salvador and we anxiously wonder will it ever be over. The families in India and Africa stir us deeply. And we ask can we ever satisfy a hungry world?

All of this would be disheartening were it not for one real fact. The fact of Pesach comes to tell us that though a people be enslaved for hundreds of years yet there is a possibility for freedom and liberation. According to the most conservative historical estimates, the Hebrew people lived in concentration camps and slave labor compounds in Egypt for 210 years and yet they were liberated.

It is also worthwhile to note the first of the Ten Commandments begins with, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This is the signature of faith, for this is a God of freedom.

The point is that God does care even though His message is slow in coming. The truth is that there is a Divine concern for those who are oppressed, for those who suffer, for those who are enslaved. Pesach is proof positive that freedom is yet possible. Every Pesach at this time of the year, I am once more inspired to re-dedicate myself to the causes of freedom. I know nothing hopeless in the affairs of men when it comes to compassion and justice.

The message of Pesach also comes at the right time to work its purpose. During the winter, and particularly near its end, we feel as if we are in a state of doldrums and there is

a sense of lassitude in us. Pesach activates us and it literally puts us to work.

Think of all the things we have to do. We have to clean the house and change the dishes, order the matza and wine, invite the family, make sure that the youngest knows the four questions, buy baby a new pair of shoes, etc. Even the Seder makes participants of all of us. Mother has to cook the meal, father has to lead the Seder, everybody has to eat the matza and all the other foods. In fact, we were told this by the Talmud: "Everyone is required to participate in the drinking of four cups of wine - men and women, as well as the children."

Aside from motivating us and moving us into positive directions, it teaches us an important lesson. All of us must be participants in the great drama of liberation, all of us must share in creating a better society, all of us must move from inaction into action if we are to better the world. As one wit once put it: You may be on the right track, but if you just sit there you'll be run over.

All told, Pesach is a unique festival not only in Judaism, but in the history of religion. The Seder with the serving of symbolic foods enables the Jew to relive and recreate his past.

That is why every year I eagerly await Pesach. I like Pesach in the springtime, because in it I sense with my entire being that to be a Jew is to be a part of history and the drama of creation.

PARIS (WNS) -- Several hundred people, including the wife of former French Premier Pierre Mendes - France, demonstrated in front of the Soviet Consulate asking that Jewish Prisoner of Conscience Anatoly Shcharansky be freed.

### JEWISH PARENTS ARGUE-COUNTY DISTRICT LISTENS

The Clark County School District has published an advisory to staff members concerning scheduled Jewish holidays during the 1982 - 83 school year. Since passage of an amendment to an existing regulation by the School Board on February 11th, Jewish students are to receive excused absences for not being present at school during these days. The regulation reads in part: "Care should be taken not to schedule major examinations or significant single event student activities on major religious holidays."

Following is a listing of Jewish holidays: Rosh Hashana (New Year) - September 18 and 19; Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) - September 27; Sukkot (Festival of Tabernacles) - October 2 and 3; Shemini Atzeret (Eighth Day of Assembly) - October 9; Simchat Torah (Rejoicing of the Law) - October 10; Pesach (Passover) - March 29 and 30, 1983 and April 4 and 5, 1983 and Shavuot (Festival of Weeks) - May 18 and 19, 1983.

**Happy  
Passover**

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