

MARCH 19, 1999

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Happy Nisan. It is the month of spring, the month of Passover, the month of our going out from Egypt, from slavery, the month of our freedom.

Question: what is the main purpose of the seder at Passover?

What does the format of the seder encourage us to do?

My brother told me a story he found in on the newer Haggadahs (from the Hartmann Institute). It's a story about Isaac Rabi (pronounced ray-bee), the Nobel Laureate physicist. Dr. Rabi talks about his childhood, growing up in Brooklyn in the early part of this century. When his friends got home from school every day their parents would ask them, "What did you learn today?" or sometimes, "did you answer any of the questions the teacher asked today?" but when Isaac Rabi got home from school every day, he would hear from his parents, "Nu -- Izzy did you ask a good question today?" "And that," says Prof. Rabi, "is how I became a physicist."

In fact there are a lot of Jewish physicists. Becky's father, for one, anybody else here know Jewish physicists? But more than there are Jewish physicists, there are Jews who ask questions. And of course Jews who answer questions with questions. So I am sometimes surprised when I see Jewish answers to questions that seem to suggest they are the REAL answer. I prefer it when two different answers are the real answers!

This week I received in the mail a booklet of what is called sermonic and other material that is sent to rabbis twice a year, before Passover and before the Days of Awe. It's a lovely booklet, and I often share readings with you from it. This Passover issue had two drashot in it, one was called "Hurry is for Slaves" by Rabbi Meyer Kramer, the other, "Tomorrow may be too late" by Rabbi Joseph Radinsky. The first tells us that the message of Pesach is that we no longer need to hurry, we are not slaves, we are not trying to escape from Egypt. Take your time, he tells us, we live hurry-up lives in a hurry-up world, and that is not good. "It took the Jews 40 years in the desert to

absorb the implications of freedom." Good things take time. Speed "causes us to miss important and enriching chunks of existence." He ends with an anonymous and wonderful quotation: "Let us not hurry; we have no time to lose."

The second sermon, "Tomorrow may be too late" tells us that Pesach rails against an all too common attitude, the attitude that says, "no hurry," that says, "I think I'll just let nature take its course." Pesach, says the second drash, "teaches us that we should seize opportunities;" "clutch possibilities that come our way," just like the Israelites did by running from Egypt, by not waiting for their bread to rise, by getting out while the getting out was possible. Rabbi Radinsky ends his drash with the sentence: "Too many opportunities can be lost by tarrying too long."

So, based on these two drashot, I guess the message of Pesach is "don't hurry and don't tarry." Any questions?

I had some sad news today that I want to share with you. My aunt Elizabeth's husband, Sam Epstein, died last night. You may remember hearing both of their names on the healing list over the last couple of months. And others of you may remember meeting Sam and Elizabeth at High Holy Days this past year where they joined us for several services, or you may remember when I first introduced them to you, two years ago on Valentine's Day, at which time I told you the story of their romance and marriage. Sam was 87 years old at his death; my aunt Elizabeth is 85. They've been married to each other for 2 years and 3 months. But they met first when they were in high school. They were high school sweethearts, in fact, but when Sam went off to college they drifted apart, married other people, lived happily in those other marriages -- Elizabeth was married to my father's brother for 47 years until he died; Sam was married to his first wife for 58 years until she died. Sam and Elizabeth had not seen each other, or spoken, or even heard of one another for over 60 years. But a year or so after Sam's wife died, he began to think about Elizabeth, that teenager he once loved, and though he lived in LA, he managed to find her back in Iowa where they had both grown up.

Hurry is for slaves, or for escaping to freedom, says the story of Passover. Once you are free you can take your time to appreciate life, to discover that things like real love grow over time, slowly, sweetly, no need to hurry it along. One thing I've loved about watching and getting to know Sam and Elizabeth over the last two years is the way that they've just appreciated

each other, and what happened, the way they took it in stride that you never know what might happen to you in a life, what unexpected thing, good or bad, or what unexpected person, might come along or come along again and change everything. They were that way about their getting back together, and they were that way about their recent illnesses and now Sam's death -- "As long as it lasts, it's nice," Elizabeth kept telling me, "but we're not kids anymore," she'd say, "you never know how long it might last." Well, in fact, their relationship this time lasted longer than when they were kids! 2 years and 3 months, not bad for a marriage when the bride was 83 and the groom 85. Sam and Elizabeth each had loving and happy first marriages also, and wonderful families that came out of those marriages. Elizabeth will be moving to Minneapolis next week, in time for Pesach, where she'll live the rest of her life in the company of her beloved daughter and son-in-law, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. LA and Sam were Elizabeth's big late-in-life adventure, but she'll happily go back to her family in the Midwest.

"Let us not hurry; we have no time to lose." Rabbi Kramer says that is the message of what it means not to be slaves any longer, to live in freedom, free to make choices about our lives. "Let us not hurry; we have no time to lose," might well have been what Sam said to Elizabeth when he found her again after 60 years. That and, the other message of Passover also, the one Rabbi Radinsky wants us to learn: "Too many opportunities can be lost by tarrying too long."

"Don't hurry and don't tarry. . . ." You never know what life will bring, nor quite how it will bring it. May this season of our freedom free us all up to experience fully whatever life may offer us, whenever life may offer it to us.

Shabbat Shalom