

*What Are The Questions?*

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When I was a child, the four questions that are asked at the beginning of the Passover seder puzzled me enormously. Oh, I understood the questions easily enough in the most literal way, but it always seemed to me that nowhere in the Haggadah were there straightforward answers to those questions. It took many seders before I realized that the questions were not as obvious as I had once supposed and that every year they might provoke different responses, and that not all of them had their source in the Haggadah.

On the other hand, even as a child, the questions asked by the *Arba'ah Banim*—the Four Children—seemed simple enough. After all, every child knows how to ask many questions; and even in my limited circle of friends and acquaintances, I certainly knew lots of children who were wise or foolish or simple, and even a few who seemed to me to be wicked. (I put myself, of course, in the first category.) It took many seders before I realized that not only might these questions have different answers each year, but that the question each child asks could be refracted through my struggle to make sense of how my illness has affected my Jewish life. What I have discovered at the seder table is that even now I am both the wise child and the wicked child; I am both the simple child and the child who does not know how to ask.

Sometimes I am the wise child. The wise child asks: "What are the laws and ordinances that *Adonai* has commanded us to observe?" Although the Haggadah simply declares that this child should be taught all the laws of *Pesach*, Torah adds that these commandments are observed for our own good so that we might remember that *Adonai* brought us out of slavery into the promised land. And so I ask, what has *Adonai* commanded of me? Has my illness become my own personal Egypt, and is there any wisdom that pain and suffering have brought me? I don't know. Is it for my own good? I hope not.

Sometimes I am the wicked child. The wicked child asks: "What does this ritual mean to *you*?" The rabbis add, for *you* and not for *her*. Too often, I want to say, "Leave me alone in my misery." Will I thus be left standing alone on the shores of the Red Sea, afraid that I will drown and disappear completely? How do I find the courage to take that first step and walk into the space *Adonai* has created for me? I don't know. Does my rage in the face of pain isolate me from the community and thus make me wicked? I hope not.

Sometimes I am the simple child. The simple child asks: "What is this all about?" And the rabbis answer: "It was with a mighty arm that

## PASSOVER 5759

*Ha Lahma Anya/This is the bread of affliction  
that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt:*

*All who are hungry—come and eat!*

*All who are in need— come join in the Passover!*

*This year we are here;*

*next year in the land of Israel!*

*This year enslaved, next year free!*

*Maggid*, the central "Recounting" section of the Passover seder ritual opens with this extraordinary invitation. Who among us is not hungry? Who among us is not in need? Who among us does not dream of liberation? On this night, we are all invited to take part in the journey—we are all included as participants in the drama.

It is a night of symbols, a night of tastes and smells, a night of storytelling, and especially a night of questions. We are encouraged to ask questions throughout the seder—engaging us in a kinetic approach to learning. From year to year, we watch the questions and their answers both stay the same, yet change and grow.

A wise rabbi has written, "The Haggadah should not be rote recitation, but rather a dynamic exploration that involves probing, empathizing, and creative interpreting." Each part of the seder, each piece of the ordered whole, is designed to bring us into a multi-layered experience of the transition from slavery to freedom. We are asked to see ourselves as if we were slaves in Egypt. We are given the opportunity to find our own individual stories within the ancient framework of the Exodus. We are challenged to tap into a place of deep understanding and remember to reach out to others who are enslaved.

Matzah, the central symbol of the holiday of *Pesach* is known as both the bread of suffering and the bread of freedom. This paradox reflects the creative tension of the seder itself—a complex interweaving of celebrating freedom while identifying with bondage. Those of us who bear the burdens of suffering, disruption, and loss, can immediately relate to this intense ambiguity. In this issue of *The Outstretched Arm*, we invite you to join our table, and explore with us selected components of the seder ritual.

May we all draw strength and insight from the enormous power of this collective effort.

*continued on page 7*



## The OUTSTRETCHED ARM

VOLUME 2 · ISSUE 1 · SPRING 1999/5759

*The Outstretched Arm* is published by the National Center for Jewish Healing, a program of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR, JANET SHERMAN



### National News

Across North America Jewish healing centers are beginning to blossom, providing a Jewish framework for people who are dealing with illness and loss. A recent meeting sponsored by the NCJH brought 15 of these communities together to learn from one another's experience in setting up a Jewish healing center. Facilitators at the meeting included Rabbis Nancy Flam, Amy Eilberg, and Simkha Weintraub; Dr. Carol Hausman (Washington Jewish Healing Network); and Debby Hirshman (Executive Director, New York's JCC of the Upper West Side). Issues such as organizational structure, program development, fundraising, and community outreach were discussed. Participants returned home inspired, energized, and supported in their work. We plan to offer more networking opportunities like this in the future, so if your community is building such a program, please let us know. To continue to support your growth, we would also like to share our experience and that of others with you, as well as provide you with helpful resources and material.

The NCJH will present a session called "How to Start a Jewish Healing Center" at the upcoming annual conference of the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies, held in Orlando, Florida. If you are involved with a JFS interested in starting a healing center, please join us.

On March 21st, Rabbi Simkha Weintraub took part (for the second year in a row) in the conference called "Spirituality and Healing in Medicine." This annual conference is sponsored by the Harvard Medical School's Dept. of Continuing Medical Education and the Mind/Body Medical Institute Care Group, under the leadership of Dr. Herbert Benson, M.D.

### Outreach

Recently, the NCJH and the New York Jewish Healing Center held an informational program for foundations and other institutional representatives, as well as friends interested in learning about and supporting our work. A panel consisting of a rabbi, a member of a Jewish Spiritual Support Group, and a physician, related their experiences with the resources in Judaism they have found helpful. (see page 6). I shared a story with the group which I would like to share with you:

### One Recipe for Solace

*A woman whose husband had died came to a Tzaddik, a "Righteous One" and poured out her heart to him. In her distraught state, she described how her loss had robbed her of all peace of mind, and how her friends' attempts to console her merely intensified her anguish.*

*After listening closely, the Tzaddik advised the woman to bake a cake—but only to use ingredients gathered from people in her town who had never experienced pain or loss. In her search for solace, the woman went from house to house, but found that in each dwelling her neighbors were unable to give her even a single grain of wheat or speck of sugar, as they had all experienced some pain, loss or suffering in their lives.*

*That night, disappointed and exhausted she returned to the Tzaddik to inform him of her failure. As she approached his study, and saw him through the window studying Torah, she realized that in her very "failure" was the remedy. She realized that she had not been singled out for punishment, but rather that loss is part of the fate of ALL mortals. She was able, once again, to accept comfort from well-intentioned friends and to envision a future state of peace.*

May we all be strengthened in our work.

## MIRIAM'S CUP *A New Tradition for the Seder*



Many people now observe a new *Pesach* tradition with many old meanings. A special goblet now sits in the center of the table, filled with clean, pure water. Think about the story we tell and remember: There would be no Exodus, no Passover, no seder, no freedom without the many brave women who played crucial roles in the Passover drama. There would be no Exodus without *Shifrah* and *Puah*, the midwives who refused to follow Pharaoh's orders to drown

newborn Israelite boys; without Yocheved, who hid her baby, Moses, for three months, then built him a little boat so he could sail safely down the River Nile; without Pharaoh's daughter, who defied her father, the king of all Egypt, when she rescued an Israelite child and drew Moses from the water.

And, last but not least, the Exodus never could have happened without Miriam the Prophet, who predicted the birth of Moses; who brought her mother to Pharaoh's daughter; who led the singing and celebration after our safe crossing through the Sea of Reeds. Legend also tells us that Miriam found the wells that kept us

alive during the forty years we wandered in the wilderness before we came into the Promised Land.


Let us dedicate this cup of water to the memory of Miriam, to the women and the waters of our Exodus, and to the women in our own lives who help heal us and repair our world.

Say their names aloud if you like: honor them in words and deeds, and in your hearts.

Adapted from *The Family Haggadah*  
by ELLEN SCHECTER



## *The Cup of Compassion* THE 10 PLAGUES



God saved us from slavery with myriad signs and wonders. But before we drink our second cup of wine, we remember the Egyptians who suffered terrible plagues in our struggle for freedom. As we name each plague, we take away a drop from our own cup of joy:

Blood instead of water...

Frogs hopping everywhere...

Gnats and flies that buzz and bite the Egyptians and their beasts...

Cattle disease .....

Painful boils all over the bodies of the Egyptians and their beasts...

Hail that hits like hammers...

Locusts that darken the land until there is nothing green or growing anywhere in Egypt...

Darkness so thick you can touch it with your hands...

And death of the firstborn of every Egyptian family: from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of his servants: all fall dead.

God sees the blood on our doors, and the Angel of Death passes over our houses. We are saved! But we cannot satisfy our thirst or celebrate our freedom without remembering the sorrow of other people, who are all God's children. To have been a slave is to understand a slave; to have been a stranger is to understand a stranger.

Today, we are no longer slaves. But what does our freedom mean? How should we use it?

I ask myself:

Are there people I treat like slaves?

How do I remain enslaved?

Have I hardened my heart against a stranger?

How can I take an active role to help end the slavery I see all around me?

Adapted from *The Family Haggadah*

## *The Cup of Defiance*

When Pharaoh decreed, the Israelites defied; when Pharaoh spoke death, the Israelites chose life. Husbands and wives continued to create new life. The Hebrew midwives refused to kill newborn baby boys. Yocheved defied the law and hid her infant son, Moses, then crafted a tiny ark to float him to safety. When Pharaoh's daughter drew Moses from the water, she defied her own father—the king and god of all Egypt. And though he grew up with princely privileges, Moses initiated his own liberation with an act of defiance when he killed a cruel Egyptian overseer.

These are the first acts of civil disobedience in recorded history; our liberation was no accident. It was forged by both divine and human intervention—with divine signs and wonders, and through acts of individual human defiance.

The story of our Exodus from Egypt is only the beginning of a continuing story that we are obliged to tell again and experience anew each year at *Pesach*. Each year the story and its questions spark new skeins of stories and questions, beginning with: How can I find a new way to tell the story of the Exodus as part of my own personal story—my own personal liberation from slavery?

Perhaps this way: If illness is a form of slavery, a personal plague that forces me into a hard, dark, narrow place, then perhaps I must seize both the opportunity and the obligation to help free myself. How? Perhaps I must give up past conceptions and images of myself, and seek strength where I am. Perhaps I must give up old hopes and expectations, and forge new ones.

Sometimes rage springs from a deep and hidden hope for healing. How can I harness rage and transform it into defiance that liberates? How can I put my fingers on that small wellspring of hope and help it gush forth like a fountain? How can I fan the Divine Spark within me to shed radiance on my own dark, narrow places?

It is still essential to participate in my own redemption.

—ES

## THE CHILD WHO DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO ASK...

By Janice Stieber Rous

This past week, my friend's baby son died. It was her third child, and her second infant son to die from a very rare genetic disorder that results in a metabolic neurological breakdown. Mercifully, her second child, a daughter, was spared. I met this woman soon after her first baby died, and from the moment we met, I knew that she had a deep spiritual hunger. Of Jewish birth, she, like so many of us, had searched in the religions of the East for answers. Eastern belief spoke to her of compassion and devotion, but her encounters with Judaism had only seemed to reflect patriarchal images of God, laws, and punishment. With no background and no experience to support her, Jewish tradition seemed completely foreign and out of her reach. Though her Jewishness seemed to offer no comfort, something still drove her to search for a way to connect.

I visited her as she sat in the hospital with the baby, watching his life slowly ebb away. I brought her prayer cards and books from the Jewish Healing Center. Because I am the "Jew" in her life, she trusts me to speak to her from an authentic Jewish voice. She trusts that perhaps I can be the connection—that I can help her find the meaning which hides underneath the printed words. So when the baby died, my husband Dan (a cantor) and I went to her home to help her plan the funeral. I knew she longed for some way to find expression for her Jewish voice. Dan gently sang for her the *El Maleh Rachamim* prayer, traditionally recited at a Jewish funeral. The haunting sounds moved her on a very deep level, and she chose to have Dan sing this prayer at the graveside funeral the following day.

Leaving the cemetery, I thought that my friend was like the fourth child in the Haggadah—the one "who does not know how to ask the question." This listener, the Haggadah tells us, is not wicked or simple, but one who cannot find the way to connect. She longs for the spiritual truths from her tradition to be revealed in such a way that they can resonate in her heart. To that child we must truly listen, we must truly reach out...

JANICE STIEBER ROUS is a teacher of the Alexander technique and the creator of *Body Dialogue*. She practices in New York City.



As we continue to learn together in *The Outstretched Arm*, we invite you now to join our seder table. Three of our guests are discussing this paragraph in the Haggadah. Please add your voice to the discussion, and consider sending us your thoughts for inclusion in a future issue.

*Dr. Tamara Green:*

Everyone present at the Passover seder is commanded to see themselves as slaves in Egypt, to live and relive the experience of the Exodus, to feel both the terror and exhilaration as we start out on a journey into the unknown wilderness. Passover eve is a night of waiting, a time of anticipation. Who of us knows where or how the journey will end?

For those who are ill or in pain, *Pesach* can take on a bittersweet meaning. Illness is, in itself, a journey into the unknown wilderness—the past when we enjoyed good health is easy to recall, the present is often difficult, and the future can loom up before us like an abyss. Being sick can mean that we are always in Egypt, always wandering in the desert, that we cannot find our way into the Promised Land. Just like the ancient Israelites, I'm not sure I want to go on this trip that was certainly not my idea. How can I think of liberation when my body is enslaved by pain? Why do I feel that the ten plagues were visited upon me, and not the Egyptians? How can I feel redeemed from bondage when illness is ever present? With illness as a cruel and demanding taskmaster, can I still savor the meaning of freedom? When we arrive at Sinai for the giving of the Torah, will I be able to stand there and watch the miracle?

Yet I know that even as matzah is the bread of affliction, it is also the bread of redemption, for it holds out the promise that, like our ancestors, we can anticipate the exhilaration of spiritual freedom even in the midst of physical bondage. As we sit together each year at the seder table and recite these words which link us to every generation, we can draw strength from one another to relive the past, to be here in the present, and to make our way into the future. Somehow, this helps to turn the night of waiting into a time of gathering strength for whatever lies ahead. In one way or another, I know that I will be standing there at Sinai.



IN EVERY GENERATION, EVERY PERSON SHOULD FEEL AS THOUGH SHE OR HE HAD ACTUALLY BEEN REDEEMED FROM EGYPT. AS IT IS SAID: "AND THOU SHALT RELATE IT TO THY CHILDREN IN THAT DAY, SAYING, THIS IS DONE ON ACCOUNT OF THAT WHICH THE LORD DID UNTO ME, WHEN I CAME FORTH OUT OF EGYPT" (EX. 13:8).

*Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub:*

**T**he Haggadah is not just a chronicle of a bygone historic moment. It is a script for a live, unfolding drama, with all of us as players. When the Haggadah recommends that "in every generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Egypt," we are empowered to re-think the story of this journey in another light. We can tell our own personal interpretation, our own midrash, and link our particular history to that of the eternal narrative. Each story is a unique one that adds to the meaning of Passover for all assembled. "In every generation" means nothing if not here and now, and "every individual" implies all those gathered at our seder tables and their deepest, most profound experiences and feelings.





**Our discussion has generated some questions. What questions would you add?**

1. What in my life do I experience as "Egypt" this year?
2. In what ways have I been set free?
3. *Mitzrayim*, the Hebrew word for Egypt, means a "narrow place". How could *my* "narrow place" function as a place for growth?
4. In what ways could I confront and express my powerlessness?
5. What specific practical actions can I take?
6. What outside my control can I trust to liberate myself?
7. If I created three personal symbols for my own story that parallel those of the seder—the paschal lamb, matzah, and the bitter herb—what would they be?
8. What is my prayer as I take the next steps in my journey of liberation?

IT WAS NOT ONLY OUR ANCESTORS WHOM THE HOLY ONE REDEEMED FROM EGYPT, BUT OURSELVES AS WELL, AS IT IS SAID, "AND THE HOLY ONE BROUGHT US OUT FROM THERE IN ORDER TO GIVE US THE LAND WHICH WAS PROMISED TO OUR ANCESTORS" (DEUTERONOMY 6:23).

*Dr. Joel Ziff:*

**W**e commemorate the experience in Egypt not only during Pesach; we are asked to remember it every day by referring to our servitude and subsequent liberation in our daily prayers and the liturgy of every Holy-Day. Why do we give such a central place to this story in our liturgy and ritual practice?

The liberation from slavery in Egypt marks the birth of the Jewish nation; it also serves as a symbol for all the periods of exile and redemption in Jewish history. The Exodus represents deliverance, not just from oppression in Egypt but from all exiles in the past, present, and future.

It speaks both to the inevitability of oppression throughout history, as well as to the trust in an equally inescapable liberation.

When we read in the Haggadah that "each of us is obligated to consider ourselves as coming out of Egypt," we see that the event serves not only as a marker of turning points in the development of the Jewish people; it is also symbolic of critical moments in our own lives. The coming out of Egypt, is an archetypal image of life transitions; it embodies every narrow passage we traverse as we give birth to ourselves.

The inevitable difficulties of life can

overwhelm us. If we view these experiences solely as oppressive events, we can find ourselves enslaved in Egypt and unable to escape. But the story of slavery can offer us a different possibility: the Israelites not only overcome the adversity, they develop into a nation. The biblical story of slavery and redemption validates the notion that such experiences in our own lives are inevitable and may be ultimately constructive events.

The liberation from slavery involved two seemingly contradictory qualities: (1) acknowledging powerlessness as a basis for hope and (2) a commitment to act in spite of powerlessness. Only when the Israelites cry out does God respond with the miracles of the plagues. In acknowledging our own powerlessness in moments of difficult transition, we no longer live in denial and illusion. We open ourselves to ask for and accept help, and in this place of receptivity we may begin to free ourselves from rigid patterns of coping.

The Exodus required active intervention from God, but human initiative and action were also required in the process. Tradition tells us that when the Israelites reached the sea and were unable to cross, Moses turns to God. God promises to respond, but the Israelites must take the first step. Nachshon, one of the Israelites, acting on faith, enters the water. When the water reaches his nostrils, the sea splits. Throughout the story, the Israelites took many small steps that resulted in effects that miraculously exceeded the results one might logically expect. So too, in our own lives, small steps can create momentum that activates and energizes; they lead to affective changes as well as enhance self-confidence and self-image.

In the character of Moses, we see a role model for balancing the acknowledgement of powerlessness with the commitment to action. Moses knows his limits, but he also responds to the calling from God to lead the Israelites. He dialogues with God to clarify the time for action and the time for receptivity. At each moment in our own journeys we similarly need to stay in dialogue, to acknowledge our limits and reach out, while also doing whatever we can to make changes.

JOEL ZIFF, Ed.D. is a psychologist, consultant, and teacher living in Newton, Massachusetts. These thoughts were adapted with his permission from his wonderful book, *Mirrors in Time: A Psycho-Spiritual Journey through the Jewish Year* (Jason Aronson, 1996).



# MAGGID—A PERSONAL JOURNEY

by Ellen Schechter

ELLEN SCHECTER is a writer, producer, and educator who has published more than twenty books for children, and created award-winning media enjoyed by millions of families. A member of a Jewish Spiritual Support Group of the New York Jewish Healing Center, she gave this talk as part of a panel presentation at a recent event held by the NCJH and the New York JHC. We are grateful that she has given us permission to share her story with all of you. Ellen has also contributed a tremendous amount of her time and creative energy to this issue of the *OA*. We welcome the gift of her voice and heart to these pages.

**For the past 24 years**, I have lived with painful, incurable, potentially life-threatening twin diseases: systemic lupus and demyelinating polyneuropathy. During those years I've done everything I could to help myself and my family: a plethora of medications, specialists, clinics, and hospitals; several support groups; hypnosis and self-hypnosis; psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, family therapy.

Being a realist, I turned my attention several years ago from a search for curing my body to a quest for healing my spirit. And thus began a spiritual journey which, despite the lack of any previous formal religious education, is taking me deep down into my Jewish roots. The search drew me to Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City, where I'm learning how to pray and study Torah, and learning Hebrew and cantillation in order to become a "Bat Torah" at age 55. As a writer, the discipline of "taming by naming"—pinning down the difficulties of disease in words on a page in order to understand and examine both their profound influences and their limitations—is also a cherished resource in adversity.

As my tandem journeys into the worlds of illness and Judaism knit inextricably together, I feel a deep need not merely to transcend my experience of illness but to sanctify it. Long ago, I bid farewell to the unanswerable, uninteresting question "Why me?" and replaced it with a new, more important challenge: "What now?" For while I know that I cannot control which cards I might be dealt in my life, I believe it is my profound responsibility to actively choose how to play them.

The call I received last fall from Rabbi Simkha Weintraub of the New York Jewish Healing Center—with his invitation to join a weekly Jewish Spiritual Healing Group—was not merely an answer to a telephone message, but the answer to a prayer: a prayer for the Jewish spiritual tools that will help me create meaning out of affliction; spin straw into gold; and fashion a heart of wisdom.

The essential difference in a Jewish spiritual support group is that our spiritual search in the face of serious illness is illuminated through the prism of Jewish belief, thought, community, ritual, and tradition. Another essential difference is that our search for meaning takes place through study. We are not limited to our own knowledge and experiences, but can hold hands and jump together into a vast sea of teaching and learning: Torah, psalms, *midrash*, Talmud, Chassidic tales...all the treasuries of wisdom Rabbi Weintraub is opening for us.

Yes, there is *kvetching*—we are Jews after all; and there is that essential "secret handshake of illness". We know that when our fellow travelers nod and murmur "I know" they really do know. But the specific joy of a Jewish Spiritual Healing Group is that we delve deeper and deeper into the Jewish traditions of healing and practice them not in isolation, but together. What do we do?

• **We pray together:** We explore meanings and modes of prayer as expressions of grief, rage, fear, loneliness, joy, thanks, celebration, and just silence; just being there.

• **We sing together:** Ancient *niggunim*—wordless melodies that sink into our marrow. When we sing we are part of a sacred chain reaching back thousands of years and forward into the future. This chain of being has particular meaning in the isolation of illness.

• **We learn how to "unpack" and interpret** the myriad moods and meanings of a psalm, thereby obtaining a template for continued exploration of our liturgy in general and within the context of illness.

• **We study and interpret:** often examining the Torah portion of the week. We find meanings and ask questions that take into account the special sorrow and wisdom of people wrestling with illness. Our discussions, for example, of Jacob wrestling the Angel and receiving not only a wound but a blessing and a new name, both raised questions and offered deep, healing revelations.

• **We discuss:** oh, do we discuss! What is the Jewish concept of the afterlife and of the relationship between body and soul? What are the origins and meanings of Jewish death and mourning rituals? What is illness? Does it come from God? Can God take it away? Is it a punishment? Or a function of the fickle finger of fate which needs integration in our spiritual lives?

• **We learn about the importance of community:** Jewish tradition, in its wisdom, dictates that we are not supposed to heal ourselves by ourselves; that I am supposed to turn to my community for strength and solace. Needing this sense of community doesn't mean I'm a chicken or a *kvetch*.

Each session of our group is studded with "Aha's"! The epiphanies differ for each of us, but here are some that resonate deeply for me:

I came to our first meeting the week I finally accepted the fact that I must leave a job I dearly loved because I could no longer force my body to bend to the will of my mind. Our weekly meetings quickly became a point of light as I began to build a new life.

For me, the struggle of the spirit in the face of illness is part of an overall search for meaning and for wisdom, as in Psalm 90: "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Our healing group enables me to reach out, reach up, and reach inside for glimpses of that wisdom.

The *niggunim* we sing together weave into my days and my dreams. They rise up out of my bones when I need them most; when the IV needle goes in my hand, and the chemo burns in my veins. They are part of my breathing; a thread that connects me to the past and the future at a time when I have cut my usual moorings and feel adrift in the world.

Participating in the Spiritual Healing Group raises more questions than it answers but it also gives more comfort, more direction, and more strength than I ever dreamed. Above all, it makes me and my group hungry—very hungry—for more as we come to realize that our Jewish tradition offers sacred opportunities to both acknowledge grief and cultivate joy.



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Adonai took us out of Egypt." Where is my deliverance from pain? Is there any reason why this has happened to me? I hope not. Will I be able to see Adonai's outstretched arm, and sense the divine presence? I hope so.

Sometimes I am the child who does not know how to ask. "As for the child who does not know how to ask, you should open the discussion for her by explaining, it is because of what Adonai did for me when I went free out of Egypt." How do I begin to seek freedom from my own narrow place? Can I shape the thoughts or give voice to the words that will help me find the path? Will Adonai be present in that place? I hope so.

At least I remember that there are questions to be asked, and for now that is enough.

ONE OF OUR READERS (AND A SPECIAL FRIEND TO THE NCJH) ADDS HER VOICE TO OUR CHORUS OF COMMENTARIES ON THE TALMUD 5B STUDY, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN OUR SUKKOT ISSUE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM MORE OF YOU!

Dear Simkha,

Our Talmud study in the fall *Outstretched Arm* is a wonderful addition and I hope we can share many more.

I would like to add one more comment on the third story. The moment at which R. Johanan weeps with R. Eleazar is a pivotal moment in the visit, in their friendship, and in R. Eleazar's journey to a *refuah sh'lema* (a complete healing).

When R. Johanan can validate R. Eleazar's reason for weeping, he brings R. Eleazar out of isolation. He "frees the prisoner from his cell". When they weep together, the two form a profound bond, a unique bond, a deeply human connection that needs no words. R. Johanan then offers his hand and a complete healing can begin.

R. Johanan teaches us one of the most important lessons in visiting the sick and the art of healing. We need not be afraid to weep with one who is ill. We have a duty to raise up the spirits and morale of one who is sick, but often the way to this is with tears first.

R. Johanan teaches us to listen and validate the justifiable and natural anguish illness can bring. We bring the stricken one out of isolation by following the example of this poignant and beautiful story.

Shalom,  
Peggy Sakow, Montreal

**Healing of Soul, Healing of Body, Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength and Solace in Psalms.** Edited by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, CSW. (*Jewish Lights* 1994). A source of solace for those who are facing illness, as well as those who care for them. These psalms and the inspiring commentaries that accompany them offer an anchor of spiritual support.

**When The Body Hurts, The Soul Still Longs to Sing.** The prayer booklet of heartfelt blessings for times of illness (written by Jewish laywomen). A loving gift for anyone needing spiritual uplift in the midst of illness.

**With Healing on Its Wings.** Masorti Publications, London. A healing collage of selections from the *Shabbat* and weekday liturgy, Genesis, Psalms, Talmud, medieval and contemporary Jewish literature.

**A Leader's Guide to Services and Prayers of Healing.** This helpful guide walks you through some of the central practical issues involved in planning and running a service of healing, whether it be free-standing or incorporated into a traditional service. Sample service included.

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## The Cup of Joy and Gratitude HALLEL



Before we end the seder, we recite the prayers of the *Hallel*. Though many of us may be suffering, we are reminded to set aside moments to acknowledge joy, love, peace, and fulfillment. Here is a translation of the exquisite "Nishmat Kol Chai" prayer. We encourage you to add your own prayers at this time as well...

WE SING PRAISES TO GOD TO GIVE THANKS FOR ALL OF OUR BLESSINGS:

Could song fill our mouths  
as water fills the sea,  
And could joy flood our tongues  
like countless waves,  
Could our lips utter praise  
as limitless as the sky,  
And could our eyes match the  
splendor of the sun,  
Could we soar with arms  
like eagles' wings  
And run with gentle grace,  
like the swiftest deer,  
Never could we fully state our gratitude  
For one ten-thousandth of the lasting love  
Which is Your precious blessing, dear God,  
Granted to our ancestors and to us.

Thank you, God, for everything you have done for us: for taking us from slavery to freedom, from sadness to happiness, from pain to joy, from darkness to light.

Adapted from *The Family Haggadah*, by ELLEN SCHECTER

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