בס״ד

L'Chaim

1930

18 Tammuz, 5786

July 3, 2026

The Weekly Publication for Every Jewish Person

נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)



As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, the story of Passover during the Revolutionary War reveals the resilience of early American Jewish life

Philadelphia, April 1781.

A boy of about eight shifts in his seat. His voice, clear and steady, rises inside the quiet room.

Mah nishtanah halailah hazeh mikol haleilot?

"Why is this night different from all other nights?"

For those gathered around the Passover seder table, crowded into a rented room near Congregation Mikveh Israel, it is a loaded question. In a land with barely 2,500 Jews across the 13 colonies, almost everyone present is a refugee displaced by the Revolutionary War. Under those conditions, every seder feels like a miracle.

The room bears little resemblance to the homes many once knew. There are no silver goblets or fine linens. A roasted chicken neck serves as the zeroa, bitter herbs gathered locally as maror, and the matzot were baked nearby in a makeshift brick oven built by the congregation.

At the head of the table sits Gershom Mendes Seixas, leader of Mikveh Israel. He is determined that the men, women and children before him will retell the story of the Exodus exactly as their ancestors had done for centuries, even as they experience a kind of exodus of their own.

Scenes like this unfolded throughout the colonies. Jewish families, though few in number and often isolated, gathered under difficult circumstances to celebrate Passover. Even obtaining matzah required planning, cooperation and ingenuity.

Before the Revolution, most colonial Jews lived in a handful of port cities: New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah and Newport. Outside those centers, Jewish life was sparse.

The war disrupted even this fragile network. When the British captured New York in 1776, many Jews fled alongside other patriots. Gershom Mendes Seixas refused to remain and be compelled to pray for the British crown. He persuaded much of Congregation Shearith Israel to close the synagogue and leave the city, carrying its Torah scrolls to safety. Many eventually settled in Philadelphia, joining the community of Mikveh Israel.

Philadelphia soon became the temporary center of American Jewish life. Refugees and local residents prayed together, rebuilt communal institutions and struggled to maintain Jewish observance amid wartime uncertainty. By Passover 1781, Mikveh Israel had grown to roughly 500 souls, the largest gathering of Jewish families the young nation had yet seen.

Passover posed particular challenges. Even in peacetime, obtaining the foods required for the seder was difficult in colonial America. Wartime disruptions made it far harder.

Matzah could not simply be purchased. Mikveh Israel built a makeshift brick oven in a rented yard near Cherry Street, where matzah was baked by hand under Seixas's supervision.

Kosher wine was equally difficult to obtain. Families often relied on sweet raisin wine or juice made by soaking raisins in water and allowing them to release their flavor. The resulting drink served for Kiddush and the seder's four cups.

Kosher meat also required planning. Trained ritual slaughterers were scarce, supplies were uncertain, and food often arrived late.

Under such conditions, Passover became a communal effort. Synagogues helped organize matzah baking and food distribution, while wealthier members assisted poorer families. These efforts reflected more than necessity. They expressed a determination to preserve Jewish life despite hardship.

At the same time that Jews retold the story of the Exodus, the colonies themselves were fighting for independence. The themes of freedom, redemption and perseverance must have resonated deeply with families living through war.

Many Jews supported the patriot cause. Merchants supplied goods to the Continental Army, soldiers served alongside their neighbors, and Haym Salomon later became renowned for helping finance the revolutionary effort. Yet the most enduring contribution of these early American Jews was neither political nor military. It was their determination to continue living as Jews without compromise.

As American Jewry grew, however, it often grew weaker in spirit. By the late 19th century, the Lower East Side had become a vibrant center of Jewish life, yet assimilation and economic pressures threatened religious commitment.

Then, in 1940, the Sixth Rebbe of Lubavitch, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, arrived in America after escaping Nazi Europe. Looking at a growing but spiritually drifting community, he recognized within it the same strength that had sustained Jewish life during the Revolutionary era. He worked to rekindle that spirit.

His son-in-law and successor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, expanded that mission worldwide. In 1954, he launched the matzah campaign to ensure that no Jew, regardless of location or background, would be left without matzah or a place at the seder table. The humble matzah of the Revolutionary era and the Rebbe's global campaign are linked by a shared idea—that freedom is expressed through observance.

What had once been a logistical challenge for a handful of wartime refugees became a global movement. Today, volunteers distribute matzah to isolated Jews around the world, and public seders are held in communities large and small.

On July 4, 2026, the United States will mark the 250th anniversary of its founding. 250 years after the Declaration of Independence, the same determination that inspired those early American Jews to hold a seder under the most difficult circumstances remains alive. Their legacy endures wherever a Jew receives matzah, joins a seder and asks once again: "Why is this night different from all other nights?"



The land shall be divided by lot. (Num. 26:55)
The Land of Israel has different areas: mountains, valleys, fields, orchards, etc. When one person received his share in the mountains and another person in a valley, or one received cornfields and another orchards, this division of the physical Land of Israel reflected the person's individual relationship to the spiritual Land of Israel. This means that everyone has something unique that relates specifically to him or her in his spiritual service. *(Likutei Sichot)*

Let the L-rd, G-d of all living souls, appoint a man over the congregation (Num. 27:16)
Such was Moses' plea before G-d: Our Father, as You are the G-d of all living souls -to the righteous and evil alike- so may You please grant Your people a leader who will deal fairly with "all living souls" who will love each Jew equally.
(Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev)

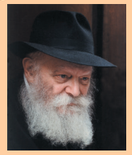
It is a continual burnt offering which was offered at Sinai (Num. 28:6)
A continual burnt-offering hints to the "hidden love" which every Jew has. This love is continuous, it never ceases.
(Ohr HaTorah)



8:12 PM *Candle Lighting Time*
NY Metro Area
18 Tammuz // July 3
Torah Portion *Pinchas*
Ethics: Ch 6
Shabbat ends 9:20 PM

Dedicated in honor of the Rebbe's Shluchim
Rabbi Zalman and Chanie Liberow
on the purchase of the new Chabad House of Flatbush.
May you continue to illuminate your surroundings with the Rebbe's message and may we all merit, through the increase of Torah, mitzvos, and acts of goodness and kindness, to witness the coming of Moshiach Now.

to dedicate an issue call (718) 778 6000



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

In this week's Torah portion, Pinchas, we read about the regular sacrifices brought on the Temple altar. There were daily, Shabbat, new month and festival offerings.

Every day, two yearling lambs were brought as "constant burnt offerings. The first you should do in the morning, and the second you should do in the afternoon."

What is the significance of bringing one in the "morning" and one in the "afternoon"? What lessons could we take from this constant burnt offering, for our relationship with G-d, and for our personal relationships?

The Hebrew word for sacrifice is "korban" which comes from the word "karov," close. The idea here is to bring yourself closer, strengthen your connection with G-d.

This must be "constant." G-d wants us to work on developing our relationship with Him every day.

How do you get closer to G-d? By being a "burnt offering." Burnt offerings were unique. Whereas with other sacrifices, only parts were burnt on the altar, the burnt offering was entirely consumed. G-d wants us to give our total self to him. To be open and vulnerable and to allow our entire self to be consumed, becoming one with G-d.

"Morning" is symbolic of the good times, when the light of G-d shines bright. At these times things are easy, there are no obstacles to overcome. "Afternoon" is the hard times, when the sun is going down and obstacles make G-d seem distant. Even in these dark times of exile we need to come closer. The darker it is, the greater the effort we need to give to connect. The bond we forge in these dark times, is beyond anything we could have created in times of light.

Ultimately the light will return but because of the closeness we have developed, the light will be greater than anything we could have imagined.

The same is true for personal relationships. To get closer you must be "constant," you must work on your relationship every day. Give your entire self to your other, allowing yourself to be open and vulnerable. This is easy when things are fine. However, it is the persistence and effort in times of difficulty that will take your relationship to a whole new level. Deeper, stronger and more wonderful than anything you could have imagined.

Struggling with ALS has been a tremendous strain on my family, especially on my wife. Nevertheless, it has brought us closer as a family and as a couple. And for that I am thankful.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

A Nation Born of Gratitude

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

As America approaches its 250th anniversary, we are invited to pause and reflect on a profound question: What is the secret of this nation's strength?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe often spoke about the unique role of the United States in history. He saw America not merely as a political entity or an economic powerhouse, but as a nation founded upon a moral vision rooted in the belief that human rights come from a Higher Power.

The Declaration of Independence does not grant rights; it recognizes that they are endowed by the Creator.

This simple but revolutionary idea—that every human being possesses inherent dignity because he or she is created by God—lies at the heart of the American experiment.

The founders understood that liberty cannot survive without moral responsibility.

The Rebbe arrived on American shores in 1941, the very year Congress officially established July 4th as a federal holiday. He often pointed to the remarkable opportunities this country provided. For Jews fleeing persecution and oppression, America became a refuge. For Torah life, it became fertile ground. And for the broader world, it became a beacon of liberty and moral possibility.

Yet the Rebbe emphasized that gratitude is not simply about appreciating the past. Gratitude carries responsibility. In a message marking America's anniversary, the Rebbe stressed the importance of recognizing the blessings we enjoy in this country.

Not only material prosperity, but the deeper gifts that are so easily taken for granted: freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, respect for human dignity, and the opportunity for people of different backgrounds to live together and contribute to the common good.

This is especially meaningful to Jews. The very name Yehudi (Jew) derives from hoda'ah, gratitude and acknowledgment.

To be a Jew is to recognize that life itself is a gift.

And gratitude, the Rebbe taught, must lead to action.

When we appreciate a blessing, we do not simply enjoy it—we ask ourselves how to use it.

If we are blessed with freedom, how can we use that freedom to strengthen our communities? If we are blessed with opportunity, how can we use it to help others?

As America marks 250 years, this is perhaps the most fitting response: not complacency, not cynicism, but gratitude coupled with responsibility.

America is not perfect. No nation is. But the greatness of a nation is measured not by perfection, but by its commitment to ideals greater than itself.

On this historic anniversary, let us give thanks—for the freedoms we enjoy, for the opportunities we have been given, and for the Divine providence that has guided this nation.

And let us recommit ourselves to ensuring that America's highest values continue to illuminate the path forward for generations to come.



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