

Passover and the Holocaust

Contributed by [School of Adaptive Agriculture](#)

Source:

Erev Pesah 1943. The battle of the Warsaw Ghetto started on the first night of Pesah. For twenty-eight shattering days, while the world watched in silence, a handful of men, women and children pitted their fragility against the massed might of the Nazi war machine. Although the flames have long been extinguished, the embers still smolder. For Pharaohs come and Pharaohs go: the Sennaracheribs, the Belshazzars, the Hamans. But the Freedom Fighters of the Ghetto will live forever, fiery testimony to the love of liberty kindled by the Exodus. Once more the Covenant People had kept the faith.

Master of the Universe, I do not know what questions to ask. I do not expect you to reveal Your secrets to me. All I ask is that You show me one thing—what this moment means to me and what You demand of me. I do not ask why I suffer. I ask only this: Do I suffer for Your sake?

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev

In the Warsaw Ghetto it's Pesah once more.

The cup of Elijah is filled to the brim.

The faithful recount the deliverance of yore.

But in storms the Angel of Death, baleful, grim.

As always the barking of Germans is heard.

As always the snarling of mad dogs of hate.

They have come here these jackbooted Pharaohs, to herd

Israel's innocent lambs to their terrible fate.

But never again will Jews tolerate taunts,

Never again obey death-bearing orders.

The doorposts tonight will be crimson with blood,

The blood of the murderers, freedom's destroyers.

Bunim Heller

The Jews in Bergen-Belson had no matzoh for Pesah 1944. It was decided that it was permissible to eat hametz, and that the following prayer should be recited before eating.

"Our Father in Heaven, behold, it is evident and known to You that it is our desire to do Your will and to celebrate the festival of Pesah by eating matzoh and by observing the prohibition against hametz. But our hearts are pained that the enslavement prevents us from doing so, and our lives are in danger. Behold, we are ready to fulfill Your commandment. 'And you shall live with by them and not die by them.' Therefore, our prayer to You is that You may keep us alive, and save us, and rescue us speedily so that we may observe Your commandments and do Your will and serve You with a perfect heart. Amen."

On this Seder night, we recall with anguish and with love our martyred brothers and sisters, the six million Jews of Europe who were destroyed at the hands of a tyrant more fiendish than Pharaoh. Their memory will

never be forgotten. Their murderers will never be forgiven.

Trapped in ghettos, caged in death camps, abandoned by an unseeing or uncaring world, Jews gave their lives in acts that sanctified God's name and the name of his people Israel. Some rebelled against their tormentors, fighting with makeshift weapons, gathering the last remnants of their failing strength in peerless gestures of courage and defiance. Others went to their death with their faith in God miraculously unimpaired.

Unchecked, unchallenged, evil ran rampant and devoured the holy innocents. But the light of the Six Million will never be extinguished. Their glow illumines our path. And we will teach our children and our children's children to remember them with reverence and with pride.

We invite the souls of all who are missing, the souls of all who were snatched from our midst, to sit with us together at the Seder. The invitation was uttered by Seder celebrants in the Vilna Ghetto in 1942...and we repeat it tonight. For on this night all Jews are united in history and in hope. We were all in Mitzrayim. We were all at Sinai. We were all in the hell that was the Holocaust. And we will all be present at the final redemption.

Ani ma'amin

I believe with all my heart

In the coming of the Messiah

And even though he may tarry,

I will wait each and every day

For his arrival

Maimonides, 12th century

I believe in the sun

Even when it is not shining.

I believe in love

Even when I do not feel it.

I believe in God

Even when he is silent.

Jews in Germany, 1939