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War and Peace at Passover
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I have been doing research in Jerusalem since January and I told my Wyoming friends, Linda and Jerry Slutsky that I would like to attend a Passover Seder. After all, I'm living in Jerusalem, in the Jewish state of Israel. Orthodox Judaism flourishes here, in addition to "secular" Judaism. Pesach, the holy days that include Passover and the Day of the Feast, is not only of great significance, Jews consider it one of their most enjoyable religious festivals. Besides, the stores took everything containing yeast or leaven off the shelves for the holiday period. No bread, no spaghetti, and no cereal; I could use a good meal.

Jerry and Linda graduated from UW in the mid-1970s and have lived in Israel since. Their children were born and raised here. One son is now a tank commander in the Israeli army, conscripted like all males - with the exception of the 220,000 male Yeshiva 'students' exempted in order to spend their time in religious education - and females in Israel. Linda and Jerry would be gone, so she made arrangements for me to have Seder with friends, Elisheva and her husband Michael. They came to Israel from New Jersey in the early 1970s, in the flush of Israel's victories in the Six Day War when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza.

I arrived on time and was warmly greeted by the family -- Grandfather Levi, a retired rabbi, and his wife Dorothy, also immigrants from the United States in the 1970s, and Elisheva and Michael's fourth son, Zeev. At age 18, he was now in the army and about to begin boot camp.

Levi sat at one end and conducted the service. I sat next to him and Zeev sat next to me. For three hours we read and sang from the Haggadah liturgy, recounting the story of the people of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, their departure under Moses' leadership, the wandering in the desert, and their final arrival in Canaan. It is a story that revives their faith and reminds them of being God's chosen people.

Passover Seder is, as the word *le-haggid* means, "to tell." It is also about remembering. The

telling and remembering reaffirm the values of Judaism: freedom, compassion, morality, and most of all a connectedness to the Jewish family. Levi was my interpreter, helping me with the English translation of the service said entirely in Hebrew. While I knew very little and forgot a great deal more, I took away a sense of the spirited inquiry and respect for the odyssey of these Jews, now at home in Israel.

Levi was as wise a guide as his soon-to-be-soldier grandson was spirited. Zeev led all the singing. He also played the part of the youngest child in asking the four "childish" questions from the Haggadah that reveal the wisdom of the faith.

We washed our hands, ate the egg in salt water, the matzah (unleavened bread), and the bitter herb. We drank the four cups of wine. We celebrated with a wonderful meal. And in the end we gave thanks for the redemption of the Jewish people, recited several psalms, the Hallel, and concluded by singing the repetitive Nirtzah song.

Only later did I learn that more than two dozen people had been killed by a bombing in Netanya while celebrating the Passover Seder in a large restaurant. A day later Israeli tanks rolled into Ramallah. Thus began the siege of the first of several Palestinian towns in the West Bank, the land occupied by Israel since 1967, the land that someday will become the nation of Palestine, and the home of three million currently stateless people.

At Elisheva and Michael's Passover Seder I sat between a soldier and a rabbi. What could be more symbolic of the current state of Israel?

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