# Considering "Next Year in Jerusalem"

*By Dasee Berkowitz*

New York (JTA) - On a recent trip to Jerusalem, my son decided that his favorite color was gold. Whenever he's asked why, he replies with a wry smile befitting a five-year-old.

"Jerusalem is the city of gold, of course," he says.

When we told him our family was moving to Israel this summer, he was quite pleased.

"Ima, will we live there until I'm a grown-up?" he asked.

That's the idea, we nodded.

While I know what my family will mean when we reach the end of the Passover Seder this year and say "Next Year in Jerusalem," for those not making the trek to the Holy Land anytime soon, what do these words mean? Are we being disingenuous? Or, as the Rabbis encourage with every other part of the Haggadah, are we expounding, embellishing, interpreting, and reading ourselves into the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

The end of the Haggadah, with the promise to arrive "next year in Jerusalem," is just as ripe for exploration as the beginning.

I am always struck when Israelis, especially Jerusalemites, say "Next year in Jerusalem" with the same intention as their Diaspora brethren. Jerusalem surely cannot only represent a physical destination. It must represent more: an ideal, a hope, a possibility.

In the language of the Haggadah, the land of Israel and Jerusalem represent the final stage of redemption. When we lift the four cups of wine during the seder, we are giving ritual expression to the four stages that the Jewish people move through, with God as their guide, to reach freedom and leave Egyptian slavery in the dust.

The Torah explains (Exodus 6:6-8), "I [God] will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt" (cup 1); "I will deliver you out from their bondage" (cup 2); "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm" (cup 3); and "I will take you to me for a people" (cup 4). But there is a fifth mention of redemption just a few verses later in the narrative: "And I will bring you into the land (of Israel)."

Arriving to the land is the final stage of redemption and corresponds to the cup of Elijah, the prophet who is said to be the one who ushers in messianic times. The cup, untouched yet filled with wine to the brim, represents the future ahead, filled with possibilities and promises for peace on earth.

As the late Rabbi David Hartman writes in "The Leader's Guide to the Family Participation Haggadah: A Different Night," "The cup is poured, but not yet drunk. Yet the cup of hope is poured every year. Passover is the night for reckless dreams; for visions about what a human being can be, what society can be, what people can be, what history may become. That is the significance of 'Le'shanah ha'ba'a b'Yerushalayim' [Next year in Jerusalem]."

Now that we are freed from the bondage in Egypt, we are called to embrace our biggest dreams, and our wildest aspirations for ourselves, for Israel and for the world.

Or when we say "Next year in Jerusalem," are we referring to a more modest endeavor?

There is a midrash about the etymology of the word Jerusalem or Yerushalayim. The Rabbis look at the word "Yerusha," which means inheritance, and "ayim," which connotes doubling, and understand that there are two Jerusalems – a heavenly one ("Yerushalayim shel ma'alah") and an earthly one ("Yerushalayim shel ma'ata"). While the heavenly Jerusalem might refer to the possibilities of a world redeemed, an earthly one is rooted in the complexities of politics, economics, and daily life. It is a place filled with energy, vibrancy, and urgency.

In the late poet Yehuda Amichai's terms, Jerusalem is a place where its inhabitants are longing for God's presence. Jerusalem, he writes, is "saturated with prayers and dreams like the air over industrial cities. It's hard to breathe." And according to the Midrash, the earthly Jerusalem is the place where God will arrive even before reaching the heavenly Jerusalem. As the Midrash imagines God saying, "I will not come into the city of Jerusalem that is above until I first come into the city of Jerusalem that is below."

What does it mean to make earthly Jerusalem a place in which God — whatever God means for us - can enter and reside? Let us create partnerships with Israelis that help let a sense of godliness, justice and love permeate the city. Let us devote more time to learning more about the complexity of life in Israel through travel and research. Let's partner with Israelis working on the ground to improve society through education, social and economic equality, and religious pluralism. Let's read more Israeli literature and honor Israeli artists.

Or is Jerusalem a state of mind?

More than physical places, rabbis have noted that Egypt and Jerusalem represent two inner spiritual states. Egypt, or mitzrayim, has at its root "tsar," or narrowness. Egypt represents the places in which we live narrowly, where we feel constricted and confined. It is a state in which we are quick to anger, to react, to put our own ego needs before the needs of others.

Jerusalem, on the other hand, has at its root "shalem," or "wholeness." It is the feeling of expansiveness, when the disparate parts of ourselves weave together into a seamless whole.

As the Seder winds down and the matzah crumbs are swept off the table, let the question of "next year" continue to echo — with all its hopes, plans and the self-understandings of where Jerusalem resides for each one of us. ✡


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# From Farm to Seder Table: Locally Grown Matzah on the Rise

*By Talia Lavin*

New York (JTA) - In their small farmhouse bakery in Vermont, Doug Freilich and Julie Sperling work round the clock producing matzah in the period preceding Passover - a matzah that feels ancient and modern at once.

Using a mix of grain they grow on their own farm and wheat sourced from other local farmers, the couple create hundreds of pieces of the wholesome unleavened bread they call Vermatzah.

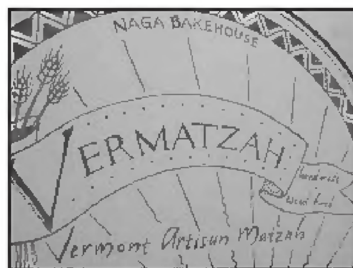
"The idea came because of our initial interest in growing grains, looking at them from the harvest to the baking in a very simple sense, and highlighting grains that have good flavor," Freilich told JTA. "We celebrate our own Passover each year, we go through the matzah-making ritual for both the spring awakening and remembering the storytelling of this holiday."

Freilich and Sperling, co-owners of the Naga Bakehouse in Middletown Springs, VT, are among American Jewish bakers looking at new ways to create matzah in ways that dovetail with the concerns of an age of foodies and locally sourced groceries.

They are joined in the process by their teenage children, Ticho and Ellis.

"Between the four of us, we are working each and every piece by hand: they are handmade with fingerprints, and heart, and soul," Freilich said. "Our matzahs are tinted and kissed by the fire of the wood oven."

At the end of the labor-intensive process, each matzah is wrapped in parchment paper and hand tied before being sent off - with a bonus seed packet of




wheatberries from the family's farm - to prospective customers throughout the country.

Vermatzah is primarily available in Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts, but Freilich says a huge increase in Web orders means the product is now making it across the United States.

Freilich and Sperling have been making Vermatzah for six years. Now others are beginning to embrace matzah's role in the farm-to-table trend.

The Yiddish Farm, an eclectic collective in Goshen, NY, that combines Yiddish language instruction with agriculture, is producing its own matzah this year baked with grain grown in its fields.

The matzah will be whole wheat and shmurah - a ritual designation for matzah that refers to a process of careful supervision which begins when the matzah's grain is in the field and doesn't stop tilll the matzah is baked. The process involves planting, combine-harvesting, reaping, milling, and sifting at the Yiddish Farm, according to the *Forward*.

The end result is a locavore's matzah dream that will travel from Goshen, in upstate New York, to Manhattan and New Jersey prior to Passover.

For Anne Kostroski, the owner of Crumb Bakery in Chicago, making her own matzah has less to do with food ideology than more practical matters.

"I don't like eating store-bought matzah because I think it tastes awful," she said, laughing.

Kostroski, 41, has been making her own signature matzah for nearly 10 years, since her conversion to Judaism in the mid-1990s.

"The matzah I make is made with honey, locally sourced eggs, black pepper and olive oil," Kostroski said. "It's flat and crunchy, but not as dry as the regular store-bought plain matzah. There's a hint of heat and sweetness that makes matzah more interesting."

For Kostroski, matzah making has been a part of her Jewish journey, even when she hasn't been able to attend synagogue regularly under the strain of a baker's life. Matzah creates a feeling of connection with history and tradition, she explains.

And her homemade matzah, which she sells at farmer's markets, her Chicago eatery, the Sauce and Bread Kitchen, and by pre-order, is made lovingly and painstakingly by hand.

"I make several hundred matzahs a year, mixed, rolled, and baked," she said. "One batch is maybe two dozen and it's really labor intensive."

Kostroski says demand is increasing, slowly but surely, year by year.

"I came across this recipe in 1995 and I started making it, and I've been making it ever since," Kostroski said. "People are not expecting different types of matzah — they expect something flavorless, and it doesn't have to be." ✡