

Rabbi David Ingber's Kabbalat Shabbat Sermon

March 27 2026

Transcribed by [TurboScribe](#). [Go Unlimited](#) to remove this message.

The Shabbat, the Shabbat takes me back 44 years. 44 years ago, my twin brother and I had our Bar Mitzvah in Israel. 44 years ago, the Shabbat, Yod Nisan, the 10th day of Nisan, which is my Hebrew birthday, and also, according to the tradition, as I said earlier tonight, was when Shabbat HaGadol, the great Shabbat, which is the first, right, the first great Shabbat, was on the 10th of Nisan.

This year, the 10th of Nisan is tonight and tomorrow. Shabbat HaGadol, time spirals on itself. Time spirals on itself.

That's a theme of a Haggadah from Dara Horn, a children's book that she just wrote, called One Little Goat, in which she writes about how each and every Seder takes place on top, temporally, of every other Seder that ever took place. A portal into every Seder. And in a wonderful graphic novel, she talks about how the Seder can't end until there's an Afikoman, until the hidden matzah is discovered.

And in this particular graphic novel, they've lost the Afikoman, and hence, the never-ending Seder, the last six months. But time spirals on itself, and that's one of the themes, of course, of Pesach itself. Pesach itself, Passover itself.

It's forever associated with memory. Zachor. Remember.

Asher tzedchem li mitzrayim, li bet avadim. Remember the exodus. The word in Hebrew for history is memory.

There is no Hebrew word for history. Historia, but no, that's English. To remember the exodus is to deeply remember that there's an eternal occurrence.

And we're always back where we started from, in some profound way. And so, in some way, it feels like this yontif, and this Pesach 2026, we're all back in that room. That room in Mitzrayim, in Egypt.

In that mamad. In that safe room that our ancestors were placed in on the 10th of Nisan. It's not only in Israel, where my family, and many of yours, are literally living their lives in and out of those mamadim, out of those safe rooms.

It's not only in places where sirens are real. We're here too, in a different way. There's a feeling of enclosure, of alertness, of scanning, of fear, of hypersensitivity, and hyperawareness.

Where is it safe to speak? Where is it safe to be visible? Where is it safe to stand as a Jew? Where is it safe to stand as a Zionist? Where is it safe to stand as an Israeli? The world feels, in so many places, like a collection of safe rooms, of mamadim. And I find myself wondering this yontif, this year, what kind of moment is this? What is this moment? And I imagine that some of you are feeling that, or maybe people online are thinking, what is this moment? Carrying together into this Pesach, that confusion, that anxiety, that constriction. And

maybe, maybe, a sense that you're not fully saying what you believe, or not even sure what you believe anymore.

We come into Pesach holding that. And that's the way it feels to be Jewish now. Exposed, complicated, isolated.

But wait, there's hope. In that question, what is this Jewish moment? What a great question. Such a Jewish question.

Quintessentially Jewish. Ma nishtana? Halay lazeh? What is this moment? We, Jews, who have a particularly powerful relationship with that dimension of time, we are finally attuned through its textures and its tones. And more often than not, in fact, in almost every moment that we find ourselves, we locate ourselves in a past that is present, and a present that is past.

What kind of moment is this? That's a Jewish question. And here's a Jewish answer. This moment is like the other moments.

This moment finds ourselves on that first Shabbos in that safe room having taken the bleeding loud, obnoxious God of Egypt into our homes, as Moses told us, and tying it to the bed, wondering, can our neighbors hear it? Will they knock on the door? Will it be safe for us? On the 10th of Nisan, we did what was asked of us. This was Shabbat HaGadol, and this is Shabbat HaGadol, and what was Gadol, what was great, was our courage. Our courage to go into the safe room, to do things that were asked of us.

This is this moment. In so many ways, like that OG Passover, we are there again. But let's be honest, if we're going to really learn about that OG Passover, let's really look at it.

Because that Saturday, and then the subsequent Seder on Wednesday night, that first Seder was not like our Seders. We didn't have a Seder with celebration. There was no Seder with matzo ball soup and chopped liver.

There was no expression of relief. Now we're free. We weren't free on that first Seder.

That first night, that first night, it wasn't about freedom, it wasn't about tambourines, it wasn't about songs of the sea. It was a night inside. Inside a home with the doors closed, instructions that were whispered, a strange, almost surreal ritual, unfolding under the pressure of fear.

Blood on the doorposts, sandals on our feet, staff in our hands, and a people waiting, listening, and holding their breath. There's a name that the Torah gives to that night, Le'el Shimorim. A night of vigilance.

A night of watching. It isn't a night of arrival. It is not Yetziat Mitzrayim.

It is not having taken us out of Egypt. It is a night that is suspended between terror and trust. And maybe that's the first thing we need to say about what this moment is in just the same way it is like that moment.

We are not after the exodus yet. We are inside the night. We are inside the night that was before it.

And if that's true, then this moment is not only frightening, it's also familiar. Because we know that we were holding the truth of our eventual redemption with the terror and the terror of being caught. That's one thing we remember at this moment.

We remember something else. We remember that as the Rebbe of Chernobyl, Menachem Nochum of Chernobyl writes on this week's Torah portion, that there are two kinds of exile. There's the exile of our people and the exile of the individual.

And we know those two acutely at this moment. The exile of our people is exactly what we are feeling. The sense that there is a horseshoe and we Jews are caught in the middle.

The sense of danger that we experience. That's the exile of the broader people. And the individuals too.

Who can say at this moment they aren't feeling katnut, smallness. A sense of something individually inside of us that is constricted. The Rebbe says that all movement on Passover is from katnut to gadlut.

From smallness to greatness. From something narrow to something expansive. From something degraded to something dignified.

The whole movement of Yitzchak Mitzrayim, the movement that is happening this weekend and these four days and always is from what we can't see. The small piece and the bigger picture that is gadol. And then the Rebbe says something remarkable.

He says that we know that on Pesach chametz, which is leavened bread is what we are not allowed to eat. And matzah unleavened bread is what we are commanded to eat. He said there is not much between those two words.

One being matzah the other being chametz. They share two letters. There are three letters.

You can hear it like Mitzrayim means narrow by the way. From Tzom meaning to fast. Mitzrayim, the narrow place.

Chametz. The only difference is this chet hay difference. Those who know the 8th letter of the alphabet it's kind of a closed lintel and mezuzah.

It's kind of like these two doorposts and a cover. And a hay is basically the same letter but with a little bit open in the corner. So he says, the Rebbe says the difference between freedom and slavery sometimes is just a little bit.

The difference between right and wrong is sometimes just a little bit. In fact, he goes on to say that if the Yetzirah, the evil inclination that part of us that keeps us in personal exile and a world in a broader exile were to be examined, he said that the Yetzirah, the evil inclination would never come to us and say, hey, look at this matzah. It's chametz.

It's more likely it will come along and say, look at this chametz. It's really matzah. It comes dressed up as what feels right.

It speaks in a language of, hey this is a mitzvah, this is a matzah. And the Rebbe goes on to say the movement from kadnut, smallness to gadlut, bigness is essentially being able to make a little hole a little opening that can turn chametz honestly into matzah. It can turn something narrow and constricted with a little bit of honesty and transparency into something that is liberating.

So here, back to the question what do they do in those safe rooms? So first, as I said they had trust and they had faith. They marked their doors. They took something internal and they made it external.

And this was not a small act. And every moment that we Jews now stand in our pride. Every moment that we declare I refuse to hide every single one of those moments is a kind of marking of our doors.

It's a presence. It's a refusal to disappear. It's a willingness to be seen and to show up even when it feels uncomfortable inside of those safe rooms in Tel Aviv and in Yerushalayim.

Our brothers and sisters are dancing at weddings in garages underneath ballistic missiles refusing to be covered into Jewish self-erasure. And we must do the same. The second thing they did is they told a story.

We sometimes think that stories don't matter, but then we forget the deepest lesson of Pesach narrative shapes the universe that we live in. One of the most remarkable things about the original Passover story is that it took place when they weren't free. They could tell a story and imagine that one day they would be.

That to tell a story not based on the limits of this moment but on the possibilities of the next one is our inheritance. Pesach and inside of our safe rooms we must tell stories that are not naive. They aren't a denial of fear.

But it's a resistance to those who narrate despair. We must tell stories of optimism and triumph at this moment. And the third thing that they did is that they stayed inside.

What does that mean? To stay inside. Moses says don't leave your house. This is the part we don't like to talk about.

Because we imagine that redemption is movement. Leaving. Going.

But the first instruction was to stay inside. Don't rush and don't scatter. Don't panic.

Hold the space. Stay with each other. Stay in the room.

Because not every moment calls for action and some moments just call for our presence. The strength not to run ahead of what is unfolding and that sometimes is very tough. Everything in us wants to leave the room but they stayed in the room.

These three moments the absolute unwillingness and resistance to self erasure to narrate a story that is not limited by the present moment but by the future possibilities and staying in the room staying in a relationship staying in that space are all expressions of that movement from smallness to bigness from the little chet to the hay and that's big work. On this Bar Mitzvah Parsha when I become a gadol I went from being small to big I wonder about that sometimes in my own personal journey in life about the marker in time that was Shabbat HaGadol that coincidence that is not coincidence I wonder about the Hebrew root of the word katnut and it's Hebrew word's root in gadlut the word katan in Hebrew like these little guys the word katan comes from the two letter Hebrew root kat which means something cut a piece something that is just a piece a child looks at a piece and they see the hole in it it's great a piece of time is eternity it's great they are trailing clouds of glory these little infinities but gadlut comes from the word gad which means a heap a little bit plus a little bit makes a lot that's our failing as adults we sometimes can't wait for the next piece and we lose the piece that we had children live in the moment but when you only live in the moment you're not gadol when you're in that safe room when all you know is that safe room and you don't know the future narration to be gadol to be gadol is to see a bigger picture to be gadol is to think that what is in front of you is not the whole thing and there is more yet to come to turn the chet of chametz into the hay of matzah means to leave enough room for breath and for spirit and for surprise that's what it is to be a gadol so on this Shabbat gadol 44 years as our brothers and sisters spend Shabbat running in and out of their mamadiv and out of their safe rooms as we prepare for our safe rooms as it were on Wednesday night a blessing into this space and into all Jewish spaces that we have faith have faith in our story have faith in our tradition have faith in one another have faith that we do have yet enough breath within us to turn chametz into matzah that little chet into a little hay by the way extra credit look how many times in the Haggadah the hay appears the word Haggadah itself is hay gimel dalet hay the same root as gadol the story of the Haggadah is a story of little pieces that are strung together into a Haggadah a bigger story with lots of hay lots of breath and energy and release may God bless us this year and in every subsequent year as we arrive back at this place that we will live in a world that is further down the road from the world in which we live in right this moment and that when we arrive back here again and again and again in years to come that we will be able to tell the same story but with different coordinates here in the present moment not the story that we are currently enmeshed in but a much much bigger gadol story may that be true for us and for our world hinei anochi sholeh lachem et aliyah ha-navi behold I will send to you says the prophet malakai that we'll read tomorrow I will send to you Elijah the prophet with nei before the coming of that great day yom ha-gadol the day of gadol the hanorah that awesome awesome big day please rise

Transcribed by [TurboScribe](#). [Go Unlimited](#) to remove this message.

Extra bit: In fact, he goes on to say that if the Yetzer haRa, the evil inclination, were to be examined, it would never come to us and say, "Hey, look at this *matzah*. It's *chametz*." It's more likely it will come along and say, "Look at this *chametz*. It's really *matzah*." It comes dressed up as what feels right. It speaks in friendly language of, "Hey this is a mitzvah," when it's really not.