

ורקת לעסל

Leaflet of Honey

Seder for Rosh HaShana

Blessings for the Jewish New Year

Dedicated to Mom and Dad (Meme & Nono)

for teaching me how.

By Tibi

Edited by Jennifer Balbes



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In this manuscript Tibi brings again his own life experience to the table with flare and good taste.

Tibi is an ambassador from a world in which few are aware of. Born In Beer-Sheva and speaking four languages: Hebrew, English, French and Arabic, Tibi relates his experiences growing up in the multicultural and multilingual world of Israel. His stories in his book "*Chicken Without a Head*" focus on his family, community and school at a very exciting time in the growing state. It is a time full of adventure for a youngster.

Presently Tibi is living with his wife in Trumbull, CT where he is a successful Israeli music and folkdance teacher and multimedia producer . He has one daughter, Sarah.

Warkat el Aas'l

The Seder for Rosh Hashana

My family celebrates Rosh Hashanah, in a tradition which has been followed by the Jews of Tunisia for many generations. On this eve of the Jewish New Year, we read from the "*Warkat El-Aasl*," which translates from the Arabic to "*Leaf of Honey*."

Each year as the holiday approached, the "*Leaf of Honey*" was distributed as a leaflet to the Jewish community in Tunisia. I still read from the original document brought from Tunisia by my grandparents. It presents prayers for the holiday together with the names of delicacies which express the symbolism found in each prayer. We call this service a "seder," like the Passover Seder, because we read each prayer and eat each symbolic dish as we go along.

The language used in the "*Leaf of Honey*" is a Hebrew dialect unique to the Jews of North Africa. It is derived from Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic and is written with Hebrew letters. There exists a letter not found in the Hebrew alphabet, a combination of the letters **Alef** and **Lamed**. We will see this letter many times in the following pages as it is used in the preposition "**El**" or "the," placed before the name of each symbolic fruit or vegetable.



A play on words is a constant theme throughout this service. There are many double meanings found in the Hebrew and Arabic, and even in my English translations. Tonight, we will read each prayer from the following pages, discuss its meaning and sample each symbolic dish.

I have included preparations for each of the delicacies so that you can recreate this service in your own homes in the coming years. Under no circumstances should you see my instructions as an obligation, each Tunisian Jewish family has its own unique preparations. I vary my recipes from year to year, yet always draw on my family's traditions. The examples I have presented have been tried and tested by my guests each year and have been proven very palatable!

Enjoy, and may you have a happy and sweet New Year.

Tibi

קדוש ליל ראש השנה



וּבְיוֹם שִׁמְחַתְכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם וּבְרֵאשֵׁי
חַדְשֵׁיכֶם וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּחֲצוֹת עַל
עֲלֵתֵיכֶם וְעַל זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן
לְפָנַי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אָנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

סְבְרֵי מִרְגָּנוּ • בְרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן :

בְרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם יִרְוּמָנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן
וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו • וְהִתֵּן לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בְּאַהֲבָה אֶת יוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן הַזֶּה • אֶת יוֹם מִזְבֵּחַ
מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה • יוֹם הַתְּרוּעָה בְּאַהֲבָה
מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זָכֹר לִיציאת מִצְרַיִם • וּדְבָרָךְ
מִלִּפְנֵי אִמָּת וּקְיָם לְעַד • בְרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מֶלֶךְ
עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ מִקְדֶּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן :

בְרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲנִינוּ
וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעֵנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה :

Kiddush for Rosh Hashanah



On your day of rejoicing, and your holidays and your months' beginnings, shall you sound your trumpets over your of fering and over your sacrifice and shall it be a commemoration in front of your God I am the Lord your God:

Rabbis and teachers; Blessed be you our God king of the universe creator of the fruit of the vine.

Blessed be you our god king of the universe that chose us from all people and raised us above all language; And sanctified us in his commandments; And you have given us, Lord our God, with love this day of remembrance ; This good day of holy reading; Day of the Call of the Trumpet with love holy reading to remember the exodus of Egypt; And your words, our king, are true and present forever; Blessed be you Lord our God king over all the land the sanctifier of Israel and the day of remembrance:

Blessed be you Lord our God king of the universe who granted us life and sustained us and brought us to this present time.



אשריתה | יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שתהא שנה זו הבאה
עלינו טובה ומתוקה כדבילה :



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-te-he Sha-nah zo-ha-ba-ah a-lei-noo to-vah
u-me-tu-kah kad-vei-lah:

Seder for Rosh HaShanah

El-Sricha Te'edah/Dveila Fig



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that this New Year that is coming upon us will be as sweet as the fig!



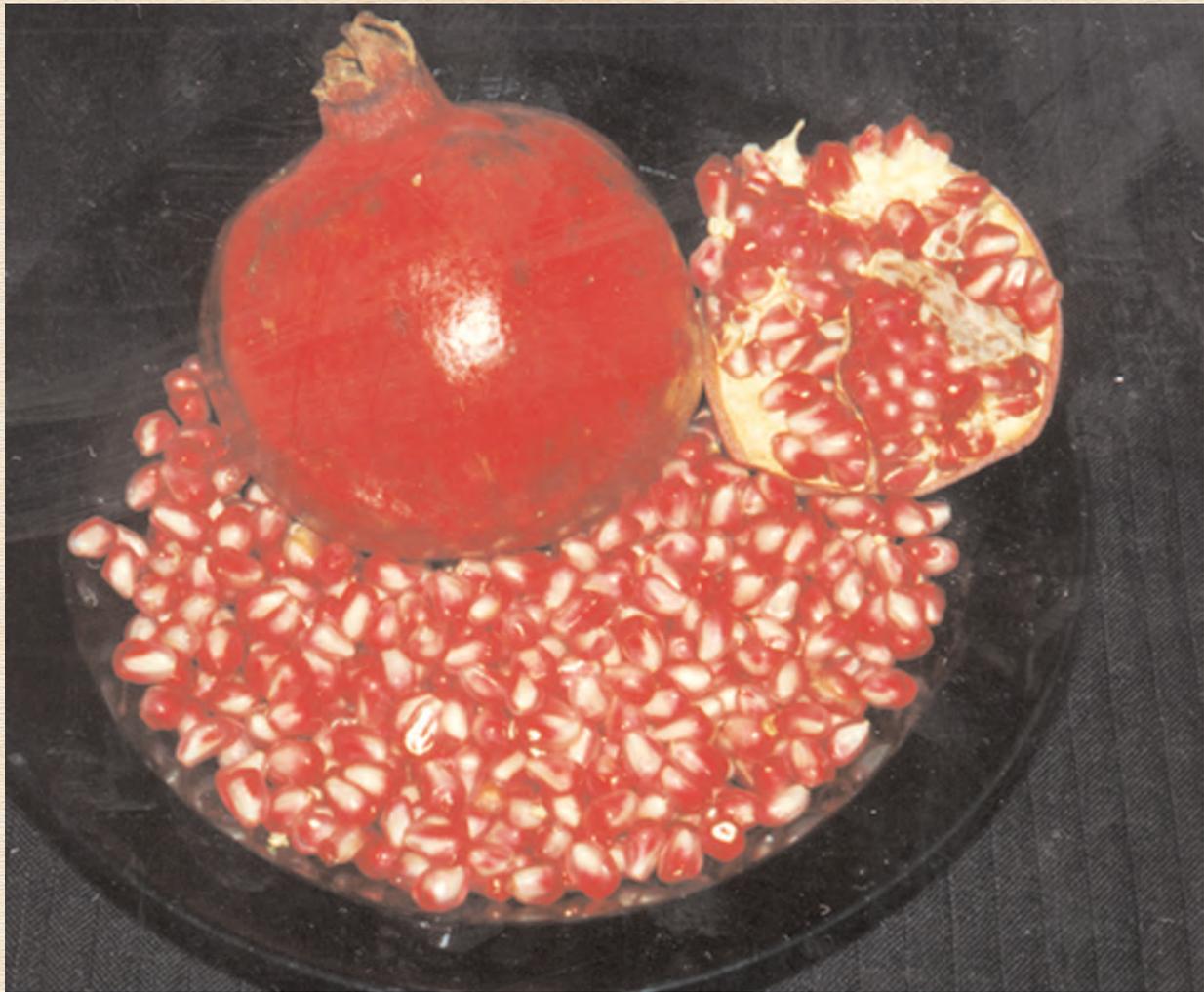
In this prayer, the fig's sweetness symbolizes our hope for a sweet year . It is my belief that the fig has an even greater meaning in this prayer, that this fruit's abundance of seeds represents the number of Jews we wish to have throughout the world.

I use both the fresh as well as the dried fig. I like to use the fresh fig which when cut open, readily displays the great number of the fruit's seeds. As fresh figs are not always available in the United States, you can use the dried figs alone. In fact, my mother advised me that "El Sricha" translates to dry fig, as opposed to fresh fig.

Preparation

Cut dried figs in halves and arrange them decoratively on a plate. If you can find fresh figs, halve them as well and place them next to the dried figs.

אדמאן | יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שירבו זכותינו כרמון :



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-yir-boo zkhu-yo-tei-noo ka-ri-mon:

El-Roman Rimmon Pomegranate



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that our rights will multiply as the pomegranate!

Until modern times, Jews historically have been deprived of basic civil rights. We were forbidden to own land, excluded from many professions and prohibited from living in neighborhoods together with gentiles.

This prayer expresses our ancestors' hope to gain those civil rights which were bestowed upon their neighbors.

The pomegranate is a brilliantly red fruit with a tough rind and a sweet or tart pulp, depending on the variety. The pulp covers many small seeds. When the fruit is cut open, the vast number of these small seeds is revealed, appearing as small red jewels. The abundant number of the pomegranate's seeds symbolizes our hope for the multiplication of our rights.

Preparation

Be careful! Handle this fruit gingerly as the bright red juice from its pulp stains! Cutting and breaking the fruit apart will release the juice; I recommend using an apron as well as covering your preparation area with newspaper .

Cut into the fruit gently with a sharp knife, either in halves or quarters, being careful not to cut all the way through. Use your hands to break apart the fruit; this allows the pomegranate to break apart naturally around its seeds, thus keeping the pulp and juice intact. Separate the seeds from the white connecting pulp inside the fruit. Be careful to remove all of the white pulp as it is very bitter . Place the seeds in a bowl. They may be eaten with a spoon, with a sprinkling of sugar if tart to the taste.

אתפאח
יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שתהא שנה זו הבאה
עלינו טובה ומתוקה כתפוח:



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-te-he Sha-nah zo ha-ba-ah a-lei-noo to-vah
u-me-tu-kah ka-ta-pu-ahh:

El-T'fach Tapu'ach Apple



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that this New Year that is coming upon us will be as sweet as the apple!



The fruit of the apple tree ripens at this time of the year. Here again, we eat a sweet fruit to express our hope for a sweet year .

Preparation

Slice sweet red or golden apples; arrange the slices on a plate in the shape of a pinwheel. In the center of the pinwheel, place a small bowl of honey .

Sprinkle orange or lemon juice over the apple slices in order to prevent the fruit from oxidizing and becoming brown.

Dip the apple in the honey and eat.

אגלגלאן | יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שירבו זכיותינו כשמשמין



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-yir-boo zkhu-yo-tei-noo ka-soom-soo-min:

El-G'ngran Soomsoom Sesame



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that our rights will multiply as the sesame!



Here again, we Jews are expressing our yearning for the basic civil rights afforded to others.

Sesame seeds are usually eaten as part of a dish, rarely are they consumed one at a time. My family eats a cookie made of sesame seeds and sugar. The abundant number of sesame seeds in this cookie symbolizes the numerous rights which we

seek for our people. Our hope for a sweet year also is expressed with the sweetness of the sugar.

Preparation

Mix 1 lb. sesame seeds, 10 tablespoons sugar, 8 tablespoons oil, 4 tablespoons flour and two eggs. Spread on a cookie tray lined with oiled wax paper. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes or until golden brown. Cut to size while still hot and serve at room temperature.

אָקֶרֶע | יְהִי רִצּוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתִּקְרַע רוֹעַ גִּזְרֵי דֵינֵינוּ
וְיִקְרְאוּ לְפָנֶיךָ זְכוּיֹתֵינוּ



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-tik-raa ro-aa gzar di-nei-noo ve-yi-kar-oo
le-fa-nei-kha zkhu-yo-tei-noo:

El-Kra Dla'at Squash



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that you would rip and (s)quash the decree and may our rights be read in your presence!

The hope expressed in this prayer is that all decrees against Jews, proclaimed by governments and the church, should be torn into pieces, or dismissed. In the prayer, the Hebrew verb kra is used with the meaning to rip, or to tear. In Arabic, squash is called kra. You can hear the similarity of the Hebrew and Arabic words. Thus, we eat squash to tie together the symbolism of the use of the word kra in the prayer.

I see an additional play on words which is evident in the English translation of this prayer. In English, we might translate the Hebrew word kra to squash, as in to squash or put down the decrees outlawing the rights of Jews.

Preparation

Preparation of this dish is time-consuming, but as you will taste, it is well worth every minute of labor. First, prepare the honey sauce, making enough for the other dishes which require this for preparation.

Honey Sauce: Mix 1 cup sugar, 1/2 cup honey, 1/2 cup lemon juice, and 2 cups water. Bring all ingredients to a boil in a large pot. Leave the sauce on a low simmer; you will use it in the preparation of other dishes.

Squash: Bring one gallon of water to a boil in a large pot, and then lower to a simmer. Prepare a large pot of oil for deep-frying. Cut the squash into bite-sized pieces and simmer in the hot water for approximately five minutes or until soft. Be careful not to cook for too long as the squash will break apart. After removing the squash from the water, leave the water on a low simmer for use in the preparation of other dishes. Prepare a bowl of flour and a bowl of beaten egg. Dip the squash first in the flour, then into the beaten egg. Deep fry it in the oil. When slightly crispy, remove from the oil and dip in the honey sauce. Let the pieces of squash dry on a paper towel and bring to room temperature for serving.

אסלק | יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שישתלקו אויבינו וכל
מבקשי רעתנו מפנינו :



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-yis-tal-koo son-ei-noo mi-pa-nei-noo:

El-S'Ik Selek Beet



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that you would beat our enemies and expel them from our presence!

The verb salek or "to expel" is used in this prayer to express our wish that God drive away our enemies. In Hebrew, selek, or beet, is derived from the same root as this verb. Thus, the vegetable we use to represent the request made in this prayer is the beet.



I find an additional play on words in this prayer when I contemplate the English translation. In English, the word beet sounds like the word beat. In the translation, we ask God to beat our enemies from our presence.

The sugar beet is the sweet root of a biennial plant. As it grows throughout two years, it serves as a symbol for both the year which has passed as well as for the coming year.

Preparation

Use the green leaves of the beet. The leaves are rich in iron and are sometimes used as a substitute for spinach.

Prepare the beet in the same way as the squash, softening the leaves for only one minute in the simmering water.

Again, dip the leaves in flour and egg, and deep fry until crispy.

Dip in the honey sauce. Serve at room temperature.

אָפּוּל | יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שִׁיפּוּלוּ שְׁנֵאֵינוּ לְפָנֶינוּ :



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-yi-po-loo son-ei-noo le-fa-nei-noo:

El-Phol Pol Fava Bean



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that all those who hate us may fall in our presence!

Fava beans are called fool in Arabic and in Hebrew, pol. Both words sound similar to the Hebrew verb pol which means to fall.

For two thousand years Jews have suffered from the hatred of their enemies. In this prayer, we express our wish that our enemies should vanish from our presence, or at least, fall humiliated in front of us.



Preparation

Soak 1 cup of fava beans overnight in a bowl of water .

Boil the beans in the water (add more water if necessary), adding 1 teaspoon of ground cumin, for one hour.

Chop a medium-sized onion. Saute the onion with 1 tablespoon of sugar until lightly browned.

Add the fava beans and a pinch of salt to the onions, continuing to saute until golden brown in color. Sprinkle the beans with a pinch of cumin and chill. Serve cold.

אתום | יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שיתמו איבינו ושנאינו
וכל מבקשי רעתנו מפנינו :



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-yi-ta-moo oi-vei-noo ve-son-ei-noo ve-khol
me-vak-shey ra-a-tei-noo mi-pa-nei-noo:

El-Tom Shoom Garlic



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that all of our enemies, those who hate us and those who wish evil upon us, be banished and brought to their end.

In this prayer, we ask God to end our enemies' hatred of Jews. The word used in Hebrew tom, means end or completion. Tom, in Arabic, is garlic. We thus use garlic to symbolize our desire for the end of our enemies' hostility .



An additional play on the words of this prayer comes to light when looking at the Hebrew word for garlic, shoom. In Hebrew , shoom also means none...no more enemies, no more hatred...

Preparation

Prepare this dish last. Mix the remaining flour and egg together to make a batter. Add a pinch of garlic powder.

Crush as much garlic as you can tolerate and mix into the batter , adding salt to taste.

Deep fry until crisp. Dip in the honey sauce and leave to dry .

Serve at room temperature.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּהֵא שָׁנָה זוֹ הַבְּאֵה
עָלֵינוּ טוֹבָה וּמְתוֹקָה כַּדְּבַשׁ
מִרְאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרֵית שָׁנָה :

אעסל



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-noo she-te-he Sha-nah zo ha-ba-ah a-lei-noo to-vah
u-me-tu-kah ka-dvash mi-rei-shit ha-sha-nah ve-ad a-kha-rit
sha-nah:

El-Aas' l Dvash Honey



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that this new year that is coming upon us will be as sweet as the Honey, from the beginning of the year to its conclusion!

What could be sweeter than honey? If the use of the fig and the apple in our prayers did not clearly enough represent our desire for a sweet year, the symbolism of honey cannot be mistaken. We have used honey throughout this service as the sauce used in preparation of many of our dishes contains the sweet substance. In addition to being very sweet, honey is also sticky messy and not really palatable by the spoonful. We can dip challah, or again the apple, into the honey.

My family uses the quince, a fruit very much like the apple but harder and tarter. We continue to this day to carry on my grandmother's tradition of preparing the fruit in a very special way. She made delicious quince preserves by cooking the quince with honey. Tunisian Jews also prepare the quince for Yom Kippur. Just before Rosh Hashanah, we grind cloves, spreading a generous amount on a wet, white cloth. We place the quince on the cloth and wrap it tightly. On Yom Kippur, we open the cloth and smell the quince, now fragrant from the cloves, to help us through the fast.

Preparation

Cover the bottom of a large pot with approximately 1/2 inch of water. Steam 1 lb. of sliced quince in the water until soft. Add 1 lb. sugar and 1/2 cup lemon juice. Stir while simmering until foam appears, approximately 10 minutes. Remove from heat, chill and serve.

Alternatively, slice the quince, dip it in honey and eat. Note: after slicing, sprinkle the quince with orange or lemon juice to prevent the fruit from oxidizing and becoming brown.

אָרַם
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁנִּהְיָה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא
לְזָנָב וְתִזְכּוֹר לָנוּ אֵילֹוֹ שֶׁל
יִצְחָק אֲבִינוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם :



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-nu she-ni-hi-ye le-rosh ve-lo le-za-nav ve-tiz-kor
la-noo ei-lo sel yits-hak a-vi-noo a-lav ha-sha-lom:

El-Ras Rosh Head



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that we may be a head and not a tail and that we may commemorate the ram of Isaac our father, may he rest in peace!

Isaac's life was spared when Abraham found the ram. Abraham sacrificed this ram rather than offering his son, Isaac, to God. This prayer reminds us of the sacrifices we have made, as Jews, throughout the two thousand years of our existence.



Preparation

Ideally, a ram's head would be used for this service. It is not easy, however, to procure such an item nor is it an aesthetic addition to a dinner table. For this part of the service, my mother makes a soup out of meat extracted from the head of a ram. This meat is not easily found in a supermarket in the U.S.A. thus we will combine this blessing with the next, serving the fish with its head, but without its tail. On our Table we create a head using an eggplant and roots.

אחות | יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי
אבותינו שנפרה ונרבה כדגים:



Ye-hi ra-tson mi-le-fa-ne-kha A-do-nai E-lo-hei-noo ve-E-lo-hei
a-vo-tei-nu she-nif-re ve-nir-beh ka-da-gim:



El-Hote Dag Fish



May it be in your favor, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that we may be fruitful and multiply like fish!

This prayer, expressing our hope as Jews to increase in numbers, is in keeping with God's promise to Abraham. In number, Jews are one of the smallest religious groups in the world. We would like to multiply in number and become one of the largest religious groups, thereby seeing fulfillment of the promise made to our ancestors.

We have suffered much persecution but have maintained our Jewish identity, thus surviving longer than any other religious group. Fish is one of God's creations which multiply at a very fast rate; eating the fish symbolizes our hope to multiply in number.



Preparation

Remove the tail of the fish, leaving its head intact (this is symbolic of our wish to be a head and not a tail).

Bake, boil or fry the fish for serving using spices and/or a sauce of your choice. A sweet sauce enhances the theme of our yearning for a sweet year and adds a nice touch to the end of our service.

Leg of Lamb

The secret for this dish is in the sauce.

But first you have to rub olive oil on the leg and marinate the leg in garlic and crushed mint mixed with soy sauce, ginger and paprika (to your taste). I also poke holes in the meat and insert small slivers of garlic where ever I can.

Let it marinate in a plastic bag for a day .

Preheat the oven and broil the leg (on a rack on top of potatoes onion and water) 15 - 20 minutes each side.

Lower the heat to 300 and cover and leave it for 20 - 30 minute for each pound (depending on the way you cover the meat -- if it is tight you can keep it longer) up to 6 hours.

Every hour you may baste it with the sauce that you will prepare next.

Combine:

- A jar of pepper jelly
- A jar of mint jelly
- 1/2 cup of mint chopped small
- 1/2 cup of soy sauce
- 3 tablespoon of olive oil
- A tablespoon of crushed fresh ginger
- 3 crushed cloves of garlic
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/3 cup of balsamic vinegar

Boil the mixture for a minute and let it cool to room temp. You may keep this sauce for reuse if you like.

When serving the lamb pour warm sauce on top of portions individually .



Salad Dressing

A small jar of marinated artichokes hearts

TSP raspberry jelly

TBSP soy sauce

3 TBSP balsamic vinegar

1/3 cup olive oil

1 TSP ginger powder

Blend it all together and spread on top of salad with roasted sesame seeds.

Chicken for Kaparot

From the book "Chicken Witout a Head" by Tibi

I'll tell you this story if you promise not to tell anyone and keep it a secret between us.

Meme Mili walked in Friday afternoon, struggling through the door with her suitcase and a large, flat cardboard box that was shaking from side to side. Oddly, every time it moved it made a chirping noise, and it sounded like something was sliding inside.

"Let me help you, Meme," I said and rushed to the door.

"Take the suitcase, please," she answered. "Thanks."

"You're welcome," I said, "what's in the box?"

"All in good time," she said with a smile. "It's a holidays gift for you and your brother."

Mom walked in the room looking at the odd box and said, "Now what is this? Welcome and happy New Year Ma"

Right behind her was Avi, my brother, yelling, " Meme, Meme, what did you get us?"

We took Meme's case to the bed room and she put the box on the floor. The noise in the box was getting louder. Then she opened it. I couldn't believe my eyes; neither could Mom or Avi.

There were 40, maybe 50, little yellow fuzzy round chicks. They made so much noise when the box was opened.

"Oh, how cute!" I said.

"Oh, my god! You're crazy," Mom said. Avi reached out to grab them when Mom stopped him saying, "Don't, it's not a toy." She grabbed his hand just before he got to them or he probably would have crushed some. Avi didn't understand his strength.

That night we kept the chicks in the shower. Early the next morning Dad and I started to build a chicken coop. First we dug holes to put the posts in. Next we stretched the chicken wire around the posts.

"You see," Dad explained, "the net has to be fine so the chicks can't get out and the weasels can't get in."

"Dad,"

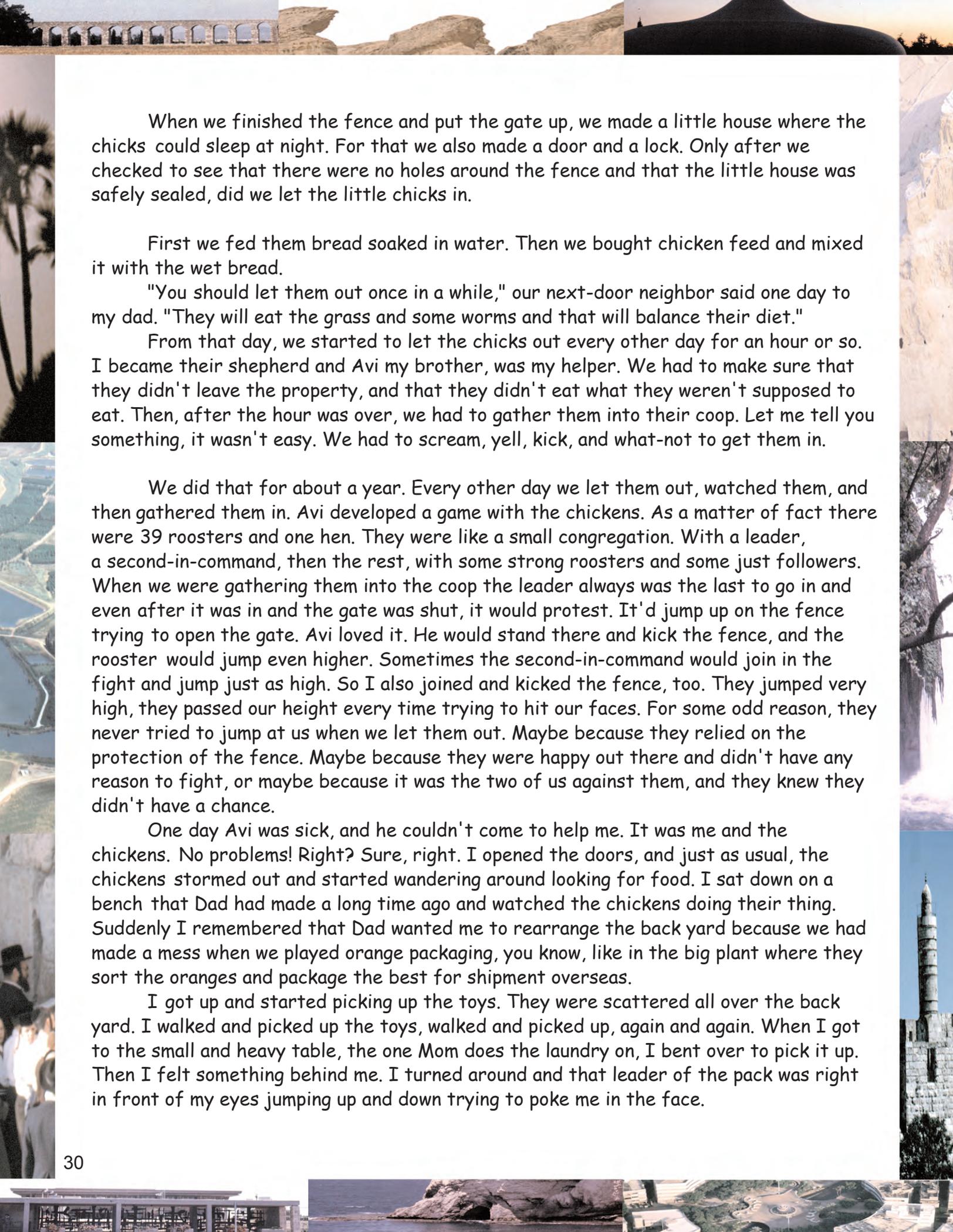
"What?"

"What is a weasel?"

"It's a skinny long animal that likes to eat chicks, or even big chickens. It catches them by the neck, sucks the blood out of them, and then it eats them."

"Wow!"

"And it's a very smart animal, too. It can go through very fine wire fence, or sneak under the fence. That is why we are putting this board on the ground to hold the fence down."



When we finished the fence and put the gate up, we made a little house where the chicks could sleep at night. For that we also made a door and a lock. Only after we checked to see that there were no holes around the fence and that the little house was safely sealed, did we let the little chicks in.

First we fed them bread soaked in water. Then we bought chicken feed and mixed it with the wet bread.

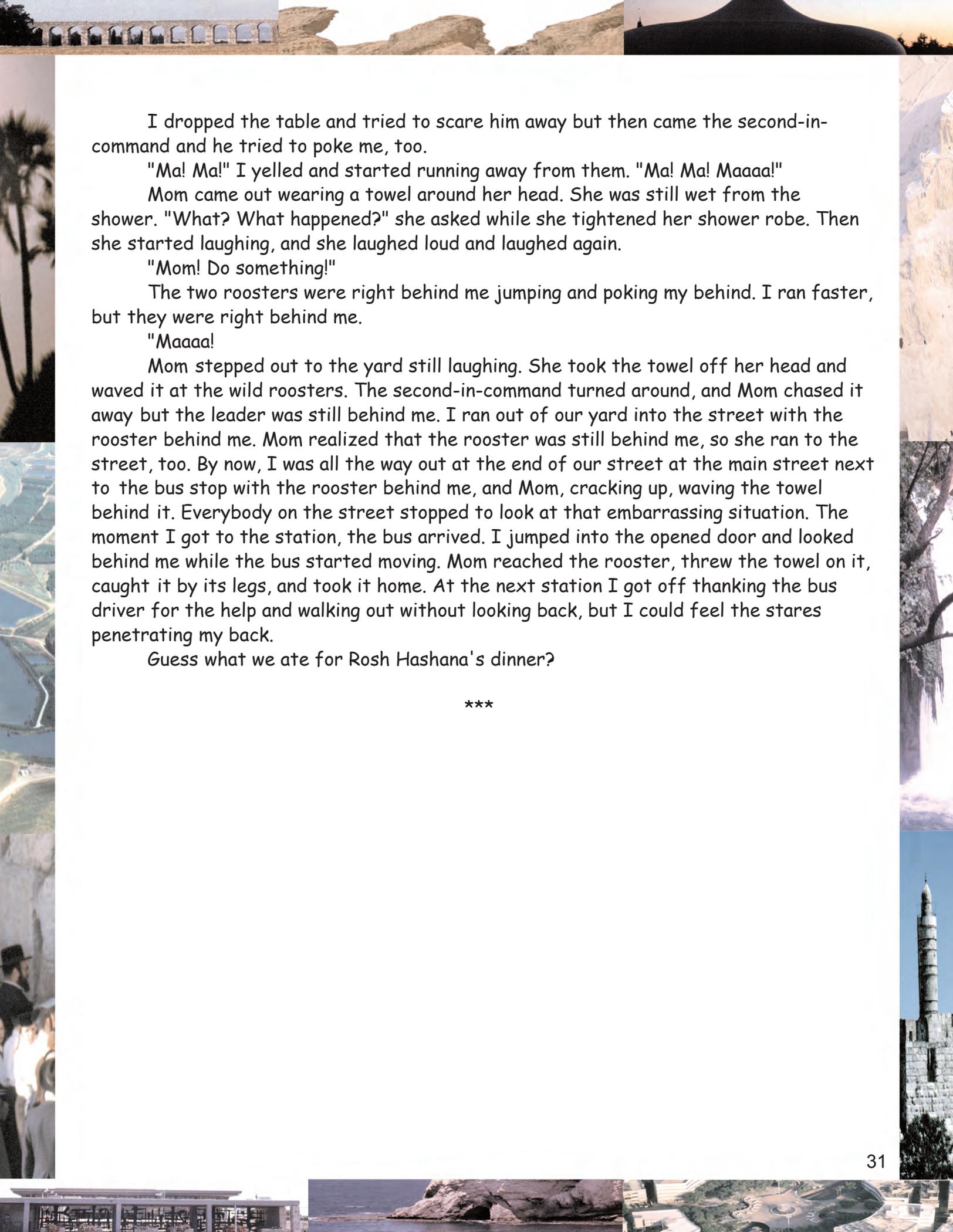
"You should let them out once in a while," our next-door neighbor said one day to my dad. "They will eat the grass and some worms and that will balance their diet."

From that day, we started to let the chicks out every other day for an hour or so. I became their shepherd and Avi my brother, was my helper. We had to make sure that they didn't leave the property, and that they didn't eat what they weren't supposed to eat. Then, after the hour was over, we had to gather them into their coop. Let me tell you something, it wasn't easy. We had to scream, yell, kick, and what-not to get them in.

We did that for about a year. Every other day we let them out, watched them, and then gathered them in. Avi developed a game with the chickens. As a matter of fact there were 39 roosters and one hen. They were like a small congregation. With a leader, a second-in-command, then the rest, with some strong roosters and some just followers. When we were gathering them into the coop the leader always was the last to go in and even after it was in and the gate was shut, it would protest. It'd jump up on the fence trying to open the gate. Avi loved it. He would stand there and kick the fence, and the rooster would jump even higher. Sometimes the second-in-command would join in the fight and jump just as high. So I also joined and kicked the fence, too. They jumped very high, they passed our height every time trying to hit our faces. For some odd reason, they never tried to jump at us when we let them out. Maybe because they relied on the protection of the fence. Maybe because they were happy out there and didn't have any reason to fight, or maybe because it was the two of us against them, and they knew they didn't have a chance.

One day Avi was sick, and he couldn't come to help me. It was me and the chickens. No problems! Right? Sure, right. I opened the doors, and just as usual, the chickens stormed out and started wandering around looking for food. I sat down on a bench that Dad had made a long time ago and watched the chickens doing their thing. Suddenly I remembered that Dad wanted me to rearrange the back yard because we had made a mess when we played orange packaging, you know, like in the big plant where they sort the oranges and package the best for shipment overseas.

I got up and started picking up the toys. They were scattered all over the back yard. I walked and picked up the toys, walked and picked up, again and again. When I got to the small and heavy table, the one Mom does the laundry on, I bent over to pick it up. Then I felt something behind me. I turned around and that leader of the pack was right in front of my eyes jumping up and down trying to poke me in the face.



I dropped the table and tried to scare him away but then came the second-in-command and he tried to poke me, too.

"Ma! Ma!" I yelled and started running away from them. "Ma! Ma! Maaaa!"

Mom came out wearing a towel around her head. She was still wet from the shower. "What? What happened?" she asked while she tightened her shower robe. Then she started laughing, and she laughed loud and laughed again.

"Mom! Do something!"

The two roosters were right behind me jumping and poking my behind. I ran faster, but they were right behind me.

"Maaaa!"

Mom stepped out to the yard still laughing. She took the towel off her head and waved it at the wild roosters. The second-in-command turned around, and Mom chased it away but the leader was still behind me. I ran out of our yard into the street with the rooster behind me. Mom realized that the rooster was still behind me, so she ran to the street, too. By now, I was all the way out at the end of our street at the main street next to the bus stop with the rooster behind me, and Mom, cracking up, waving the towel behind it. Everybody on the street stopped to look at that embarrassing situation. The moment I got to the station, the bus arrived. I jumped into the opened door and looked behind me while the bus started moving. Mom reached the rooster, threw the towel on it, caught it by its legs, and took it home. At the next station I got off thanking the bus driver for the help and walking out without looking back, but I could feel the stares penetrating my back.

Guess what we ate for Rosh Hashana's dinner?

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