

# Passover: An Opportunity For Personal and Communal Liberation

by Rabbi K'vod Wieder

Passover is rooted so deeply in the heart of Jewish consciousness that across the world, even secular Jews will participate in a seder. I know families who are not religious who have put together their own family *haggadot* - sometimes focused on personal issues, sometimes on issues of social justice, sometimes just on the ritual foods, as matzah and maror awakens memories, some personal, and some beyond to a more ancient place.

In our tradition, the Exodus from Egypt is the core of the Jewish myth, the Jewish story. Whether we are praying three times daily, reciting Kiddush on Shabbat or any other festival, or observing the very holiday of Pesach, our liturgy reminds us *zecher l'tziat mitzrayim* - the memory of the going out of Egypt. The reason why this story is so essential to the tradition, and is so compelling that it is celebrated across the Jewish world regardless of religious observance, is that it is about the journey from slavery to freedom. Even though there is an immense distance between the literal oppression under the Egyptian taskmasters and our 21st century affluent lifestyles where freedom doesn't seem to be relevant, we are still drawn to Pesach, to explore the journey from slavery to freedom.

I want to articulate some possible ways that slavery is deeply relevant to us in our lives today and what freedom could mean for each one of us. Each one of us experiences bondage consciously or unconsciously on a personal level. We may be

involved in work that is not fulfilling. We may be in relationships where there is more struggle than joy. We may feel despair at not finding someone to share our lives in an intimate way. We may be at a loss to how to support our kids emotionally while they are going through a tough time. We may continue to hurt at the ways our parents can't affirm the people that we are and the lives we've chosen to live. We may feel immense pressure and stress from the responsibilities we carry. We may feel a lack of purpose or direction. If we extend our identity beyond the personal and to our larger community, society, or global reality, we may be in touch with being a part of or witnessing socio-economic systems that do not respect the dignity of every human being, making sure that everyone has food, water, and shelter. We may notice how our socio-economic systems allow us to pollute and destroy the planet that we live on. What characterizes all of these examples is that on a personal level they describe a "narrow psychological and spiritual emotional place"; and on a societal level, they describe a system that is too narrow to meet everyone's needs. The word for Egypt is *mitzrayim*, which means "a narrow place." The story is speaking to each one of us.

The text and rituals of Passover are designed to help us become aware of our own "narrow places" and to show us a path of personal and communal liberation. When we ask *Ma Nishtanah*, we are not only asking why this night is different, but we are asking why we are different. Why is our life different than what we've envisioned for ourselves? Why are we different from what we aspire to? And what Red Sea do we need to cross to become even more fully ourselves? We hope you will join us for our second night seder at Temple Beth El to explore the story of Passover in a way that is more personal and relevant than ever before. And to make the journey to authentic freedom together!



## MECHIRAT HAMETZ: SELLING OF HAMETZ

I/We (the undersigned) hereby authorize Rabbi K'vod or his designated representative to sell all "hametz" located on our premises.

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I/we understand that this is a legal transaction and that I/we may not partake in these products during the week of Passover. I/we understand that these products will be repurchased for our use immediately after Passover. Please fill out and return this form to Myka at Temple Beth El of South Orange County by 8am Wednesday, April 20th. It is customary to make a contribution at this time to fulfill of the custom of *Maot Hittim*/providing for the needs of the poor on *Pesach*. The collected funds will be donated to Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger [mazon.org].



Signature

Printed Name

Return to Temple Beth El of South Orange County:

Email [mthompson@tbesoc.org](mailto:mthompson@tbesoc.org) ~ Fax 949/362-5323 ~ Drop off at front desk by 8am Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>