

Liberation

By Judith Heilizer (March 2018)

Wanting to understand the complexity of the term Liberation, I search the synonym finder. I am not disappointed.

It offers me 11 descriptive adjectives:

freeing
emancipating
delivering
rescuing
ransoming
redeeming
releasing
acquitting
dismissing
disengaging
detaching

Each of these words suggests liberation to involve a process, which by implication seems less desirable than the state achieved by being set free, emancipated, delivered etc. There is a rescuer, etc., an actor who by virtue of any of these mechanisms acts upon the receiver, whose state is then altered into another and for which the captive depends upon that liberating other. Nothing is required by the receiver other than acceptance of the liberator's behavior. It is a one-way relationship.

This worked fine until I came upon the last 2 words in the list, disengaging and detaching. In these states the captive becomes a part of the process, something is required of him or her as a result of the liberator's activities. The dynamic moves from being passively accepting the liberating process to being actively involved.

It is a two-way relationship with the liberator. Disengagement and detachment imply a mutuality the other words do not.

Our liberators were golden boys, young and glowing and singing and well fed and smiling as they marched through the streets of Rotterdam after the surrender by the Germans. They waved the Magen David flag and threw food and cigarettes. They freed and rescued and released but they did not detach nor disengage. On the contrary, they gathered us up and healed us just by being our liberators. We were engaged and attached in one process.

The young men in the Veterans Psychiatric Hospital's ward for irreparables were like those others had been years before. But these men were neither free-able nor rescuable nor redeemable nor any of the other states the term liberation implies. They were forever disengaged and detached but they were not free-able or even ransom-able.

And closer to home, most of us would love to liberate ourselves from the constraints which our maladaptive emotions place on us. Do we achieve this by disengagement or detachment? I think not.

So there needs to be a place in the experience of being liberated and in all of its synonyms to remain attached to and engaged with all our parts, while all the while we free, deliver, rescue, redeem release and acquit ourselves.

Liberation means more than separation. It means staying connected while letting go. In our parsha, the word KADOSH means holy as well as separate. Can one exist without the other?

Or not?

But Torah is forgiving.

Hinei ma tov umanayim, as in all we are with ourselves and with others, shevet achim gam yachad.