

Shabbat/Passover Torah Thoughts

5779:

There are thousands of editions of the Pesakh Haggadah, from every imaginable time and place that Jews have lived. Each new Haggadah tries to address the themes of oppression and liberation from different points of view. One may emphasize the seder's elements of learning and teaching; another may focus on historical memory; yet another may note the theme of sacrifice required in order to fight evil.

That divergence of interpretations is not limited to the Haggadah; there are many ways to understand Pesakh because the holiday itself touches on so many different aspects of who we are. It is the holiday of freedom from physical bondage, as well as a symbol for our release from emotional oppression. It is the holiday which Jews who suffer for their identities in many places around the world have seen as representing their personal journey from repression to freedom in Israel and elsewhere. It is the holiday during which we gather with family and friends to reenact Jewish and family rituals that date back hundreds or thousands of years.

But Pesakh is not simply anything we want it to be. It represents freedom, but that freedom is meant to be directed to a specific purpose, not just a generalized fight against oppression. That purpose is the creation of the Jewish nation, living according to God's law, in order to produce a perfected society. Freedom is God's redemption of us so that we can live according to Jewish tradition. Living that tradition is then our means of redeeming ourselves and the wider world.

As we continue to observe the rituals of Pesakh this week, let us all rededicate ourselves to learning and living as Jews in order to further the process of redeeming a broken world.

Shabbat shalom and hag same'akh,