

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Pesach Day VII & VIII – Shabbat
April 3&4, 2021 *** 21&22 Nisan, 5781

Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We **welcome all** to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

Summaries of the 7th and 8th days' Torah Readings

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/39992/jewish/Summary-of-the-Passover-Torah-Readings.htm

On the seventh day of Passover, we read how on this day the sea split for the Children of Israel and drowned the pursuing Egyptians, and the "Song at the Sea" sung by the people upon their deliverance.

On the eighth day of Passover, we read Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17. Like the reading for the second day, it catalogs the annual cycle of festivals, their special observances, and the offerings brought on these occasions to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Eighth Day's special connection with the Future Redemption is reflected in the Haftarah (reading from the Prophets) for this day (Isaiah 10:32-12:6).

Seventh Day Haftarah in a Nutshell: II Samuel 22:1-51

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3617750/jewish/Seventh-Day-of-Passover-Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's *haftarah* describes the song King David composed in his old age, echoing the weekly Torah reading, where Moses delivers his parting words to the Jewish nation in song form.

David's song expresses gratitude to G-d for saving him from all his enemies. He starts with the famous words, "The L-rd is my rock and my fortress." He goes on to describe the pain and hardships he encountered and reiterates that he always turned to G-d in his moments of distress. He recounts G-d's reaction to those who tormented him: "The Lord thundered from heaven; and the Most High gave forth His voice. And He sent out arrows and He scattered them, lightning and He discomfited them. . . I have pursued my enemies and have destroyed them; never turning back until they were consumed."

The King attributes his salvation to his uprightness in following G-d's ways: "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He recompensed me..."

The song ends with David's expression of thankfulness: "Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the nations, and to Your name I will sing praises. He gives

great salvation to His king, and He performs kindness to His anointed; to David and to his seed, forevermore."

Eighth Day Haftarah in a Nutshell: Isaiah 10:32-12:16

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3617754/jewish/Eighth-Day-of-Passover-Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This *haftarah* is a prophecy by Isaiah regarding the messianic time to come. He foretells of "a staff from the shoot of Jesse," father of King David, upon whom the Divine spirit will rest and who will be able to judge honestly by way of smell.

The prophet tells us that "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie with the kid goat; the calf and the young lion will graze together, and a young lad shall lead them."

He continues to describe how G-d will gather the exiled Jews from all over the world, to bring them back home to the Holy Land. In the newly constituted Jewish kingdom, the ancient rivalry between Judah and Ephraim will end, and they will join forces to subdue their historic enemies.

At that time, Israel will sing G-d's praises, thanking Him for all that he did and does for them, even that which had once appeared to be punishment but has now been revealed to be goodness in disguise.

Learning from God to Anticipate the Reactions of Others by Walter Herzberg

<https://www.jtsa.edu/learning-from-god-to-anticipate-the-reactions-of-others>

The Mitzvot of Matzah and The Seventh Day of Passover

Why do we eat matzah on Passover? According to the instructions that God conveyed to Israel prior to the Exodus we eat matzah because we are commanded: "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread (*matzot*)" (Exod. 12:15). However, according to Exod. 12:39, where the narrative of the events is related, we eat matzah because the Israelites, having been driven out of Egypt, were unable to linger to allow time for the dough to rise: "And they baked unleavened cakes (*matzot*) . . . because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry." If so, why does the Torah present the mitzvah (the command) before the Exodus has actually taken place? The verses seem **out of order!**

Abarbanel (Don Isaac Abarbanel, 1438–1507, Spain/Portugal/Italy) clearly articulates our question citing the Passover Haggadah to bolster his point:

*"In the Haggadah, Rabban Gamliel explained the reason for eating matzah and refraining from hametz by stating 'Why do we eat this matzah? Because their [the Israelites'] dough did not have time to rise and become leaven before God revealed Himself and redeemed them . . . ' Since God commanded the Israelites to eat matzah and refrain from hametz **before** they left Egypt (Exod. 12:15), how could Rabban Gamliel say the reason was because there was not sufficient time for the dough to rise before they were redeemed (Exod. 12: 39)?"*

Abarbanel responds to his own question as follows:

For if in actuality this mitzvah were given to Israel after their having left Egypt, perhaps they would not have experienced the speed of the redemption and would not have comprehended the reason for the mitzvah and its true [essence]. Therefore, God cleverly commanded this mitzvah to them [while they were still in Egypt] before they left; and since it was the first mitzvah they were commanded, they were especially zealous concerning it and kneaded their dough thinking they would have time to bake the matzot in Egypt as they had been commanded. However, before the baking (took place), Pharaoh and his servants came to say “rise up and go out from among my people” (Exod. 12:31). So they left in great haste.

*. . . And the children of Israel and their wives were extremely concerned lest the dough become leaven and they would [thereby] sin to God concerning the first mitzvah He had commanded them. So when they arrived in . . . another location suitable for baking their dough, they examined it and found they were wafers of matzah and had not become hametz. And they thus realized and understood that they had left in such great haste and God had worked miraculously for them. And this recognition came to them [only] because they were commanded concerning the guarding of the matzot **before** they had left . . .*

Abarbanel’s understanding of the purpose of the mitzvah, then, is, in essence, experiential or educational; God wanted the mitzvah of matzah to have the maximum impact upon the psyche of the Israelites. Because of God’s understanding of human nature, God **anticipated** the response of the Israelites to their unexpectedly speedy departure. Knowing that the Israelites would be especially punctilious in their observance of the very first mitzvah commanded them, God intentionally commanded them to bake matzah before the fact. This heightened their awareness of the extraordinary nature of the redemption, epitomized by the discovery that the dough they took with them had miraculously not risen even after a journey of a few days. Thus, this experience became etched in their memories and in their collective consciousness, ensuring that they would transmit this experience to generations to come. When the Haggadah is read today, the experiential nature of the mitzvot is indeed highlighted: “In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt”

According to Abarbanel, God was engaging in “feedforward” to use a concept developed by I. A. Richards (1893–1979, England), one of the literary influences of my teacher, Prof. Nechama Leibowitz. “Feedforward” is the concept of anticipating the effect of one’s words by acting as one’s own critic. Existing in all forms of communication, feedforward acts as a pretest that any writer/speaker can use to anticipate the impact of their words on their audience. According to Richards, feedforward allows one to then engage with their text/audience to make necessary changes to create a better effect (Wikipedia, “I. A. Richards”).

Like Abarbanel, the Meshekh Hokhmah (R. Meir Simha of Dvinsk, 1843–1926) employs the concept of “feedforward”—this time when commenting on verses related to the seventh day of Passover and dealing with a similar issue of verses seeming **out of order**.

The Meshekh Hokhmah notes that the Egyptians drowned on the seventh day of Passover. Why then, he asks, were the Israelites commanded to celebrate the seventh day **before** they left Egypt (Exod. 12) and **before** the Egyptians were drowned (Exod. 14)? He responds that,

*[I]f God had commanded that that we celebrate the seventh day after the fact [of the drowning], one might have thought that God had commanded us to celebrate the downfall of the wicked. . . therefore the Israelites were commanded while they were still in Egypt to celebrate the seventh day **before** the Egyptians had drowned in the sea . . . and that is why the word “joy” is not mentioned concerning Passover, and one does not recite the entire hallel during the holiday . . . so as not to “rejoice upon the downfall of your enemy” . . .*

*In my opinion, the fact that this mitzvah is mentioned now (in Exod. 12) **before** the Egyptians drowned is to demonstrate the perfection of God’s mitzvot. Israel does not rejoice in the downfall of their enemies as it is stated: “Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles. Lest the Lord see it and it displease Him’ (Proverbs 24:17–18) . . . so the upstanding person does not rejoice when his enemy falls because this rejoicing displeases God . . . therefore concerning Passover it is only mentioned that God took the children of Israel out of Egypt; there is no celebrating the destruction of their enemies.*

Both Abarbanel and the Meshekh Hokhmah suggest that God anticipated the reactions of the Israelites and consequently presented the mitzvah to eat matzah and the mitzvah to celebrate the seventh day **before** the narrative description of events.

Abarbanel suggests that the placement of the mitzvah was intended to heighten the experiential, even physical, nature of the mitzvah while the Meshekh Hokhmah suggests that the placement was intended to highlight the moral/attitudinal aspect of the mitzvah in particular and the perfection of the mitzvot in general.

Perhaps we, too, might learn from these commentaries to anticipate the needs and reactions of others by choosing our words thoughtfully. (*Walter Herzberg is Assistant Professor Emeritus of Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation and Professional Pastoral Skills*)

[The Once and Future Exodus: Seventh Day Pesah 5781 by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/Greenberg7thDayPesach5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=118746764&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--mu9ET472sJinaEpzhw18yl4c4b7-O3P5L1OG-FBLtUwh0v6x-MmLG0NGHWbfoAziKgpVI6VLs2yYQKauEVfntUMUcWQ&utm_content=118746764&utm_source=hs_email)

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The Seventh Day of Passover, a day of holy convocation, occurs this year on Shabbat. Therefore, the regular Parashat Hashavua Torah reading, Shemini, is postponed to the following week. In its place, we read the Torah chapters describing the actual Exodus from Egypt, the Egyptian chase after the Israelites to recapture and reenslave them, and the climactic splitting of the Reed Sea and destruction of the Egyptian army, including chanting the Song of the Sea.¹

The Exodus from slavery to freedom became the central event of Jewish religion and liturgy. It is celebrated every Passover, reenacted at the annual Seder, and remembered every day of the year.² The Exodus became an “orienting event,” a moment in history held up as a guiding light for the Jewish way of life and ethics, a compass by which to navigate our way through history.³ Some would understand Pesah as a one-time occurrence, unique to the Bible. And some would see the event as an archetype, repeated throughout history, in order to uphold the message of liberation and human value inherent in it.

Similarly, interpreters in and out of the tradition have argued whether this event was limited to showing the way for the Jewish people, or if it intended as a sign for all of humanity. If it is a universal signal, this would make the freeing of the Jews a down payment—the first installment of the universal redemption, divinely promised, for the entire world. Over the millennia, different schools of thought in Judaism interpreted the event on this axis, ranging from the narrowest (as a purely Jewish experience), to the most expansive, seeing it as a preview of the final Messianic denouement, where the whole world is turned into a Garden of Eden for all living creatures.

As for this second question, already the prophet Amos makes clear in his vision that the Exodus is not just a Jewish affair. God loves and saves all human beings. Just as God took the Israelites out of Egypt on the way to becoming a covenantal people living in freedom on their own land, so had God brought the Philistines up out of Crete and the Arameans up from Kir in order to realize their destiny (Amos 9:7).⁴ Similarly, in Amos’ spirit, I would argue that the Exodus is the initiation—and the sign of the future coming—of the total cosmic plan for universal freedom and human dignity.

On the question of repetition, the prophet Isaiah told of a future Exodus for the Israelites that would be even more splendid than the original liberation. Unlike the original happening, the future event would not be rushed, that is, eating the freedom meal “with haste”, dressed for the journey, while hoping to leave at the first indication from Pharaoh that they could go.⁵ Isaiah may be referring to the return, under Persian rulers, from the Babylonian Exile to the land of Israel. However, I read the verse (as does Jewish tradition) as open-ended to the distant future as well.

The Rabbis of the Talmud understood that the future Exodus would be equivalent to the reappearance of the original but would have different characteristics reflecting

the unfolding of the covenant of Israel. The Sages believed that just as God self-limited in entering the covenant in biblical times,⁶ God had dramatically self-limited again in renewing the covenant in their time. Rabbinic Judaism is then a second stage of the covenant.

The Rabbis saw five major divine self-limitations in the evolving encounter with God. Through them, the Lord came closer even as God was giving up control and decreasing direct interventions in human history. Each limitation (“*tzimtzum*” in later Kabbalistic terminology) was **designed to give humans a greater role and responsibility in carrying out the covenant:**

1. No more revelations from heaven, and no more prophecy— God’s sending a direct instruction to humans (e.g. “Thus saith the Lord”) came to an end after the destruction of the Temple.
2. The age of visible miracles like the splitting of the Reed Sea was over. Henceforth, there would only be hidden miracles in which God operates behind the scenes.
3. In the biblical era, God appeared—mostly in protected special environments such as the Temple—with transcendent presence, as an external Force of explosive power. In the Rabbinic era, God presented as Shekhinah, a hidden, more tempered and maternal Presence encountered in all walks of life and the mundane.
4. To learn what God wants of us now, human judgement would be the source— Rabbis’ interpretations and rulings, based on past revelations. This included that the Rabbis might well disagree on what God wants and such argumentation is a better source of truth. Rabbinic intelligence in applying inherited principles to the present situation was mediated by the intuition and practice of their living communities.
5. Human behaviors and policy judgement would be more decisive in the outcome of military conflicts and political issues. This was unlike in the biblical period where, if the Israelites were on God’s side (and not betraying the Torah with idol worship or sinful behavior), then God would assure them of victory even over mightier powers. Thus, according to the Rabbis, both Temples were destroyed due to Jewish sins. But in the First Temple the sins were cardinal sins against God—such as idolatry—whereas in the Second Temple the sins were between people—including a vicious civil war (*sinat hinam* / baseless hatred) and reckless behavior in revolting against Rome.⁷

Following the Rabbis’ framework, we can see that there was an Exodus event for the talmudic period—the experience of going from suppression and being outlawed, of living in danger and threat of genocide, to acceptance and the right to self-defend in the Persian Empire. This is what we celebrate on Purim. But as appropriate in an age of greater divine hiddenness, the miracle of being saved was initiated by the

human leaders, Esther and Mordecai, while God operated behind the scenes. (Note there is no mention of God's name in the Megillah). Nevertheless the Rabbis determined that in recognizing Purim as the new form of divine miracle and accepting the holiday, the Jews renewed the covenant that had been initiated by the Exodus redemption.⁸

I believe that in our era we are living through a third stage of Jewish religion.⁹ As in Rabbinic times, the new stage of covenant is initiated by another divine *tzimtzum*/self-limitation. God becomes totally "hidden." In our times, God is closer and more totally present even than in Shekhinah form. There are more miracles than ever but they, like God, are more difficult to discern because they are hidden in the natural process. They occur through the operation of natural laws (such as technological wonders), as uncovered and applied entirely through human agents, God's partners in the covenant of *tikkun olam*. Again, God renews the covenant and relinquishes more control in order to call humans to take on full responsibility for realizing the covenant in the world.¹⁰

There is an Exodus event for this era in Jewish history, only—as the Rabbis explained with regard to the Megillah—the miracle and experience reflect the changed circumstances of divine-human partnership. The contemporary Pesah event is the creation and building of the State of Israel. In this Exodus, the operation appears to be completely functioning in a naturalistic way with humans taking full responsibility for achieving the covenantal goal. There are more miracles than ever but they occur only when humans act and take full charge of doing what needs to be done. This redemption includes making errors, misjudgements, and inflicting pain on others.¹¹

This fulfillment of the prophet's vision—that the renewal of the covenant will occur by Jews returning to the homeland—was desperately needed. It occurred when the Holocaust and murder of six million Jews seemed to have crushed the Jewish Torah teaching that the good will triumph in history. The development of Israel and the rebuilding of Jewish community—and Torah throughout the world—reinstated the credibility of the Jewish affirmation that life is stronger than death.

Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) recreates the Passover/Exodus event for our time. The distance from powerlessness and genocide in Auschwitz to the heights of a rebuilt and flourishing Jerusalem, is of a greater magnitude than the movement from slavery in Egypt to the entry into the Holy Land. The numbers are greater. In the Torah narrative, 600,000 Jews came out of Egypt. By comparison, 600,000 Jews survived and won the War of Independence. They were followed in redemption by 800,000 Jews from Arab countries going from marginal status and persecution to freedom in the homeland. They were followed by several hundred thousand Ethiopian Jews going from minority pariah status and from poverty and hunger to a new life as citizens of a Jewish majority state. They were followed by a million Jews released from oppression and discrimination in Russia to full rights and

a free economy in Israel. By sheer demography alone, the Exodus of our era considerably outweighs the classic biblical redemption as living proof of the Torah's vision.

One of the sad truths of our time is that the official religious authorities have been slow to recognize—let alone celebrate—the remarkable religious message in the Passover of our era. But to anyone who can see through the tribulations and denials and the flaws of the liberation process, the restoration and renaissance of the Jewish state is a sign for human beings everywhere that the promised future Exodus for all of humanity is also coming. It is in human hands to take responsibility and make it happen. By humanity's actions and policies, we can overcome poverty, oppression, and war, take the measure of sickness and affliction and bring on the final *tikkun olam* for all.

Shabbat Shalom. ¹ Exodus 13:7-15:26. ² See Mishnah Berakhot 1:5, also included in the text of our Haggadah. ³ See my essay on Parashat Shemot, "The Exodus as Orienting Event," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/exodus-orienting-event>.

⁴ It should be noted that the Philistines and Aram were leading enemy powers against the Kingdom of Judah. Hence, if God loves, chooses, and redeems those people, God surely does the same for all the other peoples in the world. This is confirmed by Amos' comment—in the same verse—that God loves the Israelites just as much as God loves the Ethiopians. ⁵ Isaiah's prophetic vision of a greater Exodus: Isaiah 52:12. The original Passover meal being eaten hastily: Exodus 12:11; the pressure on the Israelites to leave at once: 12:33. ⁶ God, who is all powerful, self-limits to be bound by covenant—that is, to uphold the stability of the laws of nature and not to intervene and bring chaos (such as floods) when humans misbehave. God also binds God's self not to perfect the world single-handedly, but to hold back and leave an important role for the human partner. The full repair will not take place unless humans do it. ⁷ I explore the repeated role of divine *tzimtzum* (= self-limitation) at length in my forthcoming book, *The Triumph of Life* ⁸ "Kiyemu ve-kiblu—the Jews ordained and took upon themselves [two days of Purim]' (Esther 9:13). They ordained [Purim as the new Passover, thereby renewing] what they had already taken upon themselves [in the first Exodus]" (Talmud Shabbat 88a). ⁹ I believe that it began with the modern age which is, in itself, a response to a divine call to humans to take power and bring *tikkun olam*. ¹⁰ This case is made at length in my forthcoming book, *The Triumph of Life*. The strongest "proof" of the thesis is found in the divine non-intervention to stop the Holocaust. The catastrophe of the Holocaust was inflicted by humans (Nazis) misusing their freedom and power to carry out a total genocide. The other human agents, viz. the Allies and the neighbors/host countries of the Jews totally failed to carry out their mission to stop the slaughter. Where they rose to their agency and responsibility to save the Jews (as in Denmark, Albania, Bulgaria, Le Chambon in France,) the Holocaust was "stopped" and Jews were saved. ¹¹ In Israel's Declaration of Independence, God is totally hidden. The only reference to the divine is to "the Rock of Israel" which can be interpreted religiously or in purely secular terms.

[Making the Bitter Sweet by Ilana Kurshan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u4kZ7aQ1ru8xFSNklzSWCORn-WXoIXXP/view)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u4kZ7aQ1ru8xFSNklzSWCORn-WXoIXXP/view>

The Torah reading for the seventh day of Pesach is the narrative of the splitting of the sea and the ensuing “Song of the Sea,” which is sung in exultant triumph by Moses and the Israelites. Following this lengthy biblical poem, the Torah recounts that the women were led in song and dance by “Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister” (Ex. 15:20). What makes Miriam a prophetess, and why is she described as Aaron’s sister and not as sister of the more famous Moses? The Talmud, in considering these questions, highlights Miriam’s role in the drama of the Exodus and her legacy in the Seder ritual.

The Talmud discusses Miriam’s prophetic gift as part of a list of the seven biblical prophetesses: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail (King David’s second wife), Hulda (who advises King Josiah in II Kings), and finally Esther – which explains why this list appears in tractate Megillah (14b). The rabbis explain that Miriam is referred to as the “sister of Aaron” because she first prophesied when Moses was not yet born and she was the sister of Aaron alone. At a time when Pharaoh had decreed that all male children must be cast into the river, she predicted, “My mother is destined to bear a son who will deliver the Jewish people.” And indeed, as the Talmud continues, when Moses was born, the whole house filled with light and Miriam’s father kissed her on her head and praised her, saying, “My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled.” But then when the baby had to be cast into the Nile, she stood by the shores of the river to watch what would befall her brother and what would befall her prophecy. Miriam thus began her prophetic career at a very young age.

Miriam, who once watched by the waters of the Nile, grows up to lead the women in song by the waters of the Sea of Reeds. She remains associated with water throughout her life – the Talmud (Taanit 9b) teaches that the well that accompanied the Israelites throughout the desert wanderings was on account of Miriam’s merit, as evidenced by the fact that it dried up immediately following her death (Numbers 20:2). Miriam’s name contains a subset of the letters in the Hebrew word for water, *mayim*, further reinforcing this connection. But Miriam’s name also begins with the same letters as the Hebrew word for bitterness, *mar*, which suggests a link to the episode that immediately follows her song in our parsha. The Israelites travel to a place called Mara, meaning bitterness, and they cannot drink the waters of the place because they are bitter. When the people complain, God shows Moses a piece of wood which Moses throws into the water, making it sweet and potable. And so immediately after Miriam leads the women in inspired song, the bitter waters are made sweet -- just as Miriam’s divinely inspired prophecy sweetened her parents’ experience of Egyptian servitude by foretelling the birth of Moses.

In the final verse of our Torah reading, God follows the episode at Mara by instructing the people that He will heal them so long as they obey Him: “If you heed the Lord your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight.... Then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians” (15:26). This

verse resonates powerfully with another role Miriam played in Egypt. According to the Talmud (Sotah 11b), Miriam and her mother Yocheved were the midwives Purah and Shira, respectively, who were responsible for ensuring that the Israelites survived in spite of their weakened condition in Egypt. The Torah relates that “The midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had told them” (Exodus 1:17). By heeding God diligently and doing what was upright in His sight, they ensured that the terrible decree that Pharaoh sought to impose—the killing of all firstborns—was not brought upon the Israelites. As midwives, they played the role of healers, making the bitter sweet.

At the Pesach seder we eat the Maror to remember the bitter experience of Egyptian servitude, thinking back, too, to the bitterness so many of us tasted on Pesach one year ago, when the world was ravaged by a global pandemic. This year, while dipping the Maror in the sweet Charoset, we take stock of all the ways we have found to sweeten the bitterness, as Miriam did. When the Egyptians pursued the fleeing Israelite slaves, we can imagine that she watched the waters of the Sea of Reeds in trepidation just as she had watched her brother in the Nile – to see whether her prophecy that the bitter would be made sweet would indeed come true. And when her prophecy was fulfilled, she led the women in song and dance, celebrating the sweetness of God’s deliverance. We might think of the sweetening of the Maror as a tribute to her legacy.

David and Agency by Bex Stern Roesnblatt

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u4kZ7aQ1ru8xFSNklzSWCORn-WXoIXXP/view>

A buzzword of our time is “agency.” The idea is that we can become self-aware and through this knowledge of ourselves we can make rational decisions. We strive to free ourselves from the control that technology exerts over us - we all have felt compelled to answer the ping of a Whatsapp interrupting us in the middle of a conversation with a friend. Of course, we know that we would rather continue talking to the friend. In fact, we think the right thing to do is to continue to talk to the friend. And yet, we lose agency, and next thing we know we’ve responded to the Whatsapp message and are now checking our emails. Likewise, we lose agency to groupthink. We live in a complex world and it is so much easier to accept someone else’s definition of what is the right way to act or to think than to puzzle it out ourselves, particularly if that someone else has a lot of standing in our community. And so, we find ourselves dismissing our own decision-making abilities and repressing our own knowledge in order to say what is generally thought of as the right thing. The answer given to these problems is usually to gain agency by becoming aware of those things which causes loss of agency and creating rituals to minimize the power of those things.

We find ourselves now in the middle of one of the most powerful rituals of the Jewish tradition, the celebration of Pesach. And it’s a holiday about freedom and

throwing off oppression! So is celebrating Pesach a means of creating agency? Is that the point of Pesach? Is that the goal we want to ascribe to Pesach? Reading our haftarah, 2 Samuel 22, can provide some insight. King David has peaked now. We're towards the end of his story. He's been a shepherd, killed Goliath, played the harp, fought with and against the Philistines, married his way into power, outlasted Saul, become king, built Jerusalem, failed as a father, and repented for his failures, among other things. This is a person who's done more in a lifetime than I can even imagine. This is a person who has inspired and been inspired by countless people. This is a person who seems to have agency. Now, looking back, David opens his mouth to retell his life story. And what comes out is a beautiful psalm of thanksgiving. David says, 'The Lord is my crag and my fortress and my own deliverer. God, my rock where I shelter, my shield and the horn of my rescue, my bulwark and refuge, my rescuer, saves me from havoc.' In what follows, David vaguely describes the works of his life, always ascribing all credit, all agency, to God. The psalm ends with David saying, "Therefore I acclaim You among nations, O LORD, and to Your name I would hymn." David, who has seemed to give up his agency to God, ends with a self-aware declaration of agency, a knowing act of the power of declaring God. We, of course, echo this on this festival of freedom, when we celebrate the power of God and the power of storytelling and virtually ignore Moses.

So how can agency be achieved? What does God have to do with agency? And is it the right goal in the first place? I leave it to your own agency to decide.

Yahrtzeits

Linda Chandross remembers Robert's mother Mollie Chandross on Friday April 9th (Nisan 27)

Kol Rina ANNOUNCEMENTS

Friday Torah Study and Service

Friday night services on Zoom will commence at 5:15 with Torah study led by Len Levin. Kabbalat Shabbat, led by Nikki Pusin, will follow at 5:45, and then it's back to Len Levin for Maariv. This week's guest d'varist will be Phil Schaefer, who will speak on "I Guess You Can Learn Something Anywhere. . . . Even Vietnam: Vietnam Perspectives From Dartmouth College Veterans." We hope you will join us!

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/533517572?pwd=dVFHR2NGZFBCYWp1Yzd6ald0bzFRdz09>

Meeting ID: 533 517 572 Password: 003293

Pesach Services, Sunday morning, April 4

We will have Zoom services for the morning of the eighth day of Pesach, Sunday, April 4, beginning at 10:00 am. **Yizkor** will be recited. We hope you will join us!

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/533517572?pwd=dVFHR2NGZFBCYWp1Yzd6ald0bzFRdz09>

Meeting ID: 533 517 572

Password: 003293