

## Rabbi's Column

It is that time of year again.

To be accurate, in the Jewish liturgical calendar, it always “that time of year again.”

So the time it is currently is spring. Really. Spring brings Passover – and we make sure that Passover and spring remain connected, since that’s what God told us to do back in the Torah. We remember to celebrate Passover as well because God told us to do so.

At least that’s one reason.

Another reason is that celebrations are nice. Being happy has a nice ring to it. Hopefully, all of our family celebrations are cases of nicely remembering that God engineered our leaving Egyptian slavery so we could go back to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Naturally there is more than just an educational symposium discussing the Exodus – there is also, eventually, food. Special food, to help maintain the proper memories. Matzah, to be precise. Also, bitter herbs. We don’t do the roasted lamb or goat (at least Jews who spent a few centuries in Europe don’t) since the Temple has not yet been rebuilt in Jerusalem.

This time of year is a busy one, calendar-wise. Here is a repeat of last year’s summary statement of what happens in the next 50 days:

We remember more recent events, both tragic and joyful. In order, we commemorate the Holocaust at the time of year that some of the Jews left in the Warsaw ghetto refused to follow Nazi orders; we remember the fallen Israeli soldiers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who have fought to keep Israel a free democracy over these decades; we celebrate the return of the land of Israel to Jewish rule after so long being ruled by absentee landlords and despots; we celebrate Jerusalem reunification day, for when Jordan had control of that area we were not allowed to even visit the Western Wall; we end the season by remembering Revelation at Sinai.

It is interesting to note how many beginnings for the Jewish people take place during this spring-like season of agricultural beginnings. We began the process of leaving physical slavery and entering into the freedom of responsibility for our own choices. We left the chaos of anarchy and entered the freedom of boundaries which helped many of us develop compassion, sympathy and empathy. We learned that learning by itself does not ensure that a person embraces the paradoxical nature of human existence. We learned that not all oppressors are as tolerant as Rome, and therefore must be defended against instead of compromised with. We are also relearning the lesson that being merely human is worth celebrating and defending.

Some remembering helps us survive, like remembering that stuff usually doesn’t grow well during the snowy season; some remembering keeps us entrenched and is possibly anti-survival, like the storied enmity in Romeo and Juliet. May we be granted the wisdom to know which of the things we keep in memory fit in each category.