

Rabbi's Column

Every year during Pesach we relive the Exodus from Egypt, remembering that we were slaves and now we are free. For much of our existence as a community, this exercise was also geared to remind us that despite all evidence to the contrary, we were actually free. Not many people needed to be reminded of how the stranger felt, as we experienced that on a daily basis. Likewise, we experienced food insecurity on a regular basis.

In America today, for the most part, we have to work a bit harder at remembering we were strangers and slaves than we do the concept of freedom. Some of us are fortunate enough to have only suffered a tiny bit of food or shelter insecurity in our lives.

So at yesterday's Tisha B'Av commemoration, one thought we came up with is to tie the remembrance of what it is like to be attacked and exiled into a drive to help the homeless and hungry. This would honor the purpose of the Temple, and might be more communally meaningful at this moment than grieving for the loss of Jewish sovereignty and the destruction of an important building. This switch might also begin the transition to Zechariah's promise that the fast days marking the loss of sovereignty would be turned to festive days, where out of love of truth and peace, the plenty we have can be shared with others. The details will be worked out over the course of the next year and announced as appropriate.

There will still be a food drive this year. Details to follow soon.

At last night's movie night, instead of the planned Danny Kaye movie (which had not yet arrived), we wound up seeing a movie called O Jerusalem. The movie explores how the narratives of the excitement of Yom Ha'Atzmaut and the depression of the Nakba developed simultaneously. A question I had at the end was "How do we get past "You killed my uncle!?" A beginning to the answer might be focusing instead on, "I killed his uncle." Perhaps over time the joint statement would become - let's just stop planning to kill each other.

Understanding the other instead of vilifying them might not change reality. It should help us become more ready to change ourselves into the best people we can be.