

Rabbi's Column

I am not sure that the best metaphor for this week preceding the Seder is a plane taxiing on the runway to the take-off moment or the crew preparing the plane and loading the luggage during their 15 minute [number chosen completely at random] window between one set of passengers departing and the next set entering. Either way, it is busy for a lot of us.

Torah portion wise, the next two Shabbatot are holiday related and then we pick up with portions that are a bit easier to talk about than the past few weeks have been.

The Israeli election process is almost over. President Rivlin still needs to decide which Minister #1 (Prime Minister) he will ask to try and form a coalition in order to govern. Based on the seats received, and where the parties are on the conservative vs. liberal continuum, the presumption is that Netanyahu will be asked again. There will be a lot of horse-trading going on during the next week or so, as the smaller parties often have prices for joining or staying with a coalition.

The Israeli spacecraft, Breishit, landed on the moon. It was an uncontrolled landing, as at about 100 kilometers or so the communication ceased between the control room and the spacecraft. So there is an Israeli flag on the moon - it just is not placed in the normal fashion. There are indications that the second attempt is beginning even now. Unless somebody else succeeds in the meantime, Israel will be the fourth country to land a craft on the moon.

As we begin the process of imagining what it was like to be a slave to Pharaoh in Egypt, perhaps we can think a bit about what we voluntarily submit to these days. As a slave to Pharaoh, the choice was stark - do what is commanded, or die. Today our choices are generally not so either/or, unless we choose to limit our choices in that fashion. So, what do we do "religiously?" Which TV shows, radio programs, or other regularly scheduled events do we consider sacrosanct? Under which circumstances are we going to choose to avoid even thinking we have a choice? [Please note - sometimes this is a good thing. The tradition tells us to choose death over being idolatrous, cheating on our romantic and sexual relationships, and murdering somebody else. We choose not to exercise any choice in those cases, to maintain God's reputation as well as our own.]

May this week go well for us all.