

Erev Rosh HaShanah 5783

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Nigun—Min Hameitzar by Debbie Friedman.

That’s the tune for “Min Hameitzar,” From Narrowness, by Debbie Friedman, a song that we often sing on Passover.

We left Egypt, this long, thin place. In fact, the name for Egypt is Mitzrayim, which means a narrow place.

The Israeli daily newspaper, *HaAretz*, says that although *mitzrayim* literally means to exit from Egypt, it is not always about running for the border. Sometimes, it's just about leaving a place or situation.



At the beginning of a seder for the Israeli Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Association, gay community leader Lior Mencher said Passover is special for members of the gay community in Israel because of “the symbolism of going from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, which for us is coming out of the closet.”

When our ancestors approached the land of Canaan, the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh approached Moses and said, “We’d like to settle on the east side of the Jordan River.” Moses said to them, “Are you crazy? No way the rest of us are going to fight to take over our inheritance promised by Hashem while you hang out with your flocks over here sipping cocktails ...” —or something like that. But they stopped him in midsentence and said, “Hey, we never said that we were going to shirk our responsibility as part of the People. After the Land of Israel is secured, we want to come back here to settle.” Moses took a breath, hugged them, and said, “OK, you become the first Diaspora with full rights and full love of your brothers and

sisters.” And as noted in the Mishnah, wherever we may be in the world, we pray facing toward our center, toward Yerushalayim/Jerusalem, east from Haverhill but west from India.

In that same way that we turn toward Jerusalem with focused prayer energy, Rosh HaShanah commands us to focus, to face ourselves, and by extension, to face our society and focus on how we can play a role in changing our society. We say that, as Jews, one of our core values is Tikkun Olam, repairing the world.

On this Rosh HaShanah, the reality of narrowness and narrowmindedness surrounds us in a way that makes us feel constrained.

- Gun violence
- Opioid crisis
- COVID pandemic
- Affronts on the right of people who can get pregnant controlling their own body
- Rolling back the progress LGBTQ people have made in recent decades
- An unwillingness among factions in our society to compromise, instead of collaborating so that we move forward together

Vocational career coaching and mentoring often require us to first look at ourselves, where are we now, and then chart the course of action to where we want to be. Tonight, we put the mirror up to ourselves and we contemplate our derech erez, our way to a better world.



Rabbi Lauren Tuchman, the first blind woman in the world to enter the rabbinate, says,

We live in a time in which klal Yisrael comprises individuals who come from a variety of backgrounds, life experiences and perspectives. ... When we expand our minds, hearts and souls to experiences and perspectives we might not have considered, we are being given the incredible opportunity to deepen and enrich our thinking. When we take the lead and warmly embrace Jews from all backgrounds into our communities, the Torah we find within them is that much deeper, more resonant and spiritually alive.

Julie Emden of the Embodied Jewish Wisdom Network writes that when we bring “forth Jewish wisdom teachings from primary text sources we employ a method we call **Embodied Pardes**.” That is, looking at the text through the lens of the body, our motions, and our perception, both conscious and unconscious, of our motions. Pardes—spelled Pey, Resh, Dalet, Samech—stands for:

Pey = Pshat = פשוט Simple body parts or actions (bone, speak, see, walk, breath)

Resh = Remez = רמז Hints at body elements or movements (expand, gather, approach)

Dalet = Drash = דרש Interpretations that can relate to the body's structure, functions, or movements

Samech = Sod = סוד Secret readings or finding hidden meanings in the text

Together, these levels of Pardes provide gateways into an embodied experience of Torah. It is a creative, four-worlds process of mind, body, heart, and spirit.

We can solve our individual and collective challenges by unlocking the blessings of this Pardes strategy. Excluding no one, including everyone, we

can appreciate all of our visions, insights, senses, our steps, all that G-d has given to us, around us, in us.

Now, given these thoughts of coming out of narrowness, embracing everyone in our community, and finding our way to a better world via a process of mind, body, heart, and spirit, let's take ten minutes and break into groups and discuss two questions:

- How do we overcome gridlock and lack of collaboration to move our communities forward?
- How does our annual reset or reboot given to us by Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur give us a springboard to move us all toward a goal of tikkun olam?

Our Zoom tech, Shelly, will invite those of you online to a breakout room. Please accept that invitation and offer your thoughts in a concise manner. Cantor and I will moderate our discussion here in the sanctuary, and then we'll come back. Let's talk ten minutes from now.

After the discussion, from Machzor Rosh HaShanah Ashkenaz (just the green), Tashlich 3: **לֹא הִחְזִיק: לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ: וְעֵבֶר עַל פְּשָׁע: נִשְׂאָ עֵוֹן: וְיָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ: וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאתָם: תִּתֵּן אֶמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב: חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם: אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם: מִיַּמֵּי קֶדֶם: מִן הַמַּצַּר קִרְאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בְּמִרְחָב יְהוָה: יְהוָה לִי לֹא אִירָא מֵהַיַּעֲשֶׂה לִּי אֲדָם: יְהוָה לִי בְּעוֹזְרֵי וְאֲנִי אֲרָאָה בְּשׁוֹנְאֵי: טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בִּיהוָה מִבְּטֹחַ בָּאָדָם: טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בִּיהוָה מִבְּטֹחַ בַּגְּדִיבִים:**

Who is an Almighty like You Forbearer of iniquity, and forgiver of transgression for the remnant of His heritage? He does not maintain His wrath forever, for He desires to do kindness. He will again show us compassion, He will suppress our iniquities; and You will cast into the depths of the sea all their sins. You will grant truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham, as You swore to our fathers from the days of old. From the narrowness [of distress] I called [to] God; Shomei'ah Tefila, the One who hears prayer answered me with the breadth of Divine relief. Adonai is with me, I will not fear, what can man do to me? Adonai is with me, to help me ...

(If we have time, we can sing Min Hameitzar using the Debbie Friedman melody.)

Min ha mei-tzar ka-ra-ti Ya

A-na-ni va-mer-chav Ya

A-na-ni, A-na-ni

A-na-ni va-mer-chav Ya

Min ha mei-tzar ka-ra-ti Ya

A-na-ni, A-na-ni

A-na-ni va-mer-chav Ya

Min ha mei-tzar ka-ra-ti Ya

A-na-ni va-mer-chav Ya

From a narrow place, I cried out to G-d. G-d answered me with wide expanse.