

2001: Passover Reflections

This year, as in the past, my partner and I will go from San Francisco to the East Bay to spend Passover with family. Our relatives are good people whom we like but we see them only at Passover. I wish I saw the people I like more often, but we're always so busy!

Last year, we ran through the Passover story so fast I had the feeling that the Pharaoh's army was invading Oakland and we were rushing to get out of town. There were six children at our table, and it was clear to me from the glazed look in their eyes [and my own] that none of us had a clue why we were doing what we were doing. The adults jumped from one symbolic display to another like they were playing leapfrog, with only a vague idea of where they were really going. We sipped, sang, recited, repeated, dipped and dunked. We skimmed words from left to right in English and then from right to left in Hebrew. Some giggled as we vaulted from page 14 over to page 24. What happened on the ten pages in between? The children looked bored, and I certainly couldn't see what any of the traditions had to do with me. Let's just get to the food, I silently conspired.

What a hunger! My actions without awareness of what I'm doing lead to hunger. And, this hunger is ubiquitous. The unwanted pounds around my middle are a sign of it. Going through the motions leaves me hungry for something unnamed. I feel absent and unfulfilled. Instead of being mindful of my life, I'm consumed by time management, efficiency and speed.

I began to think I needed a new God, one who could create a world in only four days and get me some more time off. I thought of shopping around for a God Who'd promise to answer my prayers with email speed and precision. Old-time religion was becoming burdensome and was dragging me down.

This year I'd like Passover to offer our children [and me] a chance to learn about ourselves and to apply Judaism in our lives. I'd like to approach the Seder with more order and thoughtfulness. I know that Passover is about freedom from slavery, but this year I'd like to find out what that's got to do with the way I conduct myself. How do I get my deliverance? Last year we read too fast to find out and the four questions were the only questions asked.

I believe spirituality can come to me through awareness. And I'm prepared to ask the question, "How can that be done?" I realize that faith will never be found in virtual reality, and the mystery of my life will not unfold out of ether.

Safety and security are not only created through preparedness, but through belief, and belief lives in the moment. Safety can only be gathered like the blossoms of this season, in the here and now.

Security was all around us at the table last year; I saw it in my family's smiles. I presume it will be there again for me this year if I take the time to notice. Like Elijah, security will slip in silently when I open the door for it.

Righteousness isn't a word I need to reflect on special days of the year. All the moments of every day are holy. God knows we Jews have traveled far and wide, but do we have to go so fast? I suspect Judaism was once an everyday experience. At what speed would I have to travel for it to enter my life now?