

FROM THE HAZZAN'S DESK

Passover, Eliyahu Ha'Navi and Possibility

Passover always comes our way as a harbinger of spring. In a sense, it marks, at least here in the Northeast U.S., our own Jewish-American deliverance from the grey, cold and snow of previous months. While Purim in March is the earliest indicator of 'good times ahead', Purim is a tease. It's only a 24-hour period of revelry and merry-making, mostly in the synagogue with our synagogue friends, whereas with Pesach we have eight whole days to really 'feel the energy' of liberation, freedom and the joy of family and Jewish community ties.

The Passover seder is traditionally a home-based ritual, complete with delicious foods and a Hagaddah reading that has fifteen sections, each section representing one of the fifteen steps leading to the ancient temple in Jerusalem. We experience the seder evenings simultaneously as a look backwards and a look ahead. And all of us look forward to singing the words we know so well from our childhoods that come toward the end of the evening when we welcome Eliyahu Ha'Navi as we prepare a fifth cup of wine for him:

Eliyahu Ha'Navi, Eliyahu Ha'Tishbi,

Eliyahu, Eliyahu,

Eliyahu Ha'Giladi

Bimheira biyameinu,

Yavo aleinu

Im Mashiach ben David

Im Mashiach ben David

Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite,

Elijah, Elijah,

Elijah the Gileadite

With speed in our own time,

Come to us,

With the Messiah, son of David

With the Messiah, son of David

This song dates back to the 11th century and also is sung at the end of Shabbat following the Havdalah service. Mo'tsiei Shabbat also is a time of looking ahead, in this case to the coming week, rather than the season and beyond. With this text, the concept of possibility is built into our Jewish ritual and beliefs. Just as the timing of Passover coincides with the first flowers of spring, so does our welcoming of Eliyahu as we open the door announce our anticipation of possibility, with hearts full of hope for not only the arrival of Mashiach Ben David, but the arrival of new dreams to be fulfilled. We cannot make the messiah come, but we can all embrace the spirit of possibility, and it is that spirit that can bring change to the world and to our B'nai Jacob community, as well. Don't forget to sing out the other traditional Pesach tunes, too, like Dayeinu, reminding us that we can never have too much of a good thing. I wish you all a Zissen Pesach!