

Rabbi Zamore's Message for April, 2014

This year we all will surely treasure the early signs of spring a bit more than usual. After this very cold, snowy, and long winter, it is a relief to be experiencing more temperate days and to be witnessing the shift towards the heart of spring. The snow has finally melted and the crocuses are pushing through the ground. And a sure sign of spring, the matzah and macaroons are filling the grocery shelves, as we will soon be shopping for Passover foods.

While Passover primarily marks the Exodus from Egypt, the celebration of the redemption of our ancient ancestors mingles with our embrace of spring. Of course, this season is a time of renewal. Therefore, it is no accident that Passover falls in the spring. As we feel the beauty of the season, watching the rebudding of our gardens, shaking free of the cold of winter, we sit at our Passover Seder tables and remember the gift of freedom. In that moment, we recognize all of God's blessings.

The Passover Seder includes many symbols of spring. Found on the Seder plate, the *Karpas* - the parsley, or any other greens - overtly represents springs. The *Beitzah* - burnt egg - represents the festival offering brought by our ancestors to the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. The egg also reminds us of the beginning of all life and, therefore, connects to the hope of renewal we feel in the spring. The Seder itself includes many readings which draw upon the imagery of spring.

As we sit at our holiday tables and enjoy the Seder with family and friends, we can revel in the spring symbolism this year. For families with young children, the kids can embrace this spring motif by creating vernal-themed decorations like centerpieces and place cards for the Seder table. Parents and grandparents can help children understand the connection between Passover and spring.

Fortunately, parents have an easy job of communicating the association between spring and Passover, as the Haggadah simply leads us through the signs and symbols discussed above. The Haggadah is the ultimate instruction manual and pedagogic guide. Parents are left with an important job, however, to engage their children and to model interest and excitement. Looking over the Haggadah in advance will help the parent feel comfortable with this task. Planning for opportunities to have the children participate (especially the four questions) is also essential.

Adults can emphasize the spring/Passover connection by lingering over Haggadah readings like Song of Songs and Psalms. We can also play games throughout the Seder with all age groups by challenging everyone to guess how many references the Haggadah has to spring and then track them throughout the night. Adults and children

should also free feel to add to the four questions with some spring/Passover related questions. We can also share our personal reflections on the transformation from the bleak winter to the robust spring and how it makes us feel. Then, connect those feelings to the theme of freedom.

I hope spring and Passover will bring each of us renewed energy to embrace our blessing of freedom.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Mary L. Zamore