

Weekly Teaching

April 18, 2019

Passover is the Jewish holiday that marks the beginning of spring. In the Torah, it is pointedly recorded that the holiday falls on Aviv (spring). When we observe Passover there is a symbiotic relationship between the changing of the seasons and our history.

We mark our holiday with ritual observances by which we “eat history”, as we engage in the traditional seder meal.

The karpas (green vegetable) is the symbol of “new life” and we dip it twice in salty water to recall the tears shed by the Jews enslaved in Egypt.

Eggs are the first food traditionally eaten before the formal dinner is served; always the traditional symbol of life.

Nature and history are one at the seder table, bundled together in a blanket of Shalom (Peace).

The sign of redemption is the seasons renewed; the buds beginning to open and life once again triumphing. Our eternal redemption is understood as engaging in an eternal season of spring.

This inescapable relationship between spring and hope is common to many cultures and religions.

We walk outside and feel the air becoming warmer.

We witness the rebirth of the flowers and the trees and our wintery disposition is cast aside as we relish a season of newness and possibilities.

And yet, are we ever truly free of the shackles that bind us?

We feel the power of redemption at hand, but our thoughts often center on our knowledge that the seasons are temporary.

How do we free ourselves? How do we hold onto our redemption?

The answer of religion is that in all seasons we learn the skill to distinguish between “being” and “becoming”.

When Roseanne and I moved to the East Coast from California, it was the change of seasons that excited Roseanne the most, but I had a Californian weather bias; at first complaining about it being too cold or too hot.

But, over the years I’ve come to appreciate our New England area as being highly reflective of the challenges that we need to overcome in life.

In spite of the inconveniences poor weather may bring, it is the change of seasons that makes living here so poignant.

Like the power of the leaves changing, falling and being reborn, we change; we fall and re-grow each and every day.

We wake up each morning, make goals, and then set about achieving them for our posture, prosperity or power.

This is our state of “becoming”.

During our “becoming” our life happens: our moments, our children’s wonder, our teens’ achievements, our accolades and our failures.

However, we need to also realize that embedded in the process of “becoming” we are also “being”.

Time is not just linear. Each moment has its own pause and its own unique possibilities of divine blessing.

Sometimes we forget to enjoy our “being” during our “becoming.”

This is one of the reasons that we are trained to look back and to re-witness history.

When we look back we have the opportunity to enjoy those moments.

When we gaze at a photograph in which time has stood still we feel the power of our nostalgia, and in remembering we also remind ourselves that we must live fully in the present because time flies by ever too quickly.

This phenomenon was well illustrated in a documentary entitled “Life” which shows plants and animals being born.

These living entities follow their instinct to survive and thrive. They fight for their self-preservation and pursue their procreation, but there is no distracted reflection for these living things about the living of their life.

The plant and the animal has no ability to discern between the distinction of “being” and “becoming”.

There is no linear thought imposed on so much that we call “life”.

This is both a blessing and a curse.

The ability to discern meaning to one’s existence is what gives us purpose.

But for us humans, our ability to step into a place by which we break out of our linear thinking, while so very challenging, will almost always be the most rewarding.

Freezing in the moment and finding full presence in what we are doing and where we are is the mechanism by which we taste paradise.

“Becoming” is important and will happen by the impetus of time itself. But “being” is the ability to set aside all that distracts and instead find the focus of the Truth that surrounds us.

It is scary to live amidst the moments of unknowns, preemptive strikes, etc.

We seek the curative to our mortal challenge, desiring to do nothing more than get back to “becoming” instead of “being”.

But the same brush against mortality that frightens us is also the catalyst that forces us to focus on “being” and enjoying this season of our lives.

If each and every moment is lived, and each and every moment is remembered, then time in those places are permanently suspended, and the fight against time’s march has forever been won.

Our modern society has the technology, the privilege and the freedom to live our lives with escape or distraction as our constant companions. But with spring and Passover, with nature and history, we can take the time to focus on the slavery that is now cast aside for our freedom.

We can appreciate the power to stop time itself, and with our deep and powerful reflection and presence we transform our lives.

It is spring. It is our time of hope. We can choose to enjoy both our “being” and our “becoming”.

And, with this sort of devotion, our Exodus becomes our “eternal spring”.

Happy Passover!

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