



Yeshivah of Flatbush

הישיבה דפלטבוש

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Pesah is designated as “*z’man herutenu*,” the time that marks our freedom from the tyranny and oppression of Pharaoh and Egypt. Again and again, on Pesah - and indeed throughout the year - we show our appreciation for God’s having taken us out of Egypt and liberating us from slavery. That freedom is worthy of particular celebration on Pesah. We celebrate by drinking four cups of wine, reclining like free human beings, eating matzah and recounting the story of the Exodus in countless different ways.

But freedom in and of itself is not meaningful. In fact, absolute freedom can be damaging and catastrophic. The Torah never envisioned that freedom was the ultimate goal of our liberation. That is why when we raise the second cup of wine we bless God for having redeemed us and our forefathers and “for bringing us to this night to eat matzah and maror.” Liberation, in the view of the Haggadah, is followed by a mandate to perform and remember. It is also why the discussions about the Exodus surround verses from the Torah, the book that binds us to a code and a way of life mandated by the Almighty.

Freedom is a necessary condition for nourishment of our bodies and souls. Natan Sharansky's most recent book *Never Alone* makes that point beautifully. But freedom is not enough. It must come simultaneously with a commitment to a life filled with meaning and to one with a calling to rise above simple freedom and anarchy. For Torah Jews, freedom calls upon us to dedicate ourselves to the high ideals and religious and moral code of one of the oldest books of civilization.

Rabbi Dr. Raymond Harari (HS '72)