

We know the chorus of the well-known spiritual: “Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land; tell Ol’ Pharaoh to let my people go.”

It’s a fairly accurate summary of the repeated command in the book of Exodus, but it leaves out an important phrase. In seven occurrences in the book of Exodus, the line that God instructs Moses to say to Pharaoh is “let my people go that they may serve Me.” We were liberated from Egypt, in other words, not to be autonomous individuals, but for a higher collective purpose: enacting the agenda of the God of liberation, rather than the agenda of Pharaoh.

Serving Pharaoh, our spirits are meant to be beaten down; we are meant to feel like we have no potential, no hope. Serving God, however, elevates us to accountability to the Source who demands that we sanctify time, that we mind our speech, that we pursue justice, and that we welcome the stranger.

In honor of our theme this year of *Hachnasat HaGer* – welcoming the stranger – I want to encourage us to enact our liberation this year by welcoming this stranger to our Passover celebrations. Please consider inviting another TBI household – especially folks that you do not know very well – to your home for Seder. I will be teaching a class on preparing for Pesach on March 18th, so you can find discussion ideas to bring home to your seder. And I will offer any household that hosts at least two other Jewish households for Seder a gift of a Haggadah and a gift certificate to Rhythm and Blooms, for flowers for your Seder table. Just email me to let me know whom you’re hosting.

As we approach and celebrate the season of Passover this year, I encourage us to think of the story in light of “let my people go that they may serve Me.” As we read our own lives into the Exodus story, let us consider not only, “what am I free from?” but “what is demanded of me? How am I called to serve?”