

This morning, we read from the Torah about the splitting of the Red Sea. We read, in Exodus 14:15, that when the Israelites saw the Egyptians coming after them as they were gathered at the shores of the Red Sea, they cried out in fear. Moshe at first responds by telling the Israelites to calm down and wait for Hashem to perform a miracle for them.

Hashem's response to Moshe, in Exodus 14:15, is likewise reproving: "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward!"

Many people in the room have heard of the midrashim about Nachshon Ben Amminadav, the first brave to soul to jump into the water. But several commentators, including the most prolific, Rashi, state that the instruction was that all of the Israelites needed to step forward, to take that leap into the water – and only then would Hashem part the sea.

The redemption requires many leaps of faith. On the night of seder, we commemorated the leap of faith necessary for the people to publicly slaughter their paschal lambs, an act of defiance in the face of Egyptian culture that venerated those animals.

This morning, we got to the Red Sea and told the story of the leap of faith into the water.

Our Torah and haftarah readings for tomorrow, the final readings of Pesach, remind us that the responsibility to be able to make visionary leaps was not just incumbent on our ancestors, but is ours, too, going forward. Our Torah reading, in Deuteronomy 14 through 16, deals not only with the celebration of this holiday, but with another leap-of-faith enacting liberation, the shmitta year, the seventh year of rest and debt remission, and of setting free debt-bond-servants. This time, the roles are inverted. The instruction is given to the land-holding Israelite that we must free our slaves, that we must forgive those who hold debts against us – only then is the liberation complete. The text in Deut. 15:7-10 implicitly acknowledges how challenging this is, saying, "If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman.

Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs.

Beware lest you harbor the base thought, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is approaching," so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will incur guilt.

Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the LORD your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings.