

As we approach Pesach this year, I am struck, not by the frantic cleaning, not by the preparation for seder during a second year of pandemic, but by the demand at the ritual core of the holiday, which is: “Tell the story.”

The Pesach *Haggadah* literally means, “telling.” The story of Passover, of our miraculous transition from bondage to liberation, is the foundational narrative of our people. We recite reminders of it in every service. We invoke it during *kiddush* every Shabbat and holiday. And on Pesach, of course we are obligated not only to tell the story, but to remind ourselves that, as the Haggadah says, in every generation, each of us is obligated to consider ourselves as if we had personally left Egypt.

What does it mean to live this? First, it means to recognize ourselves as the recipients of miracles, even in the midst of hardship. Just as our ancestors internalized this story despite persecution, we too, internalize this story, reminding ourselves of all that we have overcome. We sing “Dayenu! – It is enough for us!” about each small and incomplete victory over injustice or despair. We celebrate progress even as we continue to strive for what has not yet been achieved.

It also means we hold an aspiration for continued redemption. We understand that the limitations of our current reality are not the whole picture of what is possible. And we recognize that we have a role to play in the ongoing story of redemption.

One of our most important functions will be in how we tell the story. I mean this very literally. We can tell the story that we are living right now as a story of polarization and corruption. We can talk as if racial injustice, environmental degradation and wealth and health inequality are just “facts of life,” or “the way things are.”

Or we can tell the story, as the Haggadah suggests, “*mig’nut l’shevach*” – “from shame to praise.” We can speak honestly about the failures – collective and individual – that have brought us to this place of reckoning. And we can demand of ourselves and our leaders a better future.

The story continues to unfold in each and every generation, and how we tell it matters.