

12 Days Completed

Learning Focus

Here I am ready to consider the role of **Big Names** on this journey, undertaking to know more each day about the workings of oppression, so that we might get ourselves, all of us, out from under this millstone that is the Narrow Place.

Returning to the outsize role Joseph appears to have in both Genesis and Exodus: that "already there" is the briefest of recaps for the longest saga in Genesis (37, 39-50; see also *Dick Gregory's Bible Tales*, excerpted in *Rereading Exodus Along the Anacostia*). We know Joseph's career, how he dressed, what he ate, and a little about his wife -- all *Mitzrayim-ite*. We barely glimpse his brothers and their families, mostly as additional color for Joseph's story.

Once Exodus begins, the condensed narration emphasizes Joseph's role even more strongly. Causality is never explicit, and yet: Joseph dies, and his People lose their humanity; Pharaoh doesn't know Joseph, and all hell breaks loose. Was Joseph somehow a lone, thin human line preventing genocide? Is it possible that Joseph was the only link between the two groups? Or that his role was so crucial that all collapsed without him?

Attributing all that power to one person makes Joseph seem reminiscent of an organized crime leader or "the Boss" of a political patronage machine, like Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley (1902-76, ז"ל). Is the text suggesting that Joseph, or his memory, kept a lid on intergroup animosity by doling out of protection, jobs, and essential resources?

This is not inconsistent with Joseph's story in Genesis. It also resembles the contemporary strategy of relying on one Big Name with known ties to a particular group -- a prominent clergy person, or a screen celebrity, for example -- for entrée to a whole community or as a way of signaling "understanding" after some kind of harm has occurred. (Visiting Sylvia's restaurant in Harlem with Rev. Al Sharpton, or attending a high-profile Passover Seder come to mind.)

Beyond optics, can one relationship promote intergroup understanding?

What about those optics: Do they help in a crisis? for the long haul?

Why do these outsized roles exist? Are we victims of opportunists, or do we give Big Names space so they can tread where we'd rather not?

Do Big Names represent us (even while benefiting from the spotlight)?

Ritual Focus

Here I am, ready and prepared

[use traditional *kavanah* and/or continue here]

Here I am, ready and prepared to fulfill this project of counting 49 days, from Narrowness to Expansion, seeking to examine oppression and envision liberation, inspired by the Torah's counting of the Omer, counting seven full weeks, from Liberation to Revelation, until I reach fifty days, and prepare to bring new thoughts before the Eternal and into the world.

Bless

[See "blessing" page for masculine or feminine God-language]

Brukheh ateh YHVH

ברוך אתה יהוה

Elohénu hei ha'olamim

אלָהֵינוּ חִי הָעוֹלָמִים

asher kidshétnu

אֲשֶׁר קָדְשָׁתָנוּ

bəmitzvotéihe vətzivétnu

בְּמִצְוֹתָה וְצִוְתָנוּ

al sefirat ha'omer

עַל סְפִירַת הָעֵמֶר

Blessed are you, YHVH,
our God, Life of endless worlds,
who made us holy
with Voix commandments and commanded us
to count the Omer.

Count

הַיּוֹם שֶׁלֶשֶׁת עָשָׂר יוֹם שְׁהֵם שְׁבִיעָה אַחַד וְשֶׁשֶׁת יָמִים לְעֵמֶר

*Hayom sh'loshah asar yom
shehem shavua echad v'shishah yamim la-omer.*

Today is thirteen days, which is one week and six days of the Omer.

visit <http://Rereading4Liberation.com>
for more on Recounting Exodus and
Rereading Exodus along the Anacostia