

27 Days Completed

Learning Focus

Here I am ready to consider "**the people**" 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.

As Pharaoh's chief administrator during a time of famine, Joseph resettles the entire population: "And as for the people, he removed them city by city, from one end of the border of *Mitzrayim* to the other." -- Gen 47:21

An old commentary says that Joseph did this out of love for his brothers: If everyone were displaced, no one could call his brothers exiles (Talmud Chullin 60b, ~500 CE, Babylon). Later discussion says the purpose "was to prevent uprisings by populations who had no roots in their countries and therefore had no good reason to start a rebellion" (Rashbam, 12th CE, France, via Sefaria.org).

Rabbi Justin David, formerly a congregational rabbi in DC, writes about Joseph's resettlement strategy and Rashbam's take on it:

...we have an explicit condemnation of Joseph from...Rashbam, the grandson of Rashi...The Rashbam compares Joseph not only to the king of Samuel's warnings [1 Sam 7], but also to the autocratic Achashverosh, the Persian king of the Book of Esther, and Sennacherib, the ruthless Assyrian invader (see 2 Kings 18)....

...there are problems with this critical reading of Joseph. Our judgment of Joseph as an exploitative despot does not seem to be borne out by other elements of the biblical text. After all, it is not under Joseph that the people experience excessive suffering, but under the Pharaoh "who did not know Joseph" at the beginning of Exodus. -- "Benevolent Dictatorship or Righteous Balance?" at My Jewish Learning

While R' David lets Joseph off the hook, he concludes: "We should always be wary of the uses and abuses of institutional power."

Doesn't much depend on how we read "the people"?

Clearly R' David, like much of Jewish commentary, focuses on *Yisrael-ite* suffering; but that's not the whole picture.

Can we re-tell the story to include how everyone suffered or thrived?

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

Elohéinu hei ha'olamim

asher kidshétnu

bəmitzvotéihe vətzivétnu

al sefirat ha'omer

בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְהוָה

אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הַעוֹלָמִים

אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁתָנוּ

בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְצִוִּיתָנוּ

עַל סְפִירַת הָעוֹמֵר

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 שְׂמוֹנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעוֹמֵר.

Hayom sh'monah v'esrim yom shehem arbaah shavuot la-omer.

Today is twenty-eight days, which is four weeks of the Omer.

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