

A Passover Teaching You Carry with You:

Is there a teaching, ritual, or question connected to Passover that you return to again and again? What makes it enduring for you, and how does it continue to teach you?

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I became a Jew by Choice late in life after a long secular career in science and medicine that had spiritual, but not religious, underpinnings. After my conversion and in tandem with other life transitions, I felt an even stronger desire to learn more about Jewish history, Jewish texts, and Jewish literature. I delved into Jewish holidays as a student, a reader, and a questioner. With Pesah specifically, my studies of history and William Dever's archeology challenged the logos of the stories of Exodus, placing them on a different scale and timeline than I had imagined. Yet the myths became more important, and I felt inspired by the message of liberation from bondage, the founding of a people and a nation. Embracing and choosing a life that tries to repair our damaged world has had deep resonance. I found parallel thinking in Victor Frankl's statement from *Search for Meaning*, "You cannot control what happens to you in life, but you can always control what you will feel and do about what happens to you."

I came to appreciate that the telling of the stories in the Haggadah each year has helped preserve Judaism from antisemitism, assaults, pogroms, and genocides that have been part of Jewish life from its inception through today. Rituals have made a difference, and the central message of Pesah—the prospect of escaping to new lives—is powerful and enduring. Pesah is meaningful not only because it offers an opportunity for collective memory, but because of how it sets the stage for the telling—through text, read aloud, questioned, and deeply considered. Even though I have no Jewish family other than my spouse, I find Pesah deeply meaningful because I feel connected to a people and to words that have lasted for millennia. Because virtually every other part of my life has been comprised of short half-lives, the holiday of Pesah offers an intergenerational connection, even if loosely woven. That symbolism is special because it puts the focus on people and fosters a community with a history, expectations, and hopes for the future, individually and collectively.



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