

Wandering from Liberation

Contributed by [Ariel Kates](#)

Source:

The ritual we are sitting down to is one that others have sat down to for thousands of years. We move in tonight's story from one place to another - from slavery to freedom, from a narrow place to a place of limitless possibilities - we chronicle the exodus from Mitzrayim, which in many ways is like getting our happy ending, walking out into the desert horizon toward the promised land.

But we know that history has continued from the moment of exodus until now, to find us somehow here, within and aware of the cycles and spirals of human history, still wandering. We are reminded almost daily, especially now, of our transience, of the precarious nature of history and our place in it - our futures are still in our own hands and hearts and dreams as we wander.

There is a story in Talmud about an old man who is 100 years old. He's working in a field, planting a fig tree, when the king encounters him and asks *Why, at your age, are you still working?* The man said, I have always worked and I will always work, that is what it means to live. I plant this tree with the understanding *I may never eat from its fruit, but my children, their children, and all those to come will certainly, and this is why I work.* (In the story, the man lives another ten years and does eat the fruit, which he says is god's will).

On Passover, we are told that there's a promised land. And we know that in the Passover texts, liberation isn't the end of the story. In the story of the Seder, much of what we encounter can be seen literally, or can be read as metaphors - the rituals are elemental, a little bit mystical, and often mirrored. Blood is a plague which is also a protective element in being saved from the angel of death at one of the darkest moments of this story. A killing which is also mirrored in the killing of enslaved children at the beginning of the story. It is said that pillars of fire led the fleeing slaves to the sea. We mirror that in our ritual by lighting candles.

Tonight, we will each light our own candles as we welcome Shabbat and Passover together, we will reach to the sky as we do, and enact a little bit of the pillar of fire that will lead us to our liberation. Let this create a space for us to celebrate our freedom, name the experiences and difficulties of attaining that, and move forward in our wandering towards our own promised land, with enough destruction in our wakes that we can work toward whole new futures. Let our light fill the room with the things that will sustain us - a kind of liberation that isn't linear because it can't be because it's about our dreams. Let us encounter water as though we have already walked through it.