

## *Pesach Yizkor 2018*

Delivered by Rabbi Aaron Krupnick 4/7/18

We had a lovely Second Seder here in shul this year. Between both of our Second Sedarim we had over 200 people in attendance. Many were our members, some were ECC families yet to join, and still others were folks from the wider community who simply saw our sign on the corner and decided to come. In fact that last group was so large that we are considering moving our shul seder to the First Night (only) to bring in more people who need a place to go. Let all who are spiritually hungry come and eat...

Our Second Seder, not surprisingly, ran a little late, but most people stayed until the end. And at the very end of the seder we all stood up and sang Hatikvah, loud and proud. And even though they were standing way across the room from me, I could not help but notice a woman and who had come with her adult son to the seder. I had never seen them before, and even though we were yards apart, I could not help but notice the tears streaming down her cheek as Hatikvah was sung. I had to go over and see her before she left. But before I could even say hello, she turned to me, and smiling through the tears said, "Hatikvah always gets me, especially now after the seder." And it was a powerful moment for me, and for her. Then someone grabbed my arm, (you know how it is) I turned, and when I turned back, they were gone. I hope I get to see them again.

With all that goes on in Israel, and as closely as I follow the news of Africans who will not be allowed to stay in Israel, of the struggles of non-Orthodox Jews for equal religious rights, of protests on the Gaza border, of airstrikes and the fear of reprisals... with all of that on my mind, sometimes I forget the simple truth: Israel is a miracle. Modern Israel is a miracle on par with any that we read about in the Haggadah. And the suffering of the Holocaust that preceded the founding of the State far exceeds anything that the slaves had to endure in Egypt. Concluding the seder with Hatikvah is so much more than simply a "tip of the hat" to the Jewish State. Hatikvah is the fulfillment of all that we read about at our seder tables. It is the fulfillment of countless sedarim held over thousands of years, all of which have ended with the words, "Next Year in Jerusalem." And even if we ourselves cannot be in Israel, or in Jerusalem next year, we know our future is secure in the Jewish State.

Later this week, after the shul seder, I thought about that woman - I don't even know her name - the one with tears streaming down her face. I wondered if she'd ever been to Israel, but really it doesn't matter. Even if you can't get there, there is tremendous comfort in knowing that in some sense, Gd really has redeemed us. I thought of her and the tears in her eyes when I read in the paper about Zelig Kalmanovich. Zelig Hirsch Kalmanovich was a Lithuanian Jewish philologist, translator, historian, and community archivist of the early 20th century. He was a renowned scholar of Yiddish. In 1929 he settled in Vilna where he became an early director of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. When the Nazis invaded, Kalmanovich was incarcerated in the Vilna Ghetto where he became an observant Jew. During his time in the Ghetto, Kalmanovich kept a secret diary which is one of the few primary sources recording day-to-day life. His diary stressed the efforts of the community to retain their humanity in the face of oppression. Through theatre, poetry, literature, music and dance, the Jews tried to maintain their dignity and their culture in the face of the Nazi efforts at dehumanization. Deported to a slave labor camp in Estonia, Kalmanovich still held his head high, and he could say to his Nazi executioners, "I LAUGH at you! I am not afraid of you! I have a son in Eretz Yisrael!" Knowing that his son had

reached the Land of Israel made him confident that Jewish civilization would rise from the ashes. Kalmanovich was worked to death that slave labor camp but his son, Shalom Lurie, lived a long and happy life on a kibbutz and later edited and published his father's diary.

As that woman at our shul seder so poignantly reminded me, without Hatikvah, the Passover story is left only half told. Singing Hatikvah at the end of the seder is not triumphalism but is, in fact quite the opposite. By telling the full story we are reminded of the Jewish People - OUR People's refusal to stay sunk in fear and trepidation, mourning and misery, servitude and dependency on others. We are a People who move from suffering through to strength, gratitude, and indeed celebration.

And so as we turn to Yizkor, we owe it to those who came before us to tell the full story, too. We remember the sadness of their loss, but we also remember the many ways that they ennobled our lives, gave us direction, and put us on the path that has led to this moment in our lives. They may not have lived to see all that we have become, but they knew that through their own hard work and dedication, we would one day be able to look back at their lives and give thanks. We are a redemptive People who take nothing for granted. We are a hopeful people, who, even in darkness, long for the light. And we bring fulfillment to the dreams of our ancestors as we make better lives for those who will follow us.