



new london
synagogue



Happy Pesach - Od Lo

אל תיגע- is one of my favourite Hebrew idioms. “Not Yet,” is the literal meaning, but the Hebrew connotes something more. It’s difficult to explain. More romantic, perhaps, but not foolishly so. Od Lo is a phrase that inhabits the space between resignation and naivete, a space between pessimism and optimism, a space that is both grateful for what has come, but unsatisfied that we are there yet.

Od Lo Avdah Tikvateinu – our hope is not yet lost – is, of course, a line from Israel’s national anthem. The line beautifully subverts a verse from Ezekiel, as I shared over Rosh Hashanah (that sermon, if you missed it!, is

here <https://rabbionanarrowbridge.blogspot.com/2024/10/kol-nidrei-hope.html>.)

Od Lo Ahavti Dai – I have not yet loved enough – sung Arik Einstein. Or perhaps, better, I still have love to give.

The phrase is much on my mind as we arrive at Peach. There is freedom, yes, but Od Lo. In some ways Od Lo has always been the best phrase to use to describe our relationship with Freedom. It was harder, in the Biblical period and since, to take the Children of Israel out of Egypt than to take the Egypt out of the Children of Israel. Od Lo. On my recent trip to Israel, Rabbi Natasha and I had the opportunity to sit with Mikhael Manekin, a leading Orthodox thinker and pro-democracy campaigner. He spoke of his sense that his life in Israel, the country in which he was born and served, is still a life lived in Exile. Od Lo. Freedom is not solved by externalities, or a toggle switch that can be switched between on and off. Freedom has always been an incomplete journey. But the gap between what is and the fullness of freedom I desire feels particularly wide this year.

As we arrive at Pesach, there are still hostages whose experience of enslavement is bluntly literal. Od Lo.

I fear, heavily, the Israeli government doesn’t understand how to govern in the direction of freedom. Od Lo.

There’s a part of my soul in pain for the people of Gaza, living amongst rubble. I cannot believe there are no innocents among the guilty. This too is an Od Lo.

The Seder contains its own Od Lo elements, of course. We eat the bread of affliction and herbs of bitterness. We dip in teary salt-water and spill for the losses of the Egyptians. It’s never been a celebration of freedom that allows us to forget that there is always more to be done. But it is a celebration, with Halleluyahs and songs about goats and chocolate covered Matzah and all the rest of it. Od Lo.

Pesach isn’t about expressing an unfettered delight in a journey completed. Pesach is really a call to find joy in Od Lo; that rueful, contemplative, courageous, carefully-balanced romanticism between resignation and naivete, between pessimism and optimism, in a space both grateful for what has come, but unsatisfied that we are ‘there’ yet. That’s OK. In fact it might be better than anything else we could imagine.

It’s a privilege to celebrate this incomplete but remarkable festival at New London. Whether you are celebrating with family, but especially if you are (also!) able to join us at Shul, I look forward to these coming days with a sense of gratitude, anticipation and Od Lo.

Shabbat Shalom
Chag Sameach,

Rabbi Jeremy