

PASSOVER POEMS

FROM CHAYA LESTER'S BOOK
"LIT – POEMS TO IGNITE YOUR JEWISH HOLIDAYS"

Passover is the full moon Pilgrimage Festival of the 15th of Nissan. It is a spring holiday that celebrates freedom.

Hear the Call

They say that the bush burned
not only for Moses
but for anyone
who would simply
NOTICE.

Simply step aside
from their daily grind
and notice
the quiet light that
burns inside.

And know this:
We need not be consumed
by life's smoky plumes.
We can endure most anything
we set our souls to.

For we are the sacred brush
of paradox and calling.

Sit with the things that sear
your leaves
and when you hear the call
- be prepared
to leave.

Free...to Serve

Let's face it,
we are history's latest greatest liberals liberated.
We are a people of endless means
to do and be
whatever the F (and F stands for freedom)
that we want to be.

We are free to craft our wildest
self-styled-est set of dreams.
As we walk amid twin pillars of miracles
that burst through material's endless *seems*.

With our AC cloud by day
and our TV blaze by night
we hear DVDs of symphonies
atop chariots of SUVs...
But did we get the message right?

We are whatever we want to be.
But who do you choose to be?
For the purpose of all this
unprecedented & historic
freedom...
The singular purpose,
is Service.

Our task is to have impact....

God won't ask if we stood with the great
but if we sat
with the broken at the back.

Did we align our greatest wants
with the world's direst needs?
Did we use our undeserved freedom to serve humanity?
Nobles oblige...

Let us desire service
like a smoker smolders for a cigarette,
like a drunkard hunkers for a drink.
Let us become addicts of attentiveness
to the world's grittiest Needs.

For "Let my people go!"
is not the rally call

the movies told you so.
-Not for our man Moses.
His divinely-given vision ends
not just with freedom
but freedom with a mission.

So go ahead and finish his sentence...
“Let my people go
...that they may **serve** Me.”

Read your Bible & your Eric Fromm.
For the point of true freedom
is freedom **To**
not just freedom **From**.

Freedom to be holy
To obey Highest Decree.
Freedom to be servants
not of Pharaohs but of the Cosmos
and the hoboes, the hungry, the mean.

So don't replace your past master
with another king in a castle...
Rather be a vassal to the sky.
Take the stuff of this new-found freedom
and be of service
if you truly want to Fly.

The Hebrew name for Passover is *Pe-Sach*, which is symbolically read as *Peh Sach* – the mouth that speaks. Indeed, on Seder night the retelling of the story of our people’s enslavement is nothing short of a national therapeutic ritual. Psychology has shown us the necessity of using speech and expression to best process through the pains and traumas of our lives. Our yearly processing through re-telling has been an essential path of healing and empowerment for our people over millennia. At the same time, Seder night also offers us a ritual space for processing through our personal enslavements. Speech is the ideal vehicle for generating our personal freedom in tandem with the national freedom tale.

Pe-Sach - The Mouth that Speaks

We need to Speak
to be a Spoke
of the wheel
that makes the world go.

So come to circle
to talk about
your torn and tattered.
And through this speech
you will sew
your sinews back together.

Through thread and needle
of circles & syllables...
craft the cloth
to garb your soul.

Be a spoke
of the wheel
that makes the world Go.

Speak for yourself.
Be Spoke
& Sew.

Passover Cleaning

One of the classic cultural rituals of Passover is the massive house cleaning that precedes it. It offers a paradoxical path of restriction that grants an uncommon taste of freedom.



Love it or hate it you can't escape it.
Might as well make it somethin' sacred,
Celebrated.
– It's all about how you frame it.

And I'll tell you how...
'Cause I've donned the gloves and gown
and crown me with a tin crown.

Because I'm like Moses goin' down to Egypt.
This kitchen is my Pharaoh
and I'm gonna defeat it.
Gonna clean it 'til it shines like Venus.
I mean it – I'm a Passover genius.

Got my squirt bottle in high throttle
- better believe it.
Gonna cook a brisket
'cuz I got masses on the guest list.

I'm sleepless and shameless
& this hametz is heinous.

Don't blame us.
We're the world's most famous
obsessive compulsives
on the A-list.

But matza medicates us and uplifts this
downtrodden nation of misfits.

Did I mention
I got a tinfoil kitchen?
We give new meaning to anal-retention.

But you gotta appreciate the vision.
Stop your kvetchin' over cleaning.
This is your mansion
your temple, your mission!

Scrub it with a passion
– for God's in the details.
We're living like a fairy tale.
Following bread crumbs like a trail.

So, yeah, Freud might say were outrageous
And diagnose us with a neurosis
but he never knew the sweetness of Shabbas
in the land that God promised.
Never knew how real freedom
is born out of bondage.

So start up your sweepin'
and I'll see you smiling wide
on the other side
of freedom.

These are the Faces

Dedicated to all the children born first-generation on Israeli soil

These are the faces
of the children
born on the other side of the Story.

The ones passed over;
to where the past is over.

The ones who know in their bones
that next year will be in Jerusalem,
just like the last one
and how, for them, it's been all along...

These are the ones who inherit full freedom.
The ones with Hebrew tongues and new songs.
Where bitterness is a story about ancestors.

These are the ones
the prophets promised would come.

Feel Free

Here's to freedom of every flavor.

Free-2b-dumb...as a doorknob - that opens wide.

Free to fall flat...as a matzah - sanctified.

Free to be broken...as an Afikomen.

Free to be bitter...as maror - and let the bitter be.

Free to be so haroset sweet that we're sappy, sticky, messy with accepting.

Free to be split like the Reed Sea... like atoms with nuclear energy.

Free to sit and tell stories all night

of how we got here and

wow, we got here.

Free to leave

Free to believe.

Elijah's Cup

She kept a corner of her cupboard bare
to remind her of what wasn't there
singing "The Righteous will have their share"
as she dusted the spot with her long brown hair.

The spot was for the missing kiddush cup
which was painted upon the board where she supped
and many an eye claimed it stood straight up
though its golden facade still alluded their touch.

And though her bare cabinets held no books
it was plain to those with eyes to look
that the holy hung from the flower pot hooks
around the kitchen where she nimbly cooked.

How her Sabbath soup could feed a dozen troops
they'd tread on the heels of the trill of her flute
and stream from the hills in their rest-a-day suits
to cover her porch with a patchwork of boots.

For it was said you could reach heaven through her backyard gate
though the front door opened to a much better fate
for they'd sing and tell stories till the hour grew late
recounting the deeds of Elijah the Great.

She'd wink and point out her Seder plate
-just a scrap of cloth 'neath a paper weight-
which she claimed no common hand could create
for it was given in a visit from Elijah the Great.

As one night she had seen in a crystal clear way
that the Prophet was passing her humble gateway.
So she ran through her garden to ask him to stay
and linger he did till the soft break of day.

But before his visit was finally through
the cup and plate he magically drew
and promised with expression true
that he'd soon return to fill the two.

So with these tools of flawless faith,
Elijah's kiddush cup and Seder plate,
she lived a happy-ever-after fate
of a life of song sung in sacred wait.

Miriam's Well

There is a modern tradition to have a Cup of Miriam set on the Seder table next to the Cup of Elijah. It is filled with water to remind us of the Well of Miriam that followed the Jewish people as they wandered in the desert. Miriam's Well was the gift of staying spiritually hydrated even in our wanderings. The Midrash says that this well relocated to the Sea of Galilee when the Jews entered the Land of Israel and is still there today.



When we weren't looking
our drinks were spiked
with waters from the Well of Miriam.

So surreptitious
and sneaky was the hand
that held the flask
that we dare not ask how
that mystic cocktail
ended up in our glass.

But God don't we know how
we are blessed.
Watered by the mythic
Mother of miracles
Fearless of the desert weather.
Wet forever.

Thank you, sister Miriam,
For your fabled faucet
that keeps us hydrated and free
even in our driest & direst of wanderings.

Exodus: An Instruction Manual for Escaping Abuse

The Biblical story of the Exodus from Egypt is perhaps the world's most famous metaphor – and guide – for how to move out of a toxic relationship. It is particularly potent medicine for anyone caged in an abusive relationship. The Biblical phrase the 'House of Bondage' (*beit avadim*) is a striking image because the truth is that any home where there is abuse becomes a house of bondage.

The term 'bondage' is also illuminating because in any abusive home there is an essential BOND at work. That is the unyielding bond between the abuser and the abused. That bond is a shackle to which they are both imprisoned. That essential bond must be identified and broken. One way it is shattered is in the very telling of one's story of enslavement.

In the entire text of the Exodus, it never once says that the Hebrews protested their enslavement. For over 100 years they don't so much as make a whimper of complaint, much less a lunge at rebellion. Noticeably absent from the story is any hint of the slaves' selfhood or expression.

The slave is notoriously speechless, helpless. That identity is encrusted and reinforced with each new put-down, smack-down, or silencing. And yet it is up to the slave to break the bond...for the Pharaoh never will. The first way to do that is by telling your story.

For those who are enslaved: Tell your story. Seek a Moses, an Aaron, a Miriam, a therapist, a friend. You deserve an entire tribe of support. The biblical formula of freedom is real...and there is a Promised Land on the other side.

My Pharaoh

"The truth will set you free...but first it will piss you off." Gloria Steinem

I share this next poem in the spirit of the Pesach theme of the power of speech; particularly the giving of expression to that which has pained us. It is about my own enslavement to the Pharaoh of an abusive relationship. It is vulnerable, and yet empowering. I share it with a prayer that all such enslavements will cease.¹



Let me tell you my story
My Egypt-fleeing
My finding-freedom
My facing-demons
My truth.

It is a story of deception & seduction
A narrative swollen
with abuse.

I sit in stunned recollection
Of the Egypt from which I have
wrested my soul.

See my shrunk purple hands
That served him
Will you hold them?

And this tongue rotten
From silencing his secrets...
Will you hear them?

Can you hear this story?
Will you dare to dream with me a better ending
An ending of not just my slavery
But an end of slavery itself.

An end of women enslaved to men
An end of men enslaved to addictions

¹ Statistics show that 95% of reported domestic violence cases are men abusing women, while 5% are women abusing men. As such, I use the model where the abuser is male and the abused is female. But of course abuse is not gender-specific. Women also abuse men, or even other women. There are other variations. But given the statistics, in these personal poems, I address the dynamic of abusive men/abused women.

An end of the vicious cyclics
of abuse.

Perhaps you have wrangled a Pharaoh
Or two
Of your very own.

Witnessed his web of manipulations
Seen his vast deceptions
Perhaps you heard rumors
Dismissed hearsay
With an air of compassion.

But Pharaohs play off of our righteousness.
Our goodness
Is a knife in their hands
By which they daily carve
Their sick designs
into our very skin.

And I bleed still
From his blade
Even though I had the will to leave
The memory of slavery
Will be forever engrained.

And at the very least
I must speak it here
at this milestone of memory...
That the cycle of slavery may
end with me.

Or at least evoke a plague or two
Upon some unsuspecting Pharaoh
And set free
another slave.

May my telling help another woman
To step out of her grave.

Another Slave Set Free

One good thing that was born from my own enslavement to an abusive relationship was my ability to empathize with, help and heal others who found themselves in similar straits.

As a psychotherapist I have worked with many women struggling their way out of houses of bondage. I wrote this poem after receiving the kind of email every therapist working with abuse-victims hopes to receive.²

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*"Oh my God, I finally did it.
Finally went to the police
Finally filed that thick report
about my husband's abuse
because yes-it-was-abuse
a-decade-of-abuse
felt-like-a-lifetime-of-abuse
thought-it-would-never-end-abuse
I can finally call it abuse.*

*Got my Dad to pick up the kids
my brother to pack up his clothes
my lawyer to file for divorce.
Picked up my own pride
from the floor
to wounded knees
to wobbly legs
to lengthening spine
to long breathe
to leave that corral where
it had covered in fear
for so many years.
I am free."*

I read this email and literally collapsed into tears.
Shocked myself with sudden sobbing.
Shoulders heaving and forehead heavy as a stone
on the table sobbing.
Sobbing
for her 6 children
and another on the way
sobbing
in sheer amazement

² Details have been altered to protect the identity of the victim.

of the sheen of her wings
set free from that cage

Sobbing for every time
she held it in
when he pushed her, punished her
badgered her, stole sleep from her
siphoned strength from her
sucked pride from her.

Sobbing for that step when she sang a solo in the concert
- though he told her she had no voice.

Sobbing for that step when she took a bus to the job interview
- though he had hidden the car keys .

Sobbing with release and with gratitude.
Sobbing for all that was lost
and for all that she will gain
from this courageous mother-bear
thrash of strength.

Sobbing in thanks
For the freeing of another slave

Here's to all the women who set themselves free....and all the ones who will.

In the Merit of the Women

The Sages tell us that it was in the merit of the women that the Hebrews were redeemed from Egypt. So let's look at the first women who appear in the Exodus story - Shifra and Puah. These were the plucky midwives who refused to follow Pharaoh's decree of slaughtering newborn babies. These women are also understood to be Miriam and Tzipora, the mother and sister who nurtured histories' great social agitator, Moses himself.

These midwives employ a crafty tactic for the defiance of Pharaoh. He demands that they kill every male child. The text tells us they fear God, blatantly defy the command and kill no children. What is so strategic about their approach is that they don't simply refuse Pharaoh to his face. They knew that that path, honorable as it may be, would have only led to their own death and Pharaoh's choosing someone else to enact his murderous plans. So they pretend to follow orders; pacifying Pharaoh, protecting themselves and saving the children in the process.

When Pharaoh calls them back to ask why they have disobeyed him they plead powerless, saying that the Hebrew women are lively and deliver the children before their arrival. Pharaoh apparently believes them and retains their services. It seems that these plucky midwives have simply talked their way out of trouble. It is no wonder then that in reward for their defiance, the text tells us that God rewards the midwives with houses. These gift houses, as enigmatic as they may be, make perfect symbolic sense. For midwives are essentially symbols for not just the technical birthing of a child, but the entire sphere of actions and intentions that usher in and house new life.

Midrash Hagadol illustrates this idea beautifully in its weaving of a story of Pharaoh sending guards to capture the delinquent midwives. It says that God saves the women by turning them into the beams of a home. The guards search the house to no avail, for Shifra and Puah have become embedded in the house itself. They are the beams, the fortifying forces that uphold the entire structure. The midwives thus embody the home and all that it symbolizes: family, inter-relatedness, communication, and internality. For our homes are the internal spheres from which we impact the outer world.

Indeed, in this episode, these internally-oriented women are called upon by Pharaoh himself to become players in the external arena of power and politics. They rise to the task and become social activists on the national scene. Their act of defiance impacts the entire people and allows for the very birthing of Moses and Aaron. They are the abolitionists that enable the redemption of an entire people and the righting of a massive social wrong.

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out so eloquently, their story is "the first recorded instance of civil disobedience... [setting a precedent] that would eventually become the basis for the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Shifra and Puah, by refusing to obey an immoral order, redefined the moral imagination of the world". History's proud line of social activists and conscientious objectors can trace their source back to these righteous midwives stand against the powers that be.

In the poem below, Puah herself calls for a redefinition of what it means to be a freedom fighter. She reframes agitating for social justice in more internal terms. She is an activist who does not so much take to the streets, as she takes to the kitchen sink, maintaining that all great battles for justice have their locus in the living room.

Ruah

Like freedom fighters
who pray with their feet
I protest for inner-peace.

Though paraplegic in comparison
to prodigious heels of powerful men,
my prayerful wheels
spin tales of inner-freedom
and mindful treatment
of children and kin.

I commit to calm the din of crying infants
with the easy clicking of my teeth.
I speak for those who do not yet know how to speak.

My freedom fighting is not political,
That task is for a hardier class
of Jewish girl.

For me - the Egyptian fiend
is personal
for the Pharaohs I dethrone
rule the halls of each of our homes.

In the inner-alcoves of a private despair
that petrifies the children
and paralyzes the parents
that imprisons our finest hours
of family commitment and contentment.

I prefer to peddle wares
of wars-well-avoided
where everyone wins
through carefully worded
apologies and the timely
airing of grievances
between friends.

For cowering beneath the pyramids
of needs – my fiends
are the menacing insecurities of adolescents
and the lethal bickerings of parents,
the noisome whines of needy toddlers,
and the all-too-common-household-hollers
that oppress our most precious commodities

of family.

My enemies crouch quietly beneath
the crumbs on the living room carpet.
A beast between the sheets
of a cold-shouldered bedroom
where partners sleep
unconscious
and deeply out of tune
with the exquisite call
of their common dreams.

I come to loosen the shackled lips
of fathers and mothers
that they may better utter
their astounded praise
at the miracle of a house full
of filthy shoes, spilled soup
and their childrens' most innocent mistakes.

My task is to counter the
armor-clad offensive
against love and friendship
- to incite a protest against
the enslavement of a trillion
inner prophets of tranquility
whose gentle-tongued souls
are daily buried beneath
straw burdens of poor communication
and tossed out with the trashed
afternoons of a mother's impatience.

I come to play the Moses of relational redemption
in the face of a sink-full of grimy resentments.

And so I call forth all fellow
freedom fighters for inner-transformation -
midwives with wise hands
toting Torahs, toting infants, toting pens.
All prayer-footed-protesters
come & herald in
emotional freedom from the Pharaonic foe
and let us birth our children
into peaceable homes.

For when our houses enshrine tranquility
then outer-world will follow inner-lead
and rock-hard hearts

will soften grips
and all that's enslaved
will lithely slip
into the soft of freedom found
and take your shoes off
to walk around
for our houses are the
hallowed ground
from which God speaks.

So call me Puah,
who quiets the cries
of children, slaves
and the Pharaohs
inside.

Shvi Shel Pesach

(7th Day of Passover)

The seventh day of Passover is its own mini-holiday within Passover. It marks the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea. *Shirat Hayam* – the Song at the Sea – is sung in exultation after the miraculous parting.

In truth, though, there are two songs sung. One by Moses and the other by Miriam. The 18th century Hassidic writer, the Meor V'Shemesh, shares a powerful paradigm shifting commentary that contrasts these two songs.

He bases his writings on the Kabbalistic principle of linear verses circular consciousness. According to Kabbalah, line consciousness is essentially masculine. It is hierarchical, progress-oriented, future-directed, competitive; the epitome of the world's current state of affairs. Line consciousness correlates with Moses' song, rendered in the future tense of the opening lines to the song, “Az Yashir – I *will* sing”.

Circle consciousness, on the other hand, is egalitarian, rooted in the present, supportive, non-hierarchical. It is a feminine paradigm. And more than that, it epitomizes Messianic consciousness, the glowing state of affairs towards which our world evolves. Miriam's song is sung in the present tense with women dancing in circular form. Each woman stands equidistant from the center, all with equal access to God.

In a circle, everyone is holy and wholly rooted in their own source of wisdom. These circle-enacting women, according to the Meor V'shemesh, were able to access a higher revelation than Moses, history's greatest prophet.

Why? Because something immense happens when we circle. We know of the importance of the circle from teachings in the Kabbalah...but more importantly, we know it in our own bones. Circle-consciousness is humanities next frontier and most pressing endeavor. It is feminine. It is Messianic. It is essential to our globe and our mission on it.

I bless us all that we may each in our own way taste the fruits of circle consciousness flooding into and rounding out the angles of our all-too-linear world.

Circle Dance

Here at the sea
we offer limb to reach beyond
the limitations
of a linear world gone wrong.

Here we are egalitarian and elegant
Responsive and penetrant.

For the secret encoded
in our circular chorus
will speak for generations
of a new paradigm of being

Of how to be connected and conscious
even amidst conflict
with a promise of resolution
through attunement
to the circle of life
to which we are all enchained.

And our dance will
evoke an approaching era
when the ailments born
of institution & competition
will dissolve into
equality.

When common dignity
for all will incorporate
regardless of position
on the no-longer-existent ladder
of hierarchy.

Our circle will model
what it is to be fully embodied in the present
- a servant to the womb of the Moment.

With no future tense
impending & impeding
the flowing rhythm of our spin.

Here we are free
from the hamperings of
will-be's or has-been's.

Temporality is our temple
in this circle
where all is ample
and transparent.

Ours, a choreography
of equality
inclusivity
& bringing all-of-me
into this welcome
crucible of community.

Raise Your Voices

In a related vein to the teaching on circle consciousness, Passover offers a strong vision of what happens when people (and in this case, women) gather together in creative expression. The women brought their drums out of Egypt with them because they had faith that they would have cause to celebrate. Note that omanut/art has the same root as emunah/faith. The women danced, played drums, sang, channeled. They modeled for us being creative, expressive, bold.

“How did the women of this generation know to take tambourines out of Egypt, when there was barely enough time to take food? The righteous women of the generation were certain that God would perform miracles in the desert, so they brought the tambourines out of Egypt.” ~ Rashi – Exodus 15:20



Women raise your voices
in rightful raucous.

Beat drum, sing song
and stun anyone
whoever called
you too timid
to sing.

For the Spirit alone
instructs your lips and
limbs as to the allowance
of their bend
and propriety is defined by
the prophetess
who abides within.

For she will be the one to pull the covers
of your tresses
to dress her modest
as she launches
into her loudest
campaign - for you to stand and
dance majestic on histories'
well-sanded stage.

Sisters, this is why we wear our drums
ready on our shoulder blades...
to seize this moment at the sea
that it may become a fable famous
and decree.
For as long as history
needs a precedent

to utter unabashed
riffs of praise.

Here we are held
responsible to sing
of the God-drenched things that
we have seen.

And we will whirl castles out of sand
with our dance
unhampered
unashamed
entranced.

For we handmaids
have a mandate to hand-make
our own music,
to move muscles
and meet quotas
of creative output
through inspiration
and through struggle.

To sway on sand-dunes
undone by a tune.

To be emboldened
in our God-given right
to self-expression.

Embodying ideas
and idealizing emotion
invoking insight
at the lips of the ocean.

Holding up mirrors
like the windows of waves
-reflecting each other
face to effervescent face.

And so it was, is and will be
in one graceful gesture
at the parting sea
that the women set out
with clapping feet
to circle in a consciousness
of creativity.

Let us ignite each other's
dormant scorch of
dreams.

Moshiach Seudah

An additional theme of Shvi Shel Pesach is connected to the idea of Geulah – the final Redemption. In Hasidic circles there is a tradition to mark the last hours of Passover with a Moshiach Seudah – a meal celebrating the idea of Moshiach and the ushering in of the Geula.

Geula is an ideal that is held in contrast to that of Gulus (or in Sephardi pronunciation Galut). Gulus means Exile and refers to both the physical/geographical exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel as well as the spiritual/inner exile of our consciousness from a godly consciousness. Geula, on the other hand, means Redemption and represents an arrival at both the Land of Israel as well as the redeemed ‘godly’ consciousness of Israel and all it symbolizes.

Shvi Shel Pesach focuses us on our deepest yearnings for Geula, as well as invites us to notice the ways in which we are already on this side of the Gulus. The recognition of our return to the land of Israel is an ever-present gift we now have access to. This is a poem about the yearning for Geula, as well as the yearning to be able to give expression to the Geula that is already here.

This Side of Gulus

I am agitated
For just the slightest slice
of expression of this new-found reality.

I want to pen the lines of my
people in poetry
Instead of pining in lines
at the grocery.

Instead of all this thick mundane
and money-to-make
I want to agitate
To narrate
this long-awaited state...

To write like Maya Angelou would do...
Wistful with a whiskey
and spilling a masterpiece
In long hand
With a deck of cards
In a hotel room I have rented
for that very purpose

I want to narrate all this brightness
on this side of Gulus.

... More Yearning for Redemption

All I want

is to fix this old broken junk-shop of a world.
I just want to fix the heck out of it.
And quick.

Before the sunken flowers fan
out their familiar reek in the kitchen sink.

Before the many monsters dance
on the lawn - drunk on blood
and claim the moonshine
as their own.

I've had enough
with the ponderous pace
of Redemption
that comes dawdling
round the mountain
with tortoise shells and unringed bells.

Though it may lounge long
with the hound dogs on the porch
I know this Saving-Grace is a Porsche.
With many roads to torch.
Many roads to torch.

So come quicker, sweet Redeemer
and til then - let us tinker
well with the knobs and whistles
in this junk shop
made for fixers.

Or else, what are all these slivers
of silver³ yearning for?

Zesach Shenit

³ The Hebrew word Kesef - silver – has the same root as kisuf – yearning.

Pesach Sheni comes exactly one month after Pesach, on the 15th of Iyar. It is a quiet, often overlooked holiday. And yet, it is a ritual that offers a lot of strength to those who need it.

I, for one, always seem to need it...

Passover is sometimes hard on me. Hard on my faith, my body, my nerves. Hard on my marriage, too. I can't seem to make it to Seder night without a resounding chorus of my own low moans of protest. Protest against the toil of it all. The cleaning. The cooking. The taking care of everyone and everything...again. Another round of exhausting rites and ritual, long nights and a few too many fights. I inevitably seem to miss out on God along the way.

So I am particularly appreciative of Pesach Sheni. The Second Passover. The Holiday of Second Chances. This is the replay holiday, reserved for those who were unable to partake in the Pascal lamb on time. Exactly one month later, thankfully, we get another chance to re-tackle this whole freedom march, this time from a place of a little less stress and a lot more perspective.

Just get out a piece of matza and sit down with whoever you lost along the way. Ask for a second chance; from God, your spouse, your self, your friend. After all, second-chances have their own particular flavor of freedom. It's richer, more subtle and complex than the first taste could ever have been.

Again

Let's try this again.
To connect the *daats*
– to know each other
Biblically, mythically, thoroughly
with all of our incompletes.

Let's bring back the mystic,
because I missed-it
a month ago
in all the madness
of the Exodus.
I just flat-out missed it.

I was too bloody tired
and you
were strained
and the table was painted
with the sweat and toil of slavery
though we played like we were free
for the sake of the children,
didn't we?
– Masterfully.

We were as distant as
planets spinning
in their usual orbits
– light years between us.

'Do not worry, we will loop
back around
to eclipse each other again'
– I said.

We are like the moon and the sun
that don't ever really touch
except every once
in a while
on a starry night
one sphere to another
still so distant
but stacked with precision
in a line of connection
and perfect symmetry.

It is all about our perspective,

isn't it?

When the M of me stops
gazing down and
turns heavenward instead
to become 'We'.

Just lift your head.

Come cast your shadow over me
with nothing but forgiveness
between us.

The close flat facts of our connection
plain as any page
of matza reads.

You can bring the charoset
for sweetness between us
and I will bring the maror
to memorialize the distance.
We will sandwich them
just like the sages.

Forgive me.

I was lost in my own loss,
my own trauma.

I carried the old bones
of Joseph, you know.

Like a mother who buries
her priestly sons
in silence.

I lost my chance
to celebrate you.

But I won't lose my chance
to beg forgiveness
and to press with compassion
that eternal reset button
on our friendship.

So let's try this again.

With no pomp and circumstance.
No children, no guests, no friends.
Just a page of matza
and four open palms
between us.

"And with a strong hand
we were brought out of Egypt."

You are my Exodus.
My strong hand.

Your forgiveness
is my freedom.
Our love is my holy land.
Let's leave Egypt
Again.