



To be read before Avadim Hayinu
By Rabbi Barry Leff



Avadim Hayinu:

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

The Mishnah tells us that we begin telling the Passover story with our disgrace. That we were slaves.

Why? Why remember that we were slaves in Egypt?

So that we should remember, and not become oppressors ourselves.

Victims of abuse often become abusers themselves. The Torah commands us “No!” Don’t be an abuser. 36 times the Torah tells us “do not oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Despite all those warnings, our national homeland, Israel, has become an oppressor to another people. Palestinians living in the West Bank do not have freedom of movement. Israel rules their lives with checkpoints, refusing to allow construction in Area C, subjecting them to arbitrary military law. They have no representation and no voice in the government that controls their lives.

Some Palestinians compare the Israeli Occupation to a Nazi regime. We know that’s not true. We know that such a comparison is ignorant.

But what if they compare us to Pharaoh?

Pharaoh ruled over us with a harsh hand in Egypt. We must not do the same to others.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. We must not become Pharaoh in Palestine

About Rabbi Leff

A graduate of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles, Rabbi Leff makes his home in Jerusalem. He works in the business world for his living. His rabbinic work is all volunteer and includes serving as Chairman of Rabbis for Human Rights, serving on the board of the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary, and providing kosher supervision of an Israeli winery on behalf of the Masorti Movement. He is also active in ecumenical work and writing, and is a specialist in business ethics.