

## B'CHOL DOR VA'DOR

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ, כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם...

***B'chol dor va'dor chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'iluhu yatza miMitzrayim.***

“In every generation a person is required to see him/herself as if s/he came out from Egypt.” (Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 116b)

This sentence is often read perfunctorily at our Pesach Seder. It should never be – it should be cherished, inscribed on our doorposts and on our gates along with our *mezuzot*. These words are, in truth, the very core of the meaning and the message of Passover. More than that, they are the essence of the Jewish purpose in the world. They provide the lens through which we see our role in society as the “slavery-to-freedom” people. We are the people who know, in the marrow of our bones and in our collective consciousness what it means to be enslaved – and what it means to be free. It is not possible for us, as Jews, to ignore this legacy. Our only choice is to employ it as our Jewish responsibility to ensure that all people are free from the complete spectrum of slaveries:

- *physical slavery*
- *sexual slavery*
- *gender-role slavery*
- *the slavery of homelessness and poverty*
- *the slavery of a poor education*
- *the slavery of lack of access to clean water*
- *the slavery of lack of access to decent healthcare*
- *the slavery of unjust incarceration*
- *the slavery of racial and ethnic bigotry*
- *the slavery of war*
- *the slavery of being designated “illegal”*

There are other messages in these words as well that I learned from my teacher, Cantor William Sharlin, who commented on how the phrases of the text are laid out in a musical setting by David Alster-Yardeini:

- In every generation a person must see him/herself...
  - A call for self-examination that leads to the creation of values and purpose
- ...To see him/herself as if...
  - To fully perceive the possibilities and potentials of being human
- ...As if s/he came forth from Egypt.
  - To embrace the Egypt experience as our own experience and as a metaphor for our value-laden mandate to ensure that no one is designated as a stranger and oppressed.