A MESSAGE FROM ADAM

The coming week brings one of my favourite Jewish holidays, Passover. Leading up to Passover, or Pesach, my family anticipates the smells, tastes, family time together, change of seasons, and the overall traditions we have developed over the years. We grumble about having to meticulously search for and remove every scrap of chametz (leaven), and we complain about the schlepping we must do to transition our entire kitchen from its everyday status to kosher for Passover status.

At the same time, we look forward to cooking and eating hamentashen (matzah meal pancakes) – that I’m certain my mother-in-law created; we are likely the only family in Calgary that makes them… feel free to stop by and have some – and devouring matzah brei while debating whether it should be eaten with apple sauce or cinnamon sugar and syrup. We also look forward to (yes, look forward to) the Seders (festive meals which are bookended by traditional prayers, blessings, and songs). It has been interesting seeing our children mature and selectively grow out of some traditions, while maintaining others. There is both an excitement and a comfort with the introduction of new traditions while maintaining the continuity of existing ones.

Borrowing from some information I found on aish.com, it is notable that during Pesach there is a focus on teaching the next generation and perpetuating our People’s story that takes us from slavery to freedom, from Egypt to Eretz Canaan. During our Seders, we symbolically relive the oppression our ancestors experienced, tell the story of the ten plagues and the seemingly endless journey to freedom. We encourage our children to ask questions and to consider their roles in maintaining a free, meaningful society. During Pesach we read in the Haggadah, “All who are hungry – come and eat. All who are needy – come join the Passover celebration.” This is said while we are already sitting together and, interestingly, not proclaimed to the outside world. Some interpretations suggest that we start the Seder this way to ground ourselves and to refocus our thinking toward appreciation and aspiration. In saying these words, we acknowledge that we must be present and aware, and that while we might not literally be oppressed, we might still be preoccupied with things that ultimately distract us or take us away from things that really matter.

As we celebrate Passover this year, let’s all renew our focus on family, community, and making a positive impact in the world. While trivial distractions might impede our ability to meaningfully engage with one another or focus on things that matter, I am confident that if we all take the time and consciously make the effort, we can all build the type of world that we want to live in; in the present and see for the future. By reflecting on our values, strengths, and challenges – and by moving our thoughts to action – we can ensure the months and years ahead are even better and more meaningful than the ones already behind us.

Wishing you and yours a Chag Pesach Sameach!

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