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Approaching Pesach at the end of the month—the first seder is Friday, March 30—I am reminded of the words in our prayerbook (p. 39), adapted from Michael Walzer:

"...[W]herever we go, it is eternally Egypt...there is a better place, a promised land...the winding way to that promise passes through the wilderness."

Reading the Haggadah, we recall the experience of slavery and the difficulties we experienced in achieving redemption. We remember that God fought for us and inspired us with hope. At the same time, we had the teachings of our ancestors to guide us, soon to be amplified by God's commanding voice and the teachings of Torah.

And we reached the promised land, only to find out that the story of oppression and redemption is ongoing and many-faceted, and that God continues to fight for us through the inspiration and guidance of Torah. Each of us defines Egypt differently. Indeed, we may experience several Egypts at once. Oppression can be intimately personal; or, like our ancestors in Egypt, it can come to us as part of a large group. But with hope in our hearts—"next year in Jerusalem"—and the eternal teachings of justice, compassion, truth and mutual respect, we have the power and motivation to move onward.

As our text continues: "[T]here is no way to get from here to there except by joining hands, marching together." From its earliest pages, Torah tells us that human conflict is natural. What we have to figure out is how to join hands effectively and over long periods of time, so that we can reach our promised lands more quickly.

In the past, oppressed Jewish communities have been guided by shared commitments to Torah and to each other. As we approach the season of redemption, and in the current climate of national upheaval, let us find the strength, courage and love to reach out to one another so that we can proceed toward the promised land—together.

Wishing you a sweet and kosher Pesach,

Rabbi Paul Tuchman