

Traditionally, rabbis did not lead services. Their main task was to study and teach. The two times during the year that they actively took part in the services were on the Shabbats before Pesah and Yom Kippur. They gave sermons on those days to teach about the laws of those particular holidays. And because they had captive audiences, they tended to go on and on and on...

But I'm not going to do that. I want to give a very short vort, a short kavannah, intention for us to take into our Pesah seders.

As we know we drink four cups of wine at our seders. After the last cup, if we even get that far, most of us are simply too tired to read or even think about the last part of the seder, the nirtzah—the acceptance. If we're lucky we just sing, Leshana haba'ah birushalayim, Next year in Jerusalem and drag ourselves home. But actually this is an important part of the seder.

The translation of this prayer, part of a longer prayer by Rabbi Joseph Bonfils, 11th century, France, is

'Ended is the order of the Pesah Seder, as its laws require—in accordance with all of its statutes and ordinances. Just as we were found worthy to arrange it tonight, may we also be found worthy to do it (that is, to bring the Pesah offering in the future). Holy One who dwells on high, Whose congregation cannot be numbered—cause Your congregation to stand once more. Take in hand the offspring of Your plantings, soon, and lead them back to Zion, redeemed, in joyous song.'

We say this prayer only twice a year. At the end of our first night seder and on Yom Kippur, after the Ne'ilah service, after Yom Kippur is officially over. By doing this, we remind ourselves of the importance of Jerusalem in our lives. Eliahu Kitov, a modern commentator, tells us that we say this prayer because we are sworn to remember Jerusalem during times of great happiness. He quotes Psalm 137, verse 6 which tells us: 'May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.'

The seder and the ending of Yom Kippur are certainly times of great rejoicing. During Pesah we celebrate our freedom and after Yom Kippur, we are grateful for our redemption from sin.

Rather than rushing through the end of the seder this year, let's take a moment and appreciate that God still accepts us as His people and feel our own acceptance of God and our religion. Let us feel our liberation and take a moment to pray for our return to Jerusalem next year.