

PEOPLE OF THE DOOR: MAKING THE IN-BETWEEN HOLY

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It is undeniable that we are the people of the book. But I would like to offer another peoplehood definition to reorient ourselves toward where we are right now, both in our trajectory Jewishly, and also in light of current events.

One of the most powerful moments in Torah takes place in chapter 12 in the book of Exodus, with the Jewish people leaving Egypt. It offers a moment to consider what the necessary conditions were for us to become free people, to be liberated from the shackles of slavery. What is radically clear from that chapter and from the holiday that commemorates the Exodus, is that **we are people who pass over. Although, truth be told, it was only God in that story who passed over. We are a people who passed through.**

The signature event of the Exodus is the pascal offering, a willingness on our part to do something very scary and very dangerous: to slaughter the God of Egypt and place its blood on the door posts — on the liminal space, on the place between. On the door that both held the Israelites back from their liberty and also beckoned them toward their freedom. It was that act of courage and the willingness to do the most brazen, radically unheard-of thing, to slaughter the God of Egypt, that forever became our calling card as a people. **It was our willingness to pass through from a place of fear to a place of possibility, from a place of degradation to a place of dignity.**

That moment became seminal for us, and we mark it with a mezuzah, the emblem on Jewish doors, marking that we are people who passed through. We are a people of the door. A door is something that is between; we are forever the people who know what it is to make the between something holy.

So, it should not come as a surprise that God speaks to Moses in the desert and gives us the Torah there. The midrash wants to know why it is so significant for the Torah to emphasize that God is speaking to Moses specifically *bamidbar*, in the wilderness. Of course God is speaking to Moses in the desert — where else would they be? The Torah reminds us that the exchange took place in the desert to highlight that it was not given in Egypt, it was not given in land of Israel, but it was given in the place between — the “doorway,” as it were.

“We are forever the people who know what it is to make the between something holy.”

Between one place and another, we are given not just the Torah as we know it, but the Torah of the wilderness of Sinai. A place of no man’s land, uncharted and uncertain, where we built resilience. **Sure, we are people of the Torah, but more centrally perhaps, we are people of the door — of the place between, where we marked with the blood of the thing we most feared, the possibility and the hope of what may come.**

Perhaps we find ourselves in a doorway now. Not in the height of the pandemic, but neither are we free of it. **As we stand in the between, it’s our opportunity to look back at the fear, the illness, and the loss, and channel that for good, for growth, and for rebuilding.**

