

# D'ror: Liberation

*In the yovel year, the enslaved go free; the Hebrew word d'ror refers to this release, and to liberty itself.*

*Perhaps the most famous use of Leviticus 25:10 is on Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, on which is inscribed: "Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof". The iconic bell was created for the jubilee year (the word "jubilee" derives from the Hebrew "yovel") of Pennsylvania's Charter of Privileges, which granted religious liberty to its inhabitants; only later did the bell come to be an icon for abolitionists and called the Liberty Bell, because of its inscription's connection to freeing slaves. A copy of the Liberty Bell hangs in Jerusalem's Gan haPa'amon, Liberty Bell Park.*

*The commandment to release slaves during the yovel year awakens us to the fundamental problem with human slavery—the degradation of human beings and of our purpose in the world. Leviticus 25 concludes with the enduring understanding that we are meant to derive from the notion of d'ror:*

(נח) כִּי לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים  
עֲבָדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם  
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

<sup>55</sup>For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants: they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God.

*As you study the sources below, consider what "release" could mean in our own time and in contemporary terms. Who deserves release and why? Who has the obligation to call for it? How might it happen?*

## D'ror/Release: Leviticus 25:10

(י) וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת שָׁנַת  
הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וְקִרְאתֶם  
דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֶיהָ יוֹבֵל  
הוּא תִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְשִׁבְתֶּם  
אִישׁ אֶל אֲחֻזָּתוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶל  
מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תָּשֻׁבוּ :

<sup>10</sup>You [plural] shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release (*d'ror*) throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a *yovel* for you: each of you shall return to your holding and each of you shall return to your family.

- » *What does it mean to proclaim release throughout the land and for all its inhabitants? What is the relationship between this release and hallowing or making holy the fiftieth year? From what and to what*

*do you think people are being released? What is the role of returning to one's land holding and to family in freedom?*

- » *Who is the "you" that the text is addressing here? What are all the things that "you" are told to do? Why might this be stated in the plural?*

## I. Enslavement and Freedom

*The continuation of Leviticus 25 addresses in detail the circumstances that lead to enslavement, the practice of release, and the distinctions between temporary Hebrew debt-slaves, and life-long slaves from the surrounding nations, whose release would not be proclaimed at yovel. (Rabbinic tradition has long held since that the permissibility of life-long enslavement perished with the memory of who exactly the nations were that might have been enslaved). As you encounter these sources, consider potential contemporary parallels to these notions of enslavement and release.*

### A. Enslavement: Leviticus 25:39-43

(לט) וְכִי יִמּוֹךְ אֲחִיד עִמָּךְ וְנִמְכַּר לְךָ לֹא תַעֲבֹד בּוֹ עֲבָדָת עֶבֶד : (מ) כְּשָׂכִיר כְּתוֹשֵׁב יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ עַד שְׁנַת הַיָּבֵל יַעֲבֹד עִמָּךְ : (מא) וְנִצָּא מֵעִמָּךְ הוּא וּבָנָיו עִמּוֹ וְשָׁב אֶל מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ וְאֶל אֲחֻזַּת אֲבֹתָיו יָשׁוּב : (מב) כִּי עֲבָדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵמִצְרָיִם לֹא יִמְכְּרוּ מִמִּכְרֶת עֶבֶד : (מג) לֹא תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בְּכַרְךָ וְיִרְאֶתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ :

<sup>39</sup>If your kinsman below you persists in economic straits and must give himself over to you, do not treat him like a slave.

<sup>40</sup>He shall remain with you as a hired or bound laborer; he shall serve with you only until the *yovel*. <sup>41</sup>Then he and his children with him shall be free of your authority; he shall go back to his family and return to his ancestral holding. <sup>42</sup>For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude. <sup>43</sup>You shall not rule over him ruthlessly; you shall fear your God.

- » *In this passage, why does a person become enslaved? What do you imagine about the life circumstances of this person? What has happened that led to bondage?*
- » *What are the limits this passage sets on slavery? What is the rationale offered for those limits? What wider values do you see expressed here in the act of releasing slaves?*

## B. Freeing slaves: Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (Rashi) on Leviticus 25:10

וקראתם דרור—לעבדים, בין נרצע, בין שלא כלו לו שש שנים משנמכר.

“You shall proclaim release”—for slaves, even if they are committed to eternal enslavement, even if six years have not elapsed from the time of sale

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, France 1040-1105) is perhaps the best known commentator on the Bible. His commentary includes *midrash*, as well as explanations of *p’shat*—the surface meaning of the text.

### Six years or eternal enslavement: Exodus 21:2, 5-6

(ב) כִּי תִקְנֶה עֶבֶד עִבְרִי שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבִשְׁבַעַת יֵצֵא לְחֶפְשִׁי חֲנֹם : (ה) וְאִם אָמַר יֹאמֶר הָעֶבֶד אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶת אֲדֹנָי אֶת אִשְׁתִּי וְאֶת בְּנֵי לֹא אֵצֵא חֶפְשִׁי : (ו) וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֲדֹנָיו אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֶל הַדֹּלֶת אוֹ אֶל הַמְּזוּזָה וְרָצַע אֲדֹנָיו אֶת אָזְנוֹ בַּמַּרְצֵעַ וַעֲבָדוּ לְעֹלָם : ס

<sup>2</sup>When you acquire a Hebrew slave, they shall serve six years; in the seventh year they shall go free, without payment. <sup>5</sup>But if the slave declares, “I love my master, and my wife and children: I do not wish to go free,” <sup>6</sup>the master shall take them before God. They shall be brought to the door or the doorpost, and their master shall pierce their ear with an awl; and they shall then remain a slave for life.

- » *In Rashi’s understanding of d’ror, who is being released and from what?*
- » *In light of the biblical passage from Exodus, why is it important to Rashi to articulate these two details of releasing slaves? How does he present d’ror as shaping the biblical institution of slavery?*
- » *How do you imagine that yovel would shape a cultural awareness of slavery and freedom throughout the fifty-year cycle? How would proximity to or distance from the next yovel, or the mere existence of the legal institution, shape how slave-owners and those enslaved would understand their statuses, roles, and relationships?*
- » *Today, Jewish law has eliminated slavery. What can the texts about d’ror teach us, even in the absence of physical slavery?*
- » *How can the notion of release from enslavement affect our approach to the future of Israelis and Palestinians during this fiftieth year?*

### C. Slavery is cancelled when there is no *yovel*: *Tashbatz* 2:27

ידוע הוא שאין עבד עברי נוהג בזמן הזה  
 דהא קי"ל שאין ע"ע נוהג אלא בזמן  
 שהיובל נוהג כדאי' בערכין בפי המקדש  
 שדהו (כ"ט ע"א) ובקידושין פי האומר  
 (ס"ט ע"א) ובפי' (המקבל) [התקבל] (ס"ה  
 ע"א) והיובלות כבר בטלו משעה שגלו  
 שבט ראובן וגד משום דבעי שיהיו כל  
 יושביה עליה כדכתיב יובל היא לכל  
 יושביה כדאי' בשלהי ערכין (ל"ב ע"ב)  
 ובזמן הזה שאין היובל נוהג מי שירד  
 מנכסיו לא נתנה לו תור' רשות למכור  
 את עצמו שיהא כעבד עברי דקי"ל  
 דגופו קנוי כדאי' בפ"ק דקדושין (ט"ז  
 ע"א) אלא משכיר את עצמו כפועל ואם  
 השכיר את עצמו אע"פ שקרוי עבד אינו  
 קנוי כלל ויכול לחזור בו אפי' בתוך  
 זמנו כדאי' בפרק האומנין (ע"ז ע"א)  
 משום דכתיב כי לי בני ישראל עבדים  
 ולא עבדים לעבדים ואם לוח מעות הרי  
 הן חוב עליו ואין גופו קנוי כלל למלוה  
 אלא פורע חובו כשיהי' לו או ממעשה  
 ידיו אחר שיטול מהם מזונותיו אבל לא  
 מזונותיו ביתו.

It is known that the category of the *eved ivri* (Hebrew slave in debt bondage) is not operative today, as this category only exists when *yovel* is in practice. . . and *yovel* was already cancelled from the moment that the tribes of Reuven and Gad were exiled, as *yovel* requires that all of Israel's residents are living there, as it says "for all of its residents." (Arakhin 32b) And today, when *yovel* is not operative, in the case of a person who goes broke, the Torah does not permit him to sell himself such that he would be like an *eved ivri*—that is, the case where his body is purchased. (Kiddushin 17a) Rather, he should hire himself out as a laborer, and if he did so, even though he is called "*eved*," he is not acquired at all, and may go back on the agreement, even in the middle of the contract (*Bava Metzia* 76a), as it says "For the children of Israel are my servants" (Leviticus 25:55)—and not servants to servants. And if he borrowed money, this debt is incumbent on him, but the creditor does not acquire his person at all. Rather, the debt should be collected when he has the money, or from the work of his hands after he has taken from his earnings enough for his sustenance, but not for the sustenance of his household. . .

- » *Why, according to the Tashbatz, can there be no debt bondage if there is no possibility for release?*
- » *Per the citation above, the rabbis of the Talmud understood the biblical words "for the children of Israel are my (God's) servants" as ruling out the possibility of being enslaved to another servant (that is—another human being). How does yovel emphasize this servitude to God, not to humanity?*
- » *Many people have given up hope of any release, or any new ways forward toward peace between Israelis and Palestinians. How might the idea of yovel open up space for moving forward?*

**Rabbi Shimon ben Zerach Duran (1361-1444, Spain/North Africa),** often known as *Tashbatz*, was a legal scholar. The *Tashbatz* is a collection of legal opinions.

## II. Beyond Slavery: Expanding D'ror

*While in the biblical passage, d'ror is primarily about releasing slaves, later Jewish literature applies it to all of us, rendering it central to Jewish exploration of one of the ultimate quests of human existence: our pursuit of freedom and liberation.*

### A. Releasing slaves releases all of us: Rabbi Ya'akov Yehoshua Falk, *P'nei Yehoshua*

וקראתם דרור בארץ לכל יושביה  
לכל עבדיה לא נאמר אלא לכל יושביה,  
כי מדינה שאין בה חירות, ואפילו רק  
למקצת תושבים, כל התושבים הם  
משועבדים. מרגישים את החירות רק  
כשאין בכלל עבדות במדינה. העבדות נגע  
היא, שנגועים בה העבד והאדון גם יחד.  
ומעין זה אמרו חז"ל: כל הקונה עבד  
עברי כקונה אדון לעצמו (קדושין כ).  
ולכן וקראתם דרור לכל יושביה, שעל-ידי  
שחרור העבדים כל תושבי המדינה יהיו  
בני חורין.

"You shall proclaim release (*d'ror*)  
throughout the land for all its inhabitants."  
It does not say "for all its slaves," but "for all  
its inhabitants," for in a state where there  
is no freedom, even for a minority of its  
inhabitants, all its inhabitants are enslaved.  
We experience freedom only when there  
is no slavery at all in a state. Slavery is an  
affliction that damages slave and master as  
one. This comes from a saying of the sages:  
"Anyone who buys an Israelite slave has  
essentially bought a master for him/herself"  
[Talmud, *Kiddushin* 20]. Therefore it says  
"proclaim release for all its inhabitants"—  
by freeing the slaves, all the inhabitants of a  
state become free.

- » *According to the P'nei Yehoshua, how does slavery affect all of the inhabitants of a place? How does release affect them all?*
- » *How would you apply this principle in our own time? How do we (as a society or as individuals) withhold freedom, and from whom? How does that affect not only those living with restricted freedoms, but also those whose freedoms are not officially restricted?*
- » *According to a famous saying often credited to Lilla Watson, an aboriginal Australian academic and activist, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." How does this quote relate to the P'nei Yehoshua text? What gets in the way of our seeing our own liberation as bound up in that of others?*
- » *Often, there is a dichotomy between those described (or who describe themselves) as pro-Israel, and those considered pro-Palestinian. Does the P'nei Yehoshua text help break down this dichotomy?*

Rabbi Ya'akov Yehoshua Falk (Germany, 1680-1756) was a Talmud scholar. *P'nei Yehoshua* is a book of commentary on the Talmud.



## B1. Freedom of movement: Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh Hashanah* 9b

דכולי עלמא דרור לשון חירות, מאי משמע?—דתניא: אין דרור אלא לשון חירות. אמר רבי יהודה מה לשון דרור—כמדיר בי דיירא, ומוביל סחורה בכל מדינה.

Everyone agrees that *d'ror* means freedom (*herut*). From where do we know this? It is taught [in an earlier source]: “*D'ror* means freedom (*herut*).” Rabbi Yehuda said: Where does the word *d'ror* come from? Like one who lives (*medayyer*) in any dwelling (*dayyra*), and engages in commerce in any country.

**The Talmud** is a compilation of law, narrative, folk wisdom, and more. It consists of the *Mishnah*, probably compiled around 200 CE, and the *Gemara*, compiled around 500 CE or later.

The Talmud is divided into 63 tractates, each mostly focused on one subject (but often including much material on other subjects as well).

When we refer to “The Talmud,” we usually mean the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), codified in Babylonia. There is also a second Talmud, known as Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), codified in the Land of Israel somewhat earlier. The latter is less complete and has been less central to the development of law.

## B2. Rabbi Avraham Bedersi, *Hotam Tokhnit Dictionary*, “*D'ror, Hofesh*”

באמרו וקראתם דרור (ויקרא כ"ה י') לא אמר וקראתם חפש כי ענין חפש אינו כי אם הסרת השעבוד הגדול אבל דרור הוא ההצלה מן העבדות לגמרי כמו שאמר בגמרא (ר"ה ט"ב.) א"ר יהודה מה הוא לשון דרור כמאן דדייר בי דיירא שדר בכל מקום שהוא רוצה ואינו ברשות אחרים... ובכל מקום שנופל לשון דרור ר"ל דבר הנעשה בלי יראה ובלא מונע.

Where the text says “proclaim release” (*d'ror*), it doesn't say “proclaim freedom (*hofesh*),” for the idea of freedom is only removing enslavement, but release (*d'ror*) is total salvation from servitude entirely, as it says in the Talmud [*Rosh Hashana* 9b] “Rabbi Yehuda said: Where does the word *d'ror* come from? Like one who lives (*dayyar*) in any dwelling (*dayyra*)”—that is, one who dwells anywhere they would like and is not under the authority of another.

Anywhere the language *d'ror* appears, it means something that happens without fear and with no one /nothing to prevent it.

- » *Rabbi Yehuda in the Talmud passage connects the Hebrew word דרור (d'ror, release) to the Aramaic word דר (dar, to dwell). How does he use this wordplay to illuminate an understanding of what release means? To whom does this idea of d'ror apply?*

- » *What distinction is Rabbi Avraham Bedersi drawing between freedom and release? What qualities does this add to the Talmud's understanding of release? How do you relate to these various conceptions of what it means to be a free person?*
- » *How might we apply Rabbi Yehuda's and Rabbi Bedersi's understandings of d'ror to our own world? How does this play out specifically in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories?*
- » *How do you understand the end of the second text—"something that happens without fear and with no one / nothing to prevent it"? Do you or anyone you know have direct experience with having fear influence where you do and don't live or do business?*
- » *What is the role of fear in controlling individuals' actions or life choices in any of the contemporary contexts you came up with above? And what would freedom from fear look like in those contexts?*

*Hotam Tokhnit Dictionary* is a book of Hebrew synonyms written by Rabbi Avraham Bedersi (Provence, c. 1270—c. 1340)

### C. *D'ror* as passing generations: Rabbi Moses ben Nahman Girondi (Nahmanides) on Leviticus 25:10

ד'רור מלשון דור הולך ודור בא (קהלת א ד) *D'ror* is from the language of "one generation [*dor*] departs and another generation arises" [Kohelet 1:4].

- » *What connection do you imagine Nahmanides might be making here between liberation and the passing of generations? Where do you see the passage of time and generations offering release?*
- » *There are multiple generations with multiple experiences of the past fifty years: Those who remember the creation of the State of Israel and were already adults during the Six-Day War. Those who came of age at the time of the Six-Day War. Those who came of age during the First Intifada. Those who came of age during Oslo. Those who came of age during the Second Intifada. Those who came of age during the 2014 Gaza war. How do each of these generations see the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories differently? How do these generations' experiences affect them?*
- » *What was the prime event that governs your own relationship to Israel? How has this experience shaped you?*

- » *How might each generation think about release from the challenges of the last fifty years? How might this generation move forward in the next fifty?*

**Rabbi Moses ben Nahman Girondi (Spain, 1194–1270)**, known as Nahmanides or Ramban, was a prominent philosopher, mystic, and biblical commentator. His commentary on the Torah includes mystical elements, along with explanations of the basic meaning of the text and references to *midrash* (rabbinic interpretation).

#### **D. We have the power to free any place: *Sefat Emet* on Parashat Behar**

ובנ"י שיצאו ממצרים וניתן להם  
התורה יש בידם כח החירות ולהביא  
גאולה לכל המקומות והזמנים כמ"ש  
וקראתם דרור.

The children of Israel who went out of Egypt and were given Torah have in their hands the power of freedom, to bring redemption to any place and time, as it says, "proclaim release."

- » *The Sefat Emet emphasizes that we are the ones who proclaim release. What are the elements he identifies as giving us the power to effect release? To what extent do you believe or find his statement to be true?*
- » *In the current situation, everyone often feels stuck—and waiting for the other side to make a move. Israelis are waiting for Palestinians to end violence altogether; Palestinians are waiting for Israelis to stop settlement construction. What power do we have to get unstuck from this situation?*

The *Sefat Emet* is a collection of Torah commentary written by Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter (Ger, Poland, 1847–1905), more commonly known by the title of this book.



### III. *D'ror* as Incense: Authenticity and Purity in Liberation

*The word d'ror appears in an entirely different context—as an element in the anointing oil to be used in the desert tabernacle. Its meaning there becomes another element of understanding the nature of release.*

#### A. *D'ror* in Incense: Exodus 30:23-25

(כג) וְאַתָּה קַח לָךְ בְּשָׁמִים רֹאשׁ מֵרֹר  
חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת וְקִנְמֹן בְּשֵׁם מַחְצִיתוֹ חֲמִשִּׁים  
וּמֵאֲתָיִם וְקִנְיָה בְשֵׁם חֲמִשִּׁים וּמֵאֲתָיִם :  
(כד) וְקִדְּהָ חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת בְּשָׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
וְשֶׁמֶן זַיִת הָיִן : (כה) וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֹתוֹ שֶׁמֶן  
מְשַׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ רֶקֶח מְרֻקָּחַת מַעֲשֶׂה רֶקֶח  
שֶׁמֶן מְשַׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה :

<sup>23</sup>Next take choice spices: five hundred weight of solidified [*d'ror*] myrrh, half as much—two hundred and fifty—of fragrant cinnamon, two hundred and fifty of aromatic cane, <sup>24</sup>five hundred—by the sanctuary weight—of cassia, and a *hin* of olive oil. <sup>25</sup>Make of this a sacred anointing oil, a compound of ingredients expertly blended, to serve as sacred anointing oil.

#### B. *D'ror* as spiritual purity: Nahmanides on Exodus 30:23

ושנו בספרא (ויקרא חובה פ' יב) דברים  
שאי אפשר לדעתן, כגון המערב מים  
בין, קומוס במור, כי זה מזוייפין אותו  
בקומוס הנקרא צמג בערבי שהוא נדמה  
לו. ולכך אמר מר דרור, שיהיה נקי מן  
הזיוף שמזוייפין אותו תמיד. ויתכן כי  
לשון "דרור" בכל מקום נקיות, וכן  
וקראתם דרור בארץ לכל יושביה, שיהיו  
כל בעלי הארץ נקיים מעבדות ומכל  
שעבוד בגופם ובארצותם...

Midrash *Sifra* (a rabbinic commentary on the book of Leviticus) teaches about mixtures of things that cannot be detected, like mixing water into wine, or resin into myrrh. They would counterfeit myrrh with resin, because it is a similar substance. And so it says in the text "solidified (released, *d'ror*) myrrh," meaning it should be clean of forgery, the forgery so commonly foisted upon it. And so it stands to reason that *d'ror* always speaks to cleanliness, so too where it says "proclaim release (*d'ror*) throughout the land for all its inhabitants"—that all those who belong to the land must be clean from slavery and any enslavement of their bodies or their land.

- » *Nahmanides connects the word d'ror as it appears in the context of yovel with its use in the description of the myrrh. Why does he connect the concept of purity with the command for release? Which inhabitants do you think he is concerned about, and what is his concern?*
- » *What would it mean to talk about looking at freedom through the lens of purity and cleanness? Can we ever achieve perfect freedom, for ourselves or others? What is gained and what is lost by pursuing d'ror with an eye toward thoroughgoing purity? How can we work for release and other aspects of social justice while recognizing that the circumstances in which we operate—and thus likely the outcomes of our work—will always be messy and complex, rather than "pure"?*

## IV. *D'ror* as a Swallow: Free as a Bird

*In the Torah, d'ror is the name of a small bird (translated here as “sparrow.”) See how medieval commentators connect this bird to the larger idea of release.*

### A1. Psalm 84:4

(ד) גַּם צִפּוֹר מִצָּאָה בֵּית וְדָרוֹר קֵן לָהּ  
אֲשֶׁר שָׁתָה אֶפְרָחֶיהָ אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ ה'  
צְבָאוֹת מֶלְכִי וְאֱלֹהֵי :

<sup>4</sup>Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself in which to set her young, near Your altar, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.

### A2. Proverbs 26:2

(ב) כַּצִּפּוֹר לָנוּד כְּדָרוֹר לָעוֹף כֵּן קָלֵלֶת  
חֲנֹם לֹא לוֹ תָבֵא :

<sup>2</sup>As a sparrow must flit and a swallow fly, so a gratuitous curse must backfire.

### B. Swallows and people returning home: Rabbi Isaac ben Judah Abravanel on Leviticus 25

וּקְרַאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ ר־ל  
לְעִבְדִּים שִׁלְכּוּ אִישׁ לְאֶרְצוֹ כְּדָרוֹר לָנוּד  
כַּצִּפּוֹר לָעוֹף.

“Proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants”—Say to the slaves that each person should return to their land like a swallow that wanders, like a bird that flies.

**Rabbi Isaac Abravanel (Portugal 1437-1508)** was a biblical commentator and philosopher, who often addressed the everyday concerns of his Jewish community, living under persecution.

### C. Under no authority: Talmud *Shabbat* 106b

אמר רבה בר רב הונא : הכא בצפור דרור  
עסקינן, לפי שאינה מקבלת מרות. דתנא  
דבי רבי ישמעאל : למה נקרא שמה צפור  
דרור—מפני שדרה בבית כבשדה.

Rava bar Rav Huna said: This bird is called *d'ror* because it will not accept any authority, as is taught by the house of Rabbi Ishmael: Why is the name of the bird *d'ror*? Because it lives (*darah*) in a house as it lives in a field.

### D. Singing when free: Ibn Ezra on Psalm 84

וְדָרוֹר—שֵׁם עוֹף מִנְּגֵן אוֹלֵי נִקְרָא  
כֵּן בְּעִבּוֹר שֶׁאֵין מִנְּהֵגוֹ לִנְגֵן כָּל זֶמֶן  
שֶׁאֵינְנוּ חִפְשִׁי.

*D'ror*—the name of a songbird; perhaps it is named that because it will not sing unless it is free.

**Rabbi Abraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra (Spain, 1089-1167)** was a poet, grammarian, and biblical commentator whose commentary focuses on the literal meaning of the text, rather than bringing in *midrash*.

## E. Free everywhere: Radak on Psalm 84

וְזָכַר דְּרוֹר יָדוּעַ שְׁמִנְהֵגוּ לִקְנָן בְּבֵתִים  
לְעוֹלָם, לְפִיכֵךְ נִקְרָא דְרוֹר שֶׁהוּא חֹפֵשׁ  
בֵּין בְּנֵי אָדָם שֶׁמִּקְנָן בְּבֵתֵיהֶם.

וְאִם נֹאמֵר עַל הַגְּלוּת יֹאמֵר כִּי הָעוֹפוֹת  
יִמְצְאוּ לָהֶם מְקוֹם וְקָן בְּמְקוֹם  
מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ הַחֲרֹב וּמִקְנָנִים שֶׁם הָעוֹפוֹת,  
וְאִנְחָנוּ לֹא נוֹכַל לְחוּג שֶׁם וּלְהִקְרִיב  
הַקִּרְבָּנוֹת. וּבִדְרָשׁ (שְׁמוֹ"ר פ"כ ו) מִפְּרָשׁ  
אוֹתוֹ דֶּרֶךְ מִשָּׁל, וְצִפּוֹר וְדְרוֹר הוּא מִשָּׁל  
עַל כִּנְסַת יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהִיוּ בָּאִים לְחוּג  
שְׁלֹשׁ רִגְלִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וּמִקְרִיבִין  
קִרְבָּנוֹתֵיהֶם, וְאוֹמְרִים בְּנֵי הַגְּלוּת כִּי  
נִכְסְפָה נַפְשָׁם לְעוֹלָת שֶׁם כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיוּ  
עוֹשִׂים יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּשֶׁהִיוּ בָּאֶרֶץ.

The male *d'ror* is known always to nest in houses; it is called *d'ror* because it is free among human beings, nesting in their houses.

Or this might be said about exile—the birds can find a place and nest in the place of your altar, which has been destroyed—the birds nest there and we cannot circle there to make offerings. A midrash [*Exodus Rabba* 20:6] explains this through a parable—the bird stands for the people of Israel that would come to make pilgrimage on the three festivals in the Temple, and make their offerings—and the people of the dispersion say that their souls yearn to go up as Israel would do when they were in their land.

**Rabbi David Kimhi (Provence, 1160–1235)**, known as the Radak, was a biblical commentator and grammarian, whose comments often focus on the language of the text.

## F. The soul: *Sefat Emet* on Exodus, Parashat Ki Tissa

הַנֶּשְׁמָה נִקְרָא 'צִפּוֹר דְּרוֹר. The soul is called *d'ror*-bird.

- » *What link does each commentator draw between the name of the bird and the concept of freedom? How would you connect each of the aspects of this bird, as described by these texts, with some aspect of human experience?*
- » *What can this bird teach us about human freedom? What might this bird teach us about the experiences of both Palestinians and Israelis?*
- » *How might what we learn from this bird move us toward liberation and away from the stuck-ness of the current Israeli-Palestinian situation?*

## Final Questions

- » *How can we call for liberation in our own time? Who can call for liberation? How can we bring it about? What obstacles might we encounter?*
- » *Although d'ror would occur just once in fifty years, it was designed to be part of our thinking all the time. If you could integrate this aspect of yovel-consciousness into your own practice, what would change about what you believe? About how you act?*
- » *In this fiftieth year since 1967, what might we learn from these concepts of d'ror that would allow us to free ourselves from the current situation?*