

At our Seder, we point to the matzah and recite, "This is the bread of poverty." What exactly is this bread of poverty or affliction? How can matzah be, paradoxically, both the food of oppression and what is consumed in the rush of freedom?

In the midst of freedom and plenty, at our tables and among our friends, there is still hunger in Canada: for Jews and Aboriginals, whites and people of colour. As we sit at our Seder banquets, we are reminded of poverty and bitterness in the past and cautioned to not close our hearts, our eyes, or our hands to the poverty and bitterness of the present. "Let all who are hungry come to eat."

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, Toronto

Here we are reminded of our tradition's emphasis on social justice as embodied in feeding the hungry: a basic component of human dignity. It is a focus for our sages and prophets. We invite all to our seder table to experience our journey out of bondage - all the more so the poor and hungry, for one consequence of our ritual is the instilling of hope.

Thus, retelling the story of our path to freedom must impel us to action - to concrete steps to alleviate poverty, hunger and other assaults to human dignity.

Rabbi Philip Bregman, Vancouver

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֵתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם.
כָּל דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכֹל, כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָּא
הִכָּא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָּא עַבְדֵּי,
לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All those who are hungry, let them enter and eat. All who are in need, let them come celebrate the Passover. Now we are here. Next year in the land of Israel. This year we are enslaved. Next year we will be free.

On Pesach we learn to identify with the trials of our ancestors. We surely must then be able to feel the agony of our contemporaries, brothers and sisters who are prevented from freely expressing themselves and from coming together to celebrate Pesach, including those poor and hungry that are unable to celebrate Pesach. To relive yesterday's pain but to be oblivious to the agonies of today is to render our reliving as sorely wanting. Remembering yesterday becomes alive when it awakens us to the realities and challenges of today, and resolving to do something about it.

Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, Ottawa, adapted from my *The Haggadah Connection*

In our welcome to the Seder we invite "all who are hungry, let them come and eat; all who are in need, let them come celebrate Pesach." The Slonimer Rebbe taught that those who are hungry know what they lack, "they may come and eat." But those who are in need don't yet understand what they truly lack in order to fulfill themselves. Let them come and celebrate Pesach." That is, let them talk tonight about what will truly set them free. We need to nourish the soul as well as the body.

Rabbi Ron Aigen, Montreal



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