

Passover 2024: Sharing the Bread of Liberation



During the seder we begin the *maggid* (storytelling) section by uncovering the plate of matzah and declaring “this is the bread of our oppression.” Later, though, we are reminded that matzah is also the first symbol of our liberation: “...even before the dough of our ancestors in Egypt had time to rise and become leavened, the Holy One was revealed and redeemed them (from slavery).”

How does the bread of slavery, affliction, and oppression transform into the bread of our redemption? Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l teaches that the answer is found in the language of the Haggadah itself: “This is the bread of oppression our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. *Let all who are hungry come and eat.*” According to Rabbi Sacks, “what transforms the bread of oppression into the bread of freedom is the willingness to share it with others...”

When the world around us feels unstable and threatening, it is easy to fall into a false belief that we have less – less time, less freedom, less safety – than we do in truth. But this narrow, constricted mindset binds us to our fears. It limits our imaginations and inhibits our most compassionate and generous selves. It leads us to see people seeking safety at our borders as threats to ourselves, rather than as fellow humans who need protection and support.

In many countries across the globe, politicians are using anti-immigrant narratives to score political points. In Europe, the [New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) threatens the right to seek asylum and will likely engender a proliferation of human rights violations across the continent. In the U.S., leaders from across the political spectrum have proven themselves more than willing to sacrifice [the basic human and legal rights of asylum seekers](#) in the service of political dealmaking. At this moment when more than 110 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced from their homes, we need to ensure that asylum seekers, refugees, stateless, and displaced people are able to pursue safety and rebuild their lives with dignity.

The metamorphosis of the meaning of matzah throughout the seder can bring us back to a place of expansiveness and welcome. The ability to freely share food and other resources is what transforms enslaved people into liberated human beings. And on Passover night, what are we if we are not liberated?

At Your Seder Table:

After you have distributed the first pieces of matzah around your seder table, before you say the blessing invite each person to give their piece to someone else (ensuring that, at the end of the process, everyone winds up with some matzah!). Once all of the matzah has been redistributed, say together:

Bread that is shared is no longer the bread of oppression.