

A Freedom Seder in Hebron

1) On April 4th, 1969 - one year after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. - hundreds of people from a variety of backgrounds gathered in a church in Washington DC to celebrate the Jewish tradition of Passover in the first ‘Freedom Seder’, which wove the ancient Jewish story of liberation from bondage with contemporary struggles for civil rights and against the war raging in Vietnam. ‘Seder’ means ‘order’ or ‘agenda’. Tonight we make our agenda clear: Tonight, fifty years after the first settlers began the process of dispossession of Palestinian land and homes under occupation in Hebron, we stand together here and now to reaffirm the **commitment to liberation in every generation and for all peoples.**

4) The Book of Exodus begins by telling us that the people of Israel became numerous in the land of Egypt and a new Pharaoh came to power and enslaved them. We are reminded that oppressors everywhere and in every generation attempt to drum up fear of demographic threats, but we will not be fooled into fear. Instead, we honor the tradition of the midwives Shifra and Puah, who stood in defiance of the Pharaoh's command to kill the Hebrew babies. When racism and violence become the order of the day in the highest political offices and further dehumanize those who live under the control of the powerful, we stand **shoulder to shoulder** with Shifra and Puah in civil disobedience.

2) Every year the youngest person present at the seder asks the ‘**The Four Questions**’, which each ask in different ways “why is this night different from all other nights?”

Tonight is different from all other nights, for four reasons.

- On all other nights we eat bread, tonight we eat this unleavened ‘matzah’ instead. Why? To remember oppression in the world and all forms of injustice (our duty for every generation, to remember).
- On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, tonight we eat the bitter herb ‘maror’. Why? We refuse to look away from the bitterness of the occupation and we commit ourselves to ending this injustice.
- Tonight we dip parsley in salt water. Why? To mourn the dead here in Hebron, the lives that have been taken as this injustice persists.
- Most nights we don’t sit at ease at dinner. Tonight, we rest for a moment, in celebration that we are here together.

3) The traditional telling of this story includes a teaching about **four children** and how they interact with the responsibility of this event and its implications. Tonight we ask what story and responsibility we’re accountable to tell to our children. What are our four models of resistance, who are the characters in liberation?

We see the ‘**ally child**’ who sees the pain of the oppressed, and asks what power they can give up to be in solidarity with others. We see the ‘**oppressor child**’, born into perpetuating oppression, someone who believes that having the things they have requires the oppression of others. We see the ‘**oppressed child**’, born into bondage and every choice and every dream is an uphill battle. They lead the march to freedom and the struggle for dignity, though some of these children aren’t present here because they are in prison. The fourth is **the one who we pretend simply doesn’t know enough** to ask, but the truth is that this child sees and chooses to look away. We choose not to give up on them, we call them into our movement for justice.



5) With the groundwork for resistance laid by Shifra and Puah, Moses, who is alive because of their bravery, gathers his family and partners – his brother who speaks on his behalf and his sister who sings the Israelites to freedom. They work together to stand up to power and build their collective identity in those steps toward resistance. Today, we continue to **form bonds through resistance.** Tonight we celebrate our commitment to end the occupation and to march to freedom together.

#FreedomSederHebron



Youth Against
Settlements
شباب ضد الإستيطان



Hebron Freedom Fund
Working for Peace and Justice

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

To Our Land (7)

To our land,
and it is the one near the word
of god,
a ceiling of clouds
To our land,
and it is the one far from the
adjectives of nouns,
the map of absence
To our land,
and it is the one tiny as a
sesame seed,
a heavenly horizon ... and a
hidden chasm
To our land,
and it is the one poor as a
grouse's wings,
holy books ... and an identity
wound
To our land,
and it is the one surrounded
with torn hills,
the ambush of a new past
To our land, and it is a prize of
war,
the freedom to die from
longing and burning
and our land, in its bloodied
night,
is a jewel that glimmers for the
far upon the far
and illuminates what's outside
it ...
As for us, inside,
we suffocate more!

From *The Butterfly's Burden* by
Mahmoud Darwish
Translated by Fady Joudah

6) Tradition holds that we spill a drop of our drink for each of the ten plagues that were visited upon the Egyptians. This is a small and symbolic way in which we temper the joyful feelings associated with liberation by remembering that the Egyptians, another group of human beings, suffered in the wake of the journey to freedom. Tonight we center some of the **suffering** experienced today.

1. Settlements and land dispossession
2. Restriction of movement and checkpoints
3. Curfews
4. Imprisonment
5. Systems of segregation
6. Extrajudicial killings
7. Surveillance
8. Desecration of religions
9. Massacres and intercommunal violence
10. Killing of those standing up to oppression



9) Sometimes we imagine that it just takes an inspirational leader or a single moment of clarity for hundreds, thousands, or millions to act toward justice and liberation. In fact, it takes the willingness to take a risk. It requires us, no matter who we are, to step forward without knowing what will take place next. In the story of the Exodus a person called Nachshon stepped into the water before the sea had parted. It is said that it was this step forward that parted the sea and created a path to freedom.

As **we began with a question, we end with a question**: How can we inspire our people, our communities, to step forward with us toward freedom? Tonight is one example, but we have a long road ahead. Reality can only change, for both the oppressor and the oppressed, through real demonstrations of what change looks like.

Maror (8)

A bitter cud.
Biting into the bitter, that bites
back.
Of all the gross tastes, sweet and
salty,
sour, we seek it the least.
We spit it out. But not tonight.

Tonight we must taste our
bitterness.
Bite into our failure, suck its
essence.
We were slaves in Egypt, the
Haggadah
reminds us, and we still are,
but who enslaves us to what?

The bone we chew is our own.
Only I can tell myself where
I am caught, trapped, held
fast, bored but comfortable
in the box I know so well.

This is the moment for naming
that box, for feeling the walls,
for studying the dimensions
of the prison I must choose
to leave in my exodus of one.

I can join with no one else,
I cannot walk out with you

Until I measure my walls
Then break them down.
Darkness into light.

Fear and silence into
Cursing. The known
Abandoned for something
New and frightening. Bitter
Is the first taste of freedom.

From *The Art of Blessing the Day* by
Marge Piercy

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