

The Exodus from Egypt occurs in every human being, in every era, in every year and even on every day. (Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav)

In the 18th century, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, was touring the local matzah factory, in order to inspect the matzah to ensure that it was Kosher for Passover. After looking carefully, he declared that the matzah inside was not Kosher. When the shocked factory owners and community leaders asked him why not, he told them that the women in the factory were forced to labor too long and too hard, and that they were not being paid fairly for their work. He declared that the matzah was *traif* (not kosher) because it was produced through *oshek*, oppression of the workers and exploitation. (Elissa Froman (zt"l), NCJW)

The courage to leave the place whose language you learned as early as your own, whose customs however dangerous or demeaning, bind you like a halter... The courage to walk out of the pain that is known into the pain that cannot be imagined, mapless, walking into the wilderness, going barefoot with a canteen into the desert stuffed in the stinking hold of a rotting ship...

We honor only those Jews who changed tonight, those who chose the desert over bondage, who walked into the strange and became strangers and gave birth to children who could look down on them standing on their shoulders for having been slaves. We honor those who let go of everything but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought, who became other by saving themselves. (From "Maggid," by Marge Piercy)

HA LACHMA ANYA



הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּה

This is the bread of poverty and persecution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat! Let all who are in need come and share the Passover meal. This year we are still here - next year, may we be in the land of Israel! This year we are still enslaved - next year, may we be free!

"Kamal ("Kimo"), 26, was born in a village in Darfur. He was 15 when the Janjaweed attacked... 800 of his villagers fled to the Nuba Mountains... 3 weeks later, the UN found them, said it was unsafe, and helped them get to Kakuma camp in Kenya, but there were no opportunities for a real future or education there. With his best friend Ibrahim, he decided to leave. He left his family and went to South Sudan where he worked for a year to earn the money for the Bedouins to cross the Sinai. After climbing the fence to Israel, Ibrahim and Kimo walked for hours with no food or water. They finally saw the Israeli border patrol and they were given food and water and put into a detention facility. After 6 months there, he was brought to South Tel Aviv... while working to get his visa. He has worked in hotels for the last 4 years. In his free time, he studied computers, psychology, and English and volunteered... He received a summons to report to Holot Detention Facility on April 2, 2014."

Israel is currently home to roughly 53,000 people who have fled violence and persecution in East Africa. Most of them now compete for jobs and apartments with each other and already vulnerable Israelis in a few square kilometers in South Tel Aviv. The government, grasping for ways to stem the tide, has built a fence on the Egyptian border, so no more refugees can enter, and begun detaining those in Israel at the Holot "open" detention facility, in an isolated part of the Negev. Since 2007, Israeli activists, progressive Jewish organizations, and African refugee and asylum seeker communities have held a "Refugee Seder" in Tel Aviv each year.

- What place do you need to leave behind this Passover? What leap do you need to take?
- What freedom that you lack do you most wish for your children? Like our ancestors who ate matzah so that they could leave right away, is there a sacrifice you must make in order to ensure that freedom?
- What do you know about the lives of the farmers, factory workers, and retail clerks who helped bring your seder meal to the table?
- How can Israel and the United States balance the needs of citizens with the plight of refugees? To what degree should our own history shape our response?



Seder supplement 2014/5774, adapted from resources developed by the RAC, Rabbis Organizing Rabbis, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, and the Refugee Seder. "Maggid" published in Available Light (Knopf, 1988). Wishing you a *zissen Pesach* (a sweet Passover) and a meaningful seder from Rabbi Beth Kalisch and all of us at Beth David Reform Congregation!