

# A Poem on the Impossibility of Passover

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## On the Impossibility of Passover

by Robert Cohen

*'On Passover we celebrate as if we ourselves have been set free'*

On my journey  
To the Promised Land  
My feet have become entangled  
In the roots of upturned trees

Across the Jordan  
I see homes turned to rubble  
By the strong hand and the outstretched arm  
Blocking the path to righteousness

Deliverance is held up at the checkpoint  
Freedom chooses hunger  
To make its case

And what is there left to celebrate  
With timbrels and dancing?

I ask my questions  
Eat bitter herbs  
And count the plagues that we have sent

Cleansed  
Refugeed  
Absenteed  
Unrecognised

Occupied  
Besieged  
Walled  
Segregated  
Sewaged over  
Passed over

Graffiti on the Separation Wall in the West Bank. Credit: Robert Cohen

We have melted our inheritance  
To cast a new desert idol  
And the words from Sinai  
Are crushed beneath its hooves

There is no Moses to climb the mountain a third time  
Elijah is detained indefinitely  
The mission is lost  
Freedom is drowned  
And the angels gather to weep

It is the first night of the Feast of Freedom  
I open the Haggadah  
Place olives on the Seder plate  
And confront the impossibility of Passover

This year in Mitzrayim  
This year in the narrow place