

Middle Matzah

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Source: Jewish Council on Urban Affairs

In the Seder three matzot are placed on a plate. During this step the middle matzah is broken and a piece taken and hidden for later. Why is the matzah broken now when it is not needed for later in the ceremony? Because a key to freedom is to anticipate the future and make it real. The challenge of adulthood is to train ourselves to look at the long-term consequences. Slavery is a life where only the immediate is important, there is no looking forward, there is no choice. On Passover, we realize that freedom takes commitment, planning and responsibility. What are your goals? What are you committed to?

Matzah is called “lechem oni”—the bread of our affliction. In breaking the matzah in half, we remind ourselves that as long as anyone in the world is afflicted, none of us can be whole. The division of the matzah also reminds us of the forced division of communities and families due to disappearances, detentions and deportations of immigrants.

Uncover the matzah and raise it for all to see.

Now we will hide one half of this piece of matzah. At our freedom justice Seder this evening, the hidden piece of matzah, the Afikomen, represents the horror hidden from our view—those who do not have access to nutritious food, those who are unable to attain or maintain housing, the treatment of those detained and prevented from speaking with their families, friends or lawyers.

The disappeared are doubly blocked from our sight, physically separated in jails and detention centers, but also wrapped in a blanket of fear of further disappearances and legal attacks, fears intended to silence their communities.

Until these divided parts are made one again, our Seder cannot truly be ended. Until these families and communities are reunited, we have not yet achieved our freedom.