

Freedom is an Appetizer? The Seder Opening as Satire

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Source:

Reclining at dinner, drinking wine, and getting to eat *karpas*, a Greco-Roman appetizer, is freedom? Seriously?

The first part of the seder is a wicked satire that mocks the fool's answer to the central question of the Seder, "What is freedom?"

Imagine one of the great Rabbis of the Sanhedrin in antiquity, watching the Sages imprisoned and tortured by the Romans, watching senseless massacres of Jewish women and children by their Roman oppressors. Imagine him turning to a Roman citizen –the only truly "free" person in the world by *their* definition– and asking, "Tell me, What is it like to be a Roman citizen, to be free?" Now imagine the answer: "This is what a free person gets to do. We get to recline on pillows while we eat; we get served; we drink as much wine as we can hold in an elaborate drinking game called a 'symposium,' and we get to eat *karpas*, appetizers!" *What would a Jew think of that?*

They'd think: "You who are free are idiots! If we were free, we'd use our freedom not for appetizers, but for education, for making a better society, for building a safety net for our elderly, sick, and poor, not for lemonade and appetizers!

The Jewish answer to "What is freedom?" is that Freedom is about What You Do With Your Freedom. How you answer that question depends on Your Story, your Maggid, from *mitzrayim* to a chance to use your freedom.

A person today who has never suffered might define freedom as what it looks like: a new car, hundreds of followers on social media, fashionable clothes, a large house, early retirement.... Those are the pillows, wine cups, and *karpas* of today.

Only the person who identifies with oppression knows that the real answer to the seder's central question is: "Real freedom is using your freedom to serve God."

Take the karpas, dip it into salt-water, and recite: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'adamah.

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.