

Passover and Food Justice

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Source:



BREAD *of* AFFLICTION: MATZAH, HUNGER, AND RACE

This guide was created in partnership with Hazon, an organization dedicated to creating healthier and more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.

APPETIZER

FRAMING

Ha Lachma Anya (“this is the bread of affliction”) is the first passage from the *magid*¹ section of the Passover *haggadah*. It is at the heart of the *seder*, the ritual Passover meal, where participants tell the story and read interpretations of the Exodus from Egypt. It is fitting that we, too, open up our discussion by looking at this text.

In some North African Jewish traditions, one lifts the *seder* plate and/or the matzah over people’s heads and sings: *bibhilu yatzanu mimitzrayim* (“we left Egypt in a hurry”) before reciting the passage on the right.² In Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jewish tradition, one lifts up or points to the matzah at the opening line of *Ha Lachma Anya*.³ If you don’t have any *matzah* around, you can use the picture of *matzah* on this page; follow either of these traditions or use your own!

TRANSLATION

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let us celebrate Passover. Now we are slaves in the Land of Israel. Now we are slaves; next year we will be free.

TRANSLITERATION

Ha lakhma anya, di akhalu avhatana, b'ara d'mitzrayim. Kol dichfin yetei v'yeichol, kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach. Hashata hacha, l'shanah haba'ah b'arah d'yisrael. Hashata avdei, l'shanah haba'ah b'nei chorin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would it mean for you to fulfill the statement, “let all who are hungry, come and eat”?
2. What is the relationship between the “bread of affliction” and the two commandments that follow?
3. What does it mean for you to say, “now we are slaves; next year we will be free?”

- 1 | Magid is the fifth section in the order of a Passover seder, the evening where Jews fulfill the core commandment from slavery to freedom.
- 2 | Rabbi Daniel Bouskila (2005) *The Blessing of Bibhilu* https://www.danielbouskila.com/2005/05/01/the-blessing-of-bibhilu/
- 3 | Guggenheimer, H. (1998). *The Scholar's Haggadah*. New York: Schocken Books.
- 4 | Aramaic is closely related to Hebrew. It served as an intermediate language between the East from the 10th century BCE to the 7th century CE, and a significant portion of the *haggadah*, are written in it.

At a Seder, we begin by eating the dry, broken matzah, which is supposed to be an equalizer. Regardless of where we came from and where we sit, on this night, at this very table, we all eat the same meager bread.

What would it mean for you to fulfill the statement, “let all who are hungry, come and eat”?

What does it mean for you to say, “now we are slaves; next year may we be free?”