

The Symbols Of Our Hunger Seder

Contributed by [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#)

Source: Mazon: Hunger Seder

Rabbi Gamliel taught that when we tell the story of the Exodus, we must also explain the meaning of the most important symbols: zeroah, matzah, and maror. (*Leader holds up each symbol as the designated portion is read.*)

Zeroah is a roasted shank bone, which reminds us that God told the Israelites to put lamb's blood on our doors to escape the tenth plague, the slaying of the first born.

We eat matzah because there was not enough time for the Israelites to allow their dough to rise before they fled Egypt from slavery into freedom.

Maror are bitter herbs, reminding us how the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Israelites.

At this Hunger Seder today, we recognize these traditional symbols as reminders of our obligation to work for the day when all people are free from the injustice and oppression of hunger.

B'chol dor v'dor chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatzah mi'Mitzrayim.

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In every generation, we are obligated to view ourselves as if we were the ones who went out from Egypt, as it is said: And on that day tell your child, saying "For this purpose Adonai labored on my behalf, by taking me out of Egypt." It was not our ancestors alone who were delivered by the Holy Blessed One — we were also delivered with them. We were there, and yet we are also here, part of the unfolding story of pursuing justice in our own time. We retell and remember what was and at the same time we continue to shape what will be.

Who can say we've actually left? "Wherever you live, it is probably Egypt," Michael Walzer wrote. Do you live in a place where some people work two and three jobs to feed their children, and others don't even have a single, poorly paid job? Do you live in a community where the rich are fabulously rich, and the poor humiliated and desperate? Do you live in a place where some people are more equal than others?

America is a golden land, absolutely, and for Jews, it has been an ark of refuge. But it has not yet fulfilled its promise... The seder marks the flight from the humiliation of slavery to the grandeur of freedom, but not everyone has come on this journey... Aren't we still commanded to bring everyone out of Egypt?

- Excerpt by Jeffrey Goldberg from *NEW AMERICAN HAGGADAH* edited by Jonathan Safran Foer