

Tasting Freedom

A Seder Plate for Immigration Justice

We raise our hearts and voices in solidarity with all immigrants in our midst. To be in danger of deportation is a shadow darkening every corner. We have the opportunity to stand against that threat, whether they have legal status or not, and to say, immigrants belong here just as we all do. Each of the foods on the seder plate provokes us to ask special questions and reflect on the fight for immigration justice.



Maror – Taste is the sense tied most strongly to memory, and the bitter taste of *maror* is meant to remind us of the Israelites’ suffering under Pharaoh. What bitter memories of migration from our own and our families’ pasts do we want to recall?



Egg – An egg is fragile, but its thin shell is enough to protect new life from a rough world. What small things can we do to protect new migrants, some of the most vulnerable amongst us?



Haroset – The chunky paste recalls the mortar the Israelites were forced to use to build Pharaoh’s cities. Many undocumented immigrants today are working in exploitive settings where, because of their immigration status, they cannot challenge their bosses and employers - in agricultural fields, on construction sites, and in restaurants. Ending the practices that force immigrants into unfree and dangerous work is as important as thwarting Trump’s walls and bans.



Beet / Shank bone – The Israelites used lamb’s blood to mark their doors to signal the Angel of Death to pass over their home, sparing the lives of those who live under that roof. Too often, we haggle over which immigrants ‘deserve’ citizenship, to be reunited with their families, to live in safety and peace. By declaring any person undeserving, or less deserving, we are unmarking their doors, and inviting in deportation, ripping apart families, and in some cases threatening their lives. How do we ensure our words and our advocacy for immigrants do not expose anyone to harm?



Karpas – Spring’s new growth reminds us to look forward to the future. Traditionally, we dip the green vegetable in salt water to remind us of the tears the Israelites shed as they labored for Pharaoh. How we can remain hopeful when we are surrounded by pain?



Matzah – The Israelites did not have time to bake bread before they left the house of bondage, so they carried unleavened matzah. Today, immigrants are forced to choose what, how much, and even whom to bring with them on their journeys. At the end of the seder, we bring back the *afikomen*, the broken piece of matzah, to complete our meal. Let us work over the coming year to unify all immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers with all they had to leave behind.



Orange – This symbolizes the fruitfulness of a Jewish community where all are welcome – and in particular our commitment to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer folks. Discrimination against LGBTQ+ migrants pervades the immigration system. Same-gender couples are threatened with separation. Trans detainees in ICE custody are often misgendered and abused. Refugees fleeing threats based on their gender or sexual orientation face convoluted and opaque standards. The fight for a fair immigration system is equally a fight for the lives and rights of LGBTQ folks.