

TEMPLE BETH EL

SEDER SUPPLEMENT 5770

Ha Lachma Anya - The Bread of Affliction and the Affliction of Homelessness

Rabbi Judith Schindler

Ha Lachma Anya -- this is the bread of affliction -- the bread of poverty -- that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Yet we do not need to look to the ancient times of Torah to see the pain of poverty. In our country of plenty, 13 million children go to bed hungry each night. In our Queen city, 8,000 people are homeless -- among them 3,000 Charlotte Mecklenburg school students.

In Judaism, the home is one of the foundations upon which human dignity rests. It is the place in which the values of our faith are expressed and taught. May we work to create structures in which all can afford to have a home and a place of security and sanctity. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are need of this basic human right hear our voices of support.

Four Questions about Israel

Rabbi Judith Schindler

This year the issue that compels so many of us to ask four questions surrounds Israel. On one hand we yearn to show unwavering support for our homeland. Yet on the other, our conscience calls us to ask questions:

- While Israel could build settlements in East Jerusalem as it is legal, does that mean that we should -- are the current expansions of Israeli settlements on Ramat Shlomo disrupting peaceful relations with our

Palestinian neighbors or are they merely providing for natural growth of existing Jewish neighborhoods?

- Why is the Western Wall of our ancient Temple that belongs to all of us placed under the control of the ultra-Orthodox, who ban the half of us who are women from praying the words of our worship aloud or wearing a tallit when we are there?
- Why is Israel judged more harshly than any other nation and continually singled out for criticism and why do so few of us stand up and speak out on her behalf?
- What is our responsibility as Americans to be ambassadors for Israel and to educate ourselves so that we can educate others when inaccurate information is conveyed?

Freedom and Slavery

Rabbi Micah Streiffer

Avadim hayinu. Once we were slaves in Egypt

Ata v'nei chorin. And the Eternal took us out of that place.

With freedom comes responsibility. God brought us out of Egypt, but it is up to us to build the Promised Land. God created us in the Divine Image, but it is our job to create a society worthy of that image. God gave us freedom, but we must discover what that freedom means in our day.

Ata v'nei chorin - We will be truly free when we choose brotherhood and respect over hatred and fear.

Ata v'nei chorin - We will be truly free when we ensure that every person has access to basic health care.

Ata v'nei chorin - We will be truly free when no child sleeps without a roof over her head.

Ata v'nei chorin - We will be truly free when we respect each other's right to free speech; when we listen with open ears even to those with whom we do not agree.

Ata v'nei chorin - We will be truly free when we choose what is right over what is comfortable.

May we recognize the slavery that is still part of our lives, and begin to work together toward freedom.

Dayeinu... It Would Have Been Enough

Rabbi Micah Streiffer

Like our ancestor Joseph, we have known years of plenty and we have known lean years. Even as our country begins to emerge from recession, we in Charlotte find ourselves still in the midst of hard times. Yet the experience of these past years has changed us fundamentally. We have begun to realign our priorities, to reexamine what we hold most dear. The recession has taught us to appreciate what we have and helped us to understand how much we once took for granted.

Kama ma'alot tovot lamakom aleinu!
How many gifts has God bestowed upon us!

If God had only given us our families and our loved ones... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us our friends and community, to whom we can turn in difficult times... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us a roof over our heads... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us a beautiful city; a city of trees and flowers that are bursting into bloom all around us... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us a world filled with natural beauty and man-made wonders... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us the freedom to be Jews, to worship and believe in accordance with our conscience and with our tradition... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us the drive to make the world a better place... *Dayeinu!*

If God had only given us the ability to make ourselves better people... *Dayeinu!*

Only a fraction of these blessings would have been enough, but God has given us all of this and more. For all that we have, we are thankful.