

yachat 5778

rosza daniel lang/levitsky

we have arrived at a place of separation, of making distinctions.

we take one matzo - the middle matzo - from the group of three.

we break it.

we send the larger piece away.

we ask why this night is different, and name its distinct separateness four ways.

we differentiate among four children, to praise, to teach, and to separate ourselves from one of them.

and we know the importance of these ritual breakings and distancings. grace lee boggs has taught us about the importance of political partings of the way. none of us have been so sheltered that we lack a basic suspicion of calls to unity: we know whose bodies that one-ness is usually built on.

but we also know that a gesture of separation can come too easily, can take the place of difficult, attentive, necessary, fulfilling work. not work of denying differences, of a harmony that smooths and erases, but the work that shifts terrain, that moves with others through it, that digs new channels for thought and action.

let the afikomen stand for what we separate from, and return to.

let the lakhma onya stand for what we hold as an anchor.

let the afikomen stand for what keeps coming back, a persistent presence.

let the lakhma onya stand for what we make vanish quickly.

let one of them stand for liberation.

let one of them stand for slavery.

we recognize each by the shape of its edge.

let the break between the two stand.

and let us say together a metaphor that we must make as real as what fills our stomachs tonight:

dos iz dos oreme broyt vos undzere eltern hobn gegesn in land mitsrayim.

ver es iz hungerik, zol kumen un esn.

ver es neytikt zikh – zol haltn mit undz peysakh.

hayntiks yor knekht, dos kumendike yor – fraye mentshn!

this is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of mitsrayim.

whoever is hungry, come and eat.

whoever is in need - come share our passover.

this year, enslaved, next year – free people!

(traditionally, we say ha lakhma onya in aramaic - the language of the people, not the priests. but a midrash says that this is because aramaic is the language the angels do not understand. i prefer to believe that this matters because we trust the people more than the messengers in the service of the Law. this yiddish version comes from the workmen's circle / arbeter-ring.)

Metaphor to Action
Muriel Rukeyser

Whether it is a speaker, taut on a platform,
who battles a crowd with the hammers of his words,
whether it is the crash of lips on lips
after absence and wanting : we must close
the circuits of ideas, now generate,
that leap in the body's action or the mind's repose.

Over us is a striking on the walls of the sky,
here are the dynamos, steel-black, harboring flame,
here is the man night-walking who derives
tomorrow's manifestoes from this midnight's meeting ;
here we require the proof in solidarity,
iron on iron, body on body, and the large single beating.

And behind us in time are the men who second us
as we continue. And near us is our love :
no forced contempt, no refusal in dogma, the close
of the circuit in a fierce dazzle of purity.
And over us is night a field of pansies unfolding,
charging with heat its softness in a symbol
to weld and prepare for action our minds' intensity.

The Bread of the People
Bertolt Brecht

Justice is the bread of the people
Sometimes is plentiful, sometimes it is scarce
Sometimes it tastes good, sometimes it tastes bad.
When the bread is scarce, there is hunger.
When the bread is bad, there is discontent.

Throw away the bad justice
Baked without love, kneaded without knowledge!
Justice without flavour, with a grey crust
The stale justice which comes too late!

If the bread is good and plentiful
The rest of the meal can be excused.
One cannot have plenty of everything all at once.
Nourished by the bread of justice
The work can be achieved
From which plenty comes.

As daily bread is necessary
So is daily justice.
It is even necessary several times a day.

From morning till night, at work, enjoying oneself.
At work which is an enjoyment.
In hard times and in happy times
The people requires the plentiful, wholesome
Daily bread of justice.

Since the bread of justice, then, is so important
Who, friends, shall bake it?

Who bakes the other bread?

Like the other bread
The bread of justice must be baked
By the people.
Plentiful, wholesome, daily