

## Chief Rabbi's Pesach Message 5767

There are two different texts for the words we say at the beginning of the Seder as we hold up the matzah. One reads: *Ha lachma anya*, "This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in Egypt". The other reads *ke-ha lachma anya*, "This is like the bread of affliction." Some texts of the Haggadah have the first, others the second. Why? The Dubno Maggid was famous for his ingenious explanations, which he often gave by way of a parable. In this case, he told the following story. There was once a poor businessman who could barely support his family. They lived in a tiny house and he wore old and tattered clothes.

Then his luck changed. Suddenly his business started prospering. He became rich. He and his family moved into an expensive house. He was able to dress in the finest clothes. Once a year, though, he would dress in his old, worn-out clothes to remind himself of where he had come from, so that he would never forget the past or fail to give thanks for the present. His family understood.

Then, one day, his luck changed again, this time for the worse. The fortune he had made, he lost. Once again all he had were the worn-out clothes he used to wear. He gathered his children and told them that the family was no longer rich. "You see these clothes?" he said. "This time I am wearing them not to remind myself that once I was poor. I am wearing them now because I really am poor."

So it is with the matzah, said the Dubno Maggid. History plays strange tricks with the Jewish people. There are times when we are free and prosperous and safe. That is when we say *Ke-ha lachma anya*. "This is like the bread of affliction". It is a reminder of a distant past. But there are times when the world turns against us, and then we say, *Ha lachma anya*. This is not like the bread of affliction. It really is the bread of affliction.

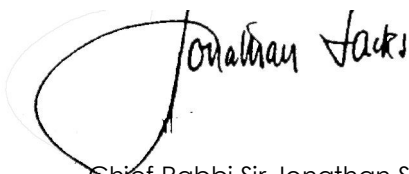
Thank G-d, we are not in that position. These have been bleak times for the Jewish people and Israel.

Hamas, Hizbollah and Iran have reminded us that, as we say in the Haggadah, "Not one alone stood against us to try to destroy us - but in every generation." This year we taste the affliction of our extended family in Israel and elsewhere.

But there remains one vital difference between now and the past. Today we have the land and state of Israel. Jews are not powerless, as for almost twenty centuries they were. Within living memory the second great exodus has taken place, from lands where Jews were persecuted to the home where they can be free. For us, this is still a time of *ke-ha lachma anya*, not *ha lachmya anya*. Affliction as Jews knew it in the past is for us a memory not a reality. That is why this Pesach we should celebrate, not fear.

Terror as practised by Hamas and Hizbollah is intended to make Israel afraid. Threats of the kind uttered by Iran are meant to intimidate and demoralise. Israel's enemies make one miscalculation. A nation that can taste the bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of persecution and yet still drink four cups of the wine of freedom is one that can never be intimidated. That is Israel's greatest strength. Having waited twenty centuries for a new birth of freedom, Israel will never give it up. Pesach remains the festival of hope. Israel is the land and home of hope. Jews are the people of hope, and a people that never loses hope can never be defeated.

*Chag Kasher vesameach* to you, your families, and to the people of Israel - our hope and our pride.



Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks  
Pesach 5767