



Olives and Maror: The Great Return March

A Passover 5779 Seder Supplement by Rabbi Brant Rosen

Reader: One year ago, on the eve of Passover, the world watched as ten thousand Palestinians gathered at the Gaza border for what would come to be known as the “Great Return March.”

As march organizer Ahmed Abu Artema explained, this movement began with a simple idea:

Reader: *As I watched the birds fly over the border I could not cross, I found myself thinking how much smarter birds and animals are than people; they harmonize with nature instead of erecting walls. Later that day, I wondered on Facebook what would happen if a man acted like a bird and crossed that fence. “Why would Israeli soldiers shoot at him as if he is committing a crime?” I wrote. My only thought was to reach the trees, sit there and then come back.*

Reader: Since the first day of the march, the largely non-violent demonstrators have been consistently met with live fire from the Israeli military. To date, over 250 Palestinians have been killed and tens of thousands wounded and maimed, including children, medics and bystanders. According to the UN Human Rights Council, there is “no justification” for the Israeli military to use live ammunition on demonstrators, concluding that there is “reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli security forces committed serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law,”

Reader: And so, on this night of Passover we affirm: we cannot gather to tell the Exodus story without acknowledging the liberation narrative that is currently unfolding at the Gaza border. We affirm further: if we remember our own persecution yet fail to call out Israel’s persecution of the Palestinian people, our seder will not be complete.

Reader: We now combine maror and olives, to acknowledge the bitterness of lives lost and dreams denied – together with the eternal hope of justice and return. Let us redouble our resolve to do our part to make these hopes and dreams a reality *bimeirah be’yamneinu* – speedily and in our own day.

We say the blessing over maror together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam
asher kidshanu be'mitzvotav ve'tzivanu al achilat maror.*

Holy One of Blessing, your presence fills creation,
you invite us to engage in sacred action through the eating of maror.

We say the blessing over olives together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri ha'eytz.

Holy One of Blessing, your presence fills creation, who creates the fruit of the tree.

We eat the maror and olives together on a piece of matzah.