

Passover Reflections

The seder's order

By Marge Piercy

The songs we join in
are beeswax candles
burning with no smoke
a clean fire licking at the evening

our voices small flames quivering.
The songs string us like beads
on the hour. The ritual is
its own melody that leads us

where we have gone before
and hope to go again, the comfort
of year after year. Order:
we must touch each base

of the haggadah as we pass,
blessing, handwashing,
dipping this and that. Voices
half harmonize on the brukhahs.

Dear faces like a multitude
of moons hang over the table
and the truest brief blessing:
affection and peace that we make.

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Interpretive Translation of Psalm 1

Dedicated to my father, Eric L. Herzog, by Rabbi Kimberly Herzog Cohen

Soul-rooted are those who have not become like stones in the field,
Nor stood fixed on a mound of earth,
Nor sit star-spangled and tangled in magical ropes.
Curious ones listen and know there are lands unseen,
there is a murmur day and night that calls Lech l'cha (Go forth...)
and we bow as branches, webbed like brain synapses,
lightning flashes sending signs
to rest among subtle, soft seed pods and unfurling tender knocks
to our hardened hearts.
Winds rage, sirens blast, with fear pouncing in the wake.
Lost at the crossroads, eyelids heavy with grief,
we take hold and we are held.
Lechi lach whispers in the gentleness,
kicks up dust clouds and altars of light as we make our way,
returning home once again.

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Freedom

By Langston Hughes

Freedom will not come
Today, this year
Nor ever
Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right
As the other fellow has
To stand
On my two feet
And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people say,
Let things take their course.
Tomorrow is another day.
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.
Freedom
Is a strong seed
Planted
In a great need.
I live here, too.
I want my freedom
Just as you.

For Memory

By Adrienne Rich

Freedom. It isn't once, to walk out
under the Milky Way, feeling the rivers
of light, the fields of dark—
freedom is daily, prose-bound, routine
remembering. Putting together, inch by inch
the starry worlds. From all the lost collections.
From "A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far"