

KARPAS

Returning to Kibbutz Sa'ad

כרפס



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. The Karpas, like many of the symbols of the Seder, combines a celebration of the new—spring—as well as remembering the bitter experiences that we suffered on our on-going journey to freedom. What contrasting feelings are you holding today?
2. How can embracing such conflicting emotions inform our conversations around the Seder Table?

By Omer Drori and Ayelet Drori, *Residents of Kibbutz Saad*

Before eating the leafy green vegetable, we dip it in salt water and say the blessing over the fruits of the earth, remembering that later, the blessing will also include the bitter herbs.

We, the community of Kibbutz Sa'ad, were evacuated from our home with the rest of the Western Negev residents, after two days of hiding in the shelters and hearing the terrible news of what was happening to our neighbors and friends. After five months of living in temporary locations, we finally began to return to our homes and continue the work of making the desert bloom. Going back brings with it the sense of freedom and relief, but also tears. We cry for the friends and neighbors we've lost. We also cry for our friends who are still refugees from their communities in the south and north, who are still far away from their own homes and their land. Most of all, we cry tears of anxiety for the hostages who may be a very short distance away, but are still beyond where we can reach. We pray that they are able to soon return to their families, their communities, and their homes. Together, we need to build a shared future, where we can all go from slavery to freedom.

Dipping the karpas in the salt water brings together two important aspects of Passover: the vegetables remind us of spring and life; while the salt water represents our tears and loss. We won't recline to eat the leafy greens, because they are still coated in our tears and we aren't truly free people. This Passover, the sense of freedom and sadness will be evident throughout our seders in Kibbutz Sa'ad. This year's seder table will be heavy with our fears and prayers for the wellbeing of our soldiers, fighting above ground, and the hostages below it. With so many people missing from our Seder tables, may we learn again how to celebrate and grow from the pain.

Many of the kibbutzim and communities around us are still not able to return to their homes. As the signs of spring and rebirth fill our land, we are grateful to be back in our homes and look forward to the return of our friends, families, and neighbors.



Children returning to the Eshkol region religious school. The school reopened in March, after being shut down since October 7.

Photo courtesy of Omer Drori



A sign made by the community of Kibbutz Sa'ad for the community of Kfar Aza reading: "Dear Kfar Aza community, we embrace you! The Sa'ad community." Both kibbutzim are adjacent and hold a strong bond, and while the Sa'ad community has returned to their homes, the people of Kfar Aza are still evacuated from their own.

Photo courtesy of Omer Drori