Pesach is the oldest and most transformative story of hope ever told.

It tells of how an otherwise undistinguished group of slaves found their way to freedom from the greatest and longest-lived empire of their time, indeed of any time.

It tells the revolutionary story of how the supreme Power intervened in history to liberate the supremely powerless.

It is a story of the defeat of probability by the force of possibility.

It defines what it is to be a Jew: a living symbol of hope.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

For many years I was puzzled by the first words we say on Pesach: 'This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat it with us.'

What kind of hospitality is it to offer the hungry the bread of affliction?

Finally, though, I think I understood. The unleavened bread represents two things. It was the food eaten by slaves. But it was also the food eaten by the Israelites as they left Egypt in too much of a hurry to let the dough rise. It is the bread of affliction, but it is also the bread of freedom.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Once a year, every year, every Jew is commanded to relive the experience of Egypt as a constant reminder of the bread of oppression and the bitter herbs of slavery – to know that the battle for freedom is never finally won but must be fought in every generation.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The Exodus is the inexhaustible source of inspiration to all those who long for freedom. It taught that right was sovereign over might; that freedom and justice must belong to all, not some; that, under God, all human beings are equal; and that over all earthly powers is the supreme power, the King of Kings, who hears the cry of the oppressed and who intervenes in history to liberate slaves.

It took many centuries for this vision to become the shared property of liberal democracies of the West; and there is no guarantee that it will remain so.

Freedom is a moral achievement, and without a constant effort of education it atrophies and must be fought for again.

Nowhere more than on Pesach, though, do we see how, loyal to its faith across the centuries, the Jewish people became the guardians of a vision through which, ultimately, 'all the nations of the earth will be blessed'.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Judaism is a faith that, more than any other, values the mind, encouraging questions and engaging us at the highest level of intellectual rigour. Every question asked in reverence is the start of a journey towards God, and it begins with the habit which, on Pesach, Jewish parents teach their children: to ask, thereby to join the never-ending dialogue between human understanding and heaven.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

There is a profound difference between history and memory. History is *his* story – an event that happened sometime else to someone else. Memory is my story – something that happened to me and is part of who I am.

To be a Jew is to know that over and above history is the task of memory. More than any other faith, Judaism made this a matter of obligation.

Pesach is where the past does not die but lives, in the chapter we write in our own lives and in the story we tell our children.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

We are Jews to show ourselves and others what it is to bring the Divine Presence into ordinary lives, human relationships, marriage, the family, homes, and communities, and thus begin to build a society that honours the 'image of God' in humankind, a society free in the deepest and most generous sense of the word.

On Pesach, as we trace our own route from the bread of oppression to the wine of freedom, we become part of that journey. Making it our own, we are drawn into a narrative at once intimate and vast, just like the Seder service itself. This is our people and our story. Challenging then, it is no less challenging now.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Pesach tells us that the strength of a nation does not lie in horses and chariots, armies and arms, or in colossal statues and monumental buildings, overt demonstrations of power and wealth.

It depends on simpler things: humility in the presence of the God of creation, trust in the God of redemption and history, and a sense of the non-negotiable sanctity of human life, created by God in His image: even the life of a slave or a child too young to ask questions.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l