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Dear Friends,

In just a few weeks many of us will gather with family and friends in celebration of Passover. At our Passover Seders we recall our people's deliverance from slavery in order to remind us of the great freedom we enjoy. Ironically, while the theme of freedom resounds throughout the holiday and its many rituals, on Passover, many of us feel anything but free. We feel enslaved by the strains and pressures of having all our family and loved ones present. The bonds of strained relationships restrain our abilities to create happy families. We are out of touch with so many, hurt by others, and feel as hot as horseradish when our guests feel compelled to ascend the soapbox for their respective cause d'jour.

The complexity of Passover and family in general is captured by Brenda Janowitz in her latest book, "The Dinner Party." With humor and sensitivity, the author shows an understanding of the familial dysfunction familiar to so many. Plot twists, deep sibling rivalry, powerful family dynasties, and quick wit make this a fun and compelling read.

Yet, it is Janowitz's ultimate message of forgiveness that makes this book a must read this Passover. "The Dinner Party" reminds us that without forgiveness we will always be slaves. That critical lesson is nothing short of a blessing!


Rabbi Brian Schuldenfrei