

My teacher, Dr. David Kraemer, tells the following story about a Passover he celebrated many years ago when his daughter was little. On seder night, the Kraemer family gathered together for candle-lighting and recited the blessing, finishing with the words *l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov* – Praised are You, God, who commands us to light the holiday candles. Immediately Dr. Kraemer's daughter – who was accustomed to the Shabbat version of the blessing – piped up with a clear voice. "Why is it different tonight?" she asked inquisitively. At which point Dr. Kraemer turned to his family and said, "We're now done for the evening. Our responsibility to conduct a Passover seder has just been fulfilled!"

In truth, the Kraemer family perhaps could have skipped seder that fateful year! For the primary purpose of the Passover ritual is to inspire questions and in so doing to bring out the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt – crafting the telling of the story to meet the capacity and need of those assembled around one's seder table. In fact, various pieces of the seder rite were designed for the sole purpose of inspiring questions – for example the dual hand-washing, once with blessing and once without, or the ancient custom of putting nuts and other small treats on the seder table to arouse the curiosity of young guests. Indeed, the ability to question is one of the hallmarks of living as a free person in a free society. In this sense, questioning becomes both the mechanism by which we tell the story of our freedom from slavery and the way in which we affirm the enduring reality of that narrative in our lives still today.

It is not just this night, however, but perhaps this entire year that feels different for many of us this Passover 5777 as we look out at a world which seems quite far from the ideals of safety and freedom for all espoused by the pages of the *haggadah*. And so in the spirit of raising questions and sometimes even critique as a sign of true liberty, I offer this year's Seder Supplement dedicated to the theme of social justice in all its many forms. (Those interested in looking at seder supplements of years past focusing on the Four Questions, the Four Children, and general seder enhancement respectively should feel free to visit our website: http://bhcbe.org/cpt_sermons/2451/, http://bhcbe.org/cpt_sermons/burning-book/, http://bhcbe.org/cpt_sermons/baseball-seder-plate/.)

I hope you will feel free to use these suggested readings and activities however you see fit or to add in other ideas of your own to emphasize the idea that modern day slavery still, regrettably, persists and that it is our responsibility as Jews to learn from our experiences of oppression to bring healing and emancipation to others. I look forward to hearing stories from your own seder table!

Shabbat Shalom and an early *Chag Sameach*,
Rabbi Annie Tucker

Pesach Supplement 5777 – Freedom and Responsibility

Introduction

Walk with your guests to the front door or have one guest rise from the table and walk to the front door. There, place a pair of shoes on the doorstep and read the words below.

The heart of the Passover Seder tells the story of the Jewish people's exodus from slavery in Egypt. During the retelling of this story, we say the words, "Arami oved avi." This phrase is

sometimes translated as “My father was a wandering Aramean” and other times as “An Aramean sought to destroy my father.” Somewhere between the two translations lies the essence of the Jewish experience: a rootless people who have fled persecution time and time again.

Soon we will recite the words “Arami oved avi” as we retell the story of our people’s exodus from Egypt. These words acknowledge that we have stood in the shoes of the refugee. Today, as we celebrate our freedom, we commit ourselves to continuing to stand with contemporary refugees. In honor of this commitment and against the backdrop of terrible restrictions on refugees, we place a pair of shoes on the doorstep of our home to acknowledge that none of us is free until all of us are free and to pledge to stand in support of welcoming those who do not yet have a place to call home.

-From the 2017 HIAS Haggadah Supplement,

www.hias.org/sites/default/files/hias_2017_haggadah_supplement.pdf

Kadesh (Kiddush and the First Cup of Wine)

Raising one’s glass is often performed as a toast, to celebrate good people or good works or important milestones achieved. Consider dedicating each of the four cups of wine seder night to a different individual or organization that is making a difference in repairing our world. Four guests can be assigned in advance to choose and report briefly on a social justice champion they wish to acknowledge and contributions to support recommended institutions can be made once the holiday ends and/or in lieu of afikomen gifts.

-RAET

Urchatz (First Hand Washing Without Blessing)

Washing hands is a cleansing process and often regarded as symbolic of this purpose, perhaps cleansing ourselves of certain aspects of our day or of this world. However, instead, we might regard it as a focus on hands themselves; the labor of human endeavor and the skillful creations crafted, both of which contributed to this meal. There is a particular significance in focusing on this aspect of the ritual tonight, as we consider the human endeavor exploited in the act of enslavement. The hands are washed without a blessing.

Today, it is still possible to buy and sell another human being. The price of a slave, adjusted for inflation, has actually dropped compared to the time of the American Civil War. In our time, human life is cheap. It’s another commodity, to be bought and consumed. Like our ancestors in Egypt, every day voices cry out to God for freedom. Will we hear them? Will we help them be free? Or will we harden our hearts?

- From Passover and Human Rights by Rabbis for Human Rights

Karpas (Dipping the Green Vegetable)

As we take for the first time one of the items on our seder plate we recognize that these symbols were chosen to help tell the Jewish journey from slavery to freedom. In more contemporary times, communities have sometimes chosen to add additional items to the traditional ones whether it is an orange representing the presence of women in ritual life or potato peels commemorating the sacrifices of our ancestors who suffered during the Holocaust. (This year we might add a band-aid to the seder plate to symbolize the precarious nature of universal health care coverage in this country.)

T'ruah, the rabbinic call for human rights, has recently suggested adding a tomato to the seder plate representing their campaign for fair food (<http://www.truah.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/tomato-on-seder-plate-2015.pdf>) or a lock and key symbolizing the issue of mass incarceration (http://www.truah.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Haggadah_Supplement_Mass_Incarceration.pdf).

What item would you like to add to the seder plate tonight? As we dip the bright green karpas into the salty water of our tears, let us muster hope that next year will indeed be different because of our efforts and agency.

-RAET

Yachatz (Breaking the Middle Matzah)

Being poor is having your heat shut off in the winter because your parents can't pay your bill.

Being poor is having two blankets for seven people in the family.

Being poor is wishing you could eat out in a restaurant.

Being poor is wearing shoes that someone else threw out.

Being poor is lying when someone asks you what your father does for a living.

Being poor is pretending that you don't care that you got no gift for your birthday.

Being poor is waiting all day in a clinic to see a doctor you don't know.

Being poor is a welfare worker asking your mother too many questions and making her cry.

Being poor is not being afraid of the dentist because you've never seen one.

Being poor is feeling a little mad because you never have what you need.

Go around the table, adding your own continuation to the sentence "Being poor is...."

-From *A Night to Remember* by Mishael Zion and Noam Zion

Maggid (Telling the Story – The Four Questions, The Four Children, The 10 Plagues and More)

The Four Children

At Passover each year, we read the story of our ancestors' pursuit of liberation from oppression. When confronting this history, how do we answer our children when they ask us how to pursue justice in our time?

What does the activist child ask? "The Torah tells me, 'Justice, justice you shall pursue,' but how can I pursue justice?" Empower her always to seek pathways to advocate for the vulnerable. As Proverbs teaches, "Speak up for the mute, for the rights of the unfortunate. Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy."

What does the skeptical child ask? "How can I solve problems of such enormity?" Encourage him by explaining that he need not solve the problems, he must only do what he is capable of doing. As we read in *Pirkei Avot* – The Ethics of our Ancestors, "It is not your responsibility to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."

What does the indifferent child ask? "It's not my responsibility." Persuade her that responsibility cannot be shirked. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "The opposite of good is not evil; the opposite of good is indifference. In a free society where terrible wrongs exist, some are guilty but all are responsible."

And the uninformed child who does not know how to ask... Prompt him to see himself as an inheritor of our people's legacy. As it says in Deuteronomy, "You must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." At this season of liberation, let us work toward the liberation of all people. Let us respond to our children's questions with action and justice.

-From *Next Year in a Just World: A Global Justice Haggadah* by American Jewish World Service

The Ten Plagues

Remembering the ten plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians when Pharaoh refused to free the Israelites, we have the opportunity tonight to recognize that the world is not yet free of adversity and struggle. This is especially true for refugees. After you pour out a drop of wine for each of the ten plagues that Egypt suffered, we invite you to then pour out drops of wine for ten modern plagues afflicting refugee communities worldwide and in the United States.

1. violence 2. dangerous journeys 3. poverty 4. food insecurity 5. lack of access to education 6. xenophobia 7. anti-refugee legislation 8. language barriers 9. workforce discrimination 10. loss of family

Rachtzah (Second Hand Washing)

Because the act of hand-washing is connected to the act of eating, some follow the tradition to refrain from speaking after washing one's hands until blessing and tasting the matzah. See how many freedom-themed songs, Jewish or secular, you can come up with and fill this in-between time by humming them without words.

-RAET

Motzi Matzah (Matzah Blessings)

It was the practice of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak each Passover to supervise the bakeries of Berdichev. In addition to the kashrut of the matzot, he was concerned with the working conditions of the women and children employees. One year, observing that they were being exploited, being forced to work from early morning until late at night, he approached the bakery owner. "Our enemies used to cause great consternation among our people," he said, "charging that we use non-Jewish blood to make our matzah. Today, however, God knows and you know as well that this is a foolish lie. But among our many sins, I see that there are Jewish bakers who prepare their matzah with Jewish blood, with the blood of the poor Jewish women and children from whom, unfortunately, they squeeze out the last bit of strength.

As we eat this matzah, the bread of affliction, we remember the conditions of unseen workers who help to bring us food. We follow in the example of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev and acknowledge that the kashrut of our food also depends on the conditions of the workers who make it for us.

-From *In Every Generation: A Haggadah Supplement on Economic Justice* by Rabbis for Human Rights 2003

Maror (The Bitter Herbs)

8-Step Maror Meditation

1. Sit comfortably in your chair.
2. Place the maror in your hand. While feeling the maror, reflect on the comfort level you are currently experiencing.

3. Raise the maror to your mouth. Note that you are about to subject yourself to discomfort, in the midst of a festival of freedom and joy. What are you feeling as you are about to taste the bitterness?
4. Put the maror in your mouth. Chew three times and then stop.
5. Pause to note what the bitterness feels like. Think about a source of bitterness in the world today. Close your eyes and picture it. Open your eyes.
6. Swallow the maror.
7. Make a realistic, tangible commitment to addressing the source of bitterness that you pictured in the world.
8. Share your commitment with the person next to you.

-From Food and Justice: A Haggadah Supplement by Uri L'Tzedek

Korech (Making the Hillel Sandwich)

In remembrance of today's slaves, up to 4 million people trafficked each year, now, in our own time, some in our very own country, we eat this extra portion of maror [in the Hillel sandwich]. We remember women entrapped by criminals who promised them a better life abroad. We think of children sold into slavery who knot carpets or tend crops at this moment. We recall refugee men swept into captive labor. With this extra maror, we who are free share the bitterness of the lot of today's slaves, resolving to appeal to governments, leaders, and communities to end human trafficking for all time.

-From Expand on the Telling: Bringing Modern Day Slavery to our Seders by Free the Slaves

Shulchan Orech (The Festive Meal)

Passover is a special time when we gather with family and friends to retell the story of our people's freedom from bondage. We read from a prayer book, perform rituals that are thousands of years old, and eat A LOT of delicious and symbolic foods. Unfortunately, not everyone is lucky enough to have that luxury.

Hunger in America is at an epidemic level. 50 million Americans – nearly 1 in 6 – struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table every day. One out of every five Israelis can't be sure when or if they'll have their next meal. These statistics are tragic, and they inspire our daily work. But at Passover, when it can seem as though the primary purpose of the Seder is to eat (and eat and eat), we feel the discomfort a bit more keenly.

This year, we turn our attention to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which faces proposals for devastating changes and cuts that would increase the problem of hunger.

Charities and houses of worship provide important temporary assistance for emergency situations, but they simply do not have the capacity or resources to feed the overwhelming number of people in need.

Federal food and nutrition assistance programs serve as our nation's frontline defense against food insecurity. SNAP is the nation's most important and effective anti-hunger program, targeting assistance according to need and helping millions of Americans to purchase adequate food for an active, healthy, and productive life.

Help protect SNAP:

Sign our petition asking Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) to protect, not eviscerate, SNAP: <http://mazon.org/take-action/snap-passover>.

Organize a campaign in your community to raise awareness about hunger in America, and the importance of SNAP.

Share your blessings: Give as much as you can or what you would have spent feeding one more person at your Seder table.

After your Seder, tell your story to the extended MAZON family. Send us an email and tell us about your discussion or share your picture or story on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter and tag us (@mazonusa). Your words might inspire others to take action and fight hunger themselves!

-From MAZON, mazon.org/jewish-social-justice/passover

Tzafun (Finding the Afikomen)

In the beginning of our seder, we compared hiding the afikomen to hiding parts of ourselves. While hiding sometimes has its purpose, the Passover meal is never complete until we find the afikomen. The story of freedom is never complete until we find that which is hidden. In our personal struggles as GLBTQA people, often our only true redemption can be found when we come out of hiding.

It is not easy to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersexed in a heteronormative world with strict gender roles. Why do we, as GLBTQA people - as GLBTQA Jews - continue living within our struggle? Why don't we just choose to try to fit into heterosexuality and more traditional gender roles? Why don't we just hide? In Genesis, God calls out to Adam after he eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and asks "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). Adam replies "I was afraid because I was naked, so I tried to hide myself" (Genesis 3:10)

Just like Adam, we often fall under the illusion that by hiding from ourselves or the people around us, we are also hiding from God. But by hiding from ourselves, we just make God, truth, and love harder to find. If we hide from ourselves, we relinquish all hope, and will never get the opportunity for redemption. After Adam reveals himself to God, God makes it known that Adam and Eve are in for hard times, but God also makes Adam and Eve garments with which to cover and protect themselves. Like Adam and Eve we will face hard times, but if we come out of hiding we can allow God to help us and protect us through it all.

-From *Ma Nishtana: A Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Ally Haggadah*, http://keshet.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/MaNishtana_GLBTHaggadah.pdf

Barech (Grace after Meals)

The Grace after Meals concludes with the drinking of the third cup of wine.

This cup of wine is dedicated to the women who do not find themselves embraced by a community, as we are tonight.

Women who endure injury, humiliation, and sexual assault and cannot talk about it. Women who suffered unspeakable abuses and did not live to tell.

This cup is for the shattered souls who never dreamed it would happen to them...

The women who stay to protect children, avoid shame, and bear the burden of *shalom bayit* in a home with no peace.

The women who stay because they believe in love.

And the women who escaped, and now struggle to find homes, build skills, and support their families.

This cup is for the women from whom everything has been taken – their families, their friends, their homes, their communities, their dignity, and their lives.

On Passover, as we celebrate liberation, we reaffirm our commitment to make all women safe in their homes and in their relationships.

This cup is for the women who find this night is no different from any other night.

They are our sisters, they are ourselves, and they are not alone.

-From Jewish Women International

Hallel (Songs of Praise)

Try singing this Hebrew version of the song “We Shall Overcome:”

Anu nitgaber

We shall overcome

Anu nitgaber

We shall overcome

Anu nitgaber b’vo hayom

We shall overcome some day

Ani ma’amin,

I believe

B’emunah shleima

With perfect faith

She’anu nitgaber hayom

That we shall overcome today

Nirtzah (Conclusion)

When we rise up from our Seder tables, let us commit ourselves to stamping out xenophobia and hatred in every place that it persists. Echoing God’s words when God said, “I take you to be my people,” let us say to those who seek safety in our midst, “we take you to be our people.” May we see past difference and dividing lines and remember, instead, that we were all created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. May we see welcoming the stranger at our doorstep not as a danger but as an opportunity – to provide safe harbor to those seeking refuge from oppression and tyranny, to enrich the fabric of our country and to live out our Jewish values in action. Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, who has created us all in Your image.

-From the 2017 HIAS Haggadah Supplement,

www.hias.org/sites/default/files/hias_2017_haggadah_supplement.pdf