

PASSOVER AS A CALL TO JUSTICE

ORIGINAL PRAYERS BY
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Passover is — first and foremost — a call to action.

A holiday full of ritual and symbolism meant to deepen our empathy, Passover reminds us that we were once slaves – powerless, marginalized, and without basic rights or freedoms. We embrace a powerful truth – that we can never truly be free until *all people everywhere* are free from oppression.

The themes of the Passover holiday have always resonated deeply with me as a Democrat. As Democrats, we fight not for the rich and the powerful, but for the poor and those who have suffered oppression and discrimination. Every year, Passover reminds me of our sacred obligation to work on behalf of those who are too often still marginalized – immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, working families, BIPOC communities, women, religious minorities, the formerly incarcerated, and those who are differently abled – and of how much work we have left to do.

I hope that you draw meaning and inspiration from the Passover Seder. May this holiday of freedom lead us to a more just and peaceful world and a year of freedom and opportunity for all people everywhere. *Chag Pesach Sameach!*

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel
Co-Chair, California Legislative Jewish Caucus

As CADEM Celebrates recognizes the rich traditions of our diverse communities, I am mindful of Passover as an observance that is both religious and cultural for the Jewish community. As such, the Jewish story of the Exodus contains many themes that speak universally to the oppression experienced beyond the Israelites and the Jewish community --- adversity, enslavement, antisemitism, and more. However, the story of the Exodus also contains themes of hope, triumph, and resilience.

The reading of the Haggadah (meaning telling) during the Passover Seder is more than a ritual. It keeps the Exodus story alive through the generations, and more significantly, has our relating to today's experiences of oppression around us. As CADEM Celebrates recognizes Passover, we renew our commitment to uplift all communities. Just as the Haggadah sets forth the order of the Seder ritual with the telling of the Exodus story, may equity and justice always be in order to ground CADEM's work. These themes may be sustained when we address the trauma of enslavement as experienced in ancient Egypt and as we experience it in modern society. Chag Pesach Sameach.

Betty Yee
CADEM Vice Chair

PASSOVER AS CALL TO JUSTICE

Passover is the Jewish Festival of Spring and the Festival of Freedom. We celebrate the liberation of the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt, rescued by the hand of God. With a special ritual meal called the Seder, (which means order in Hebrew). For millennia, Jews have retold the story of the exodus from Egypt with symbolic foods and stories, rituals and songs from a special book called the Haggadah. The Seder is a sacred meal that continues to have contemporary applications Jewish tradition teaches that in every generation, each person is to imagine that they have left Egypt. This brings an opportunity to add creativity and interpretation to the Seder rituals. This supplement of additional and special readings for your Seder ritual are offered as a way to enhance the celebration of Passover, while bringing in our Jewish, Democratic values.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CANDLE LIGHTING

As we light our Holiday and Sabbath Candles on this Passover, we celebrate this Festival of Freedom- Zman Cheruteinu. Our hearts are turned to our family and friends in love. We celebrate this night with gratitude and thanksgiving for the many blessings bestowed upon us.

The flames we now light are ever a reminder that democracy and liberty are not simply granted. But like striking a match that erupts in a flame, or flicking a lighter, the sparks that ignite can bring warmth and light. The sparks can shine fully when we work to create a society where all have a place at the table.

On this night we are inspired by the journey of our ancestors to freedom. We are taught, "in every generation a person should see themselves as if they went forth from Egypt". Tonight we leave behind the narrow place of enmity and oppression. Let us walk into the broad expanse of liberty and opportunity for all people, creating a world together of hope, fairness, equity and equality.

A READING BEFORE THE KARPAS/GREENS

A painting shows a Rabbi sitting in a chair leaning down to tie his shoelaces. His student sits by his side and is asked, what did you learn from your Rabbi?
I watched how he tied his shoes.

We learn much from one another how we treat ourselves and others.

When the Israelites left Egypt their feet carried them on the road to freedom. When Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel joined Martin Luther King on his march from Selma to Montgomery, his critics were many. He answered them saying I was praying with my feet.

As we are about to celebrate the great festival of Freedom, Passover, we have always been called to action by protesting with our feet.

We march for freedom on our feet. We are now marching on State Houses demanding for The Right to Vote.

Can we do no less, in this critical moment in history as has the President of Ukraine, Mr. Zelenskyy, when he said on his feet facing the world... "Hineni."
Here I Am.



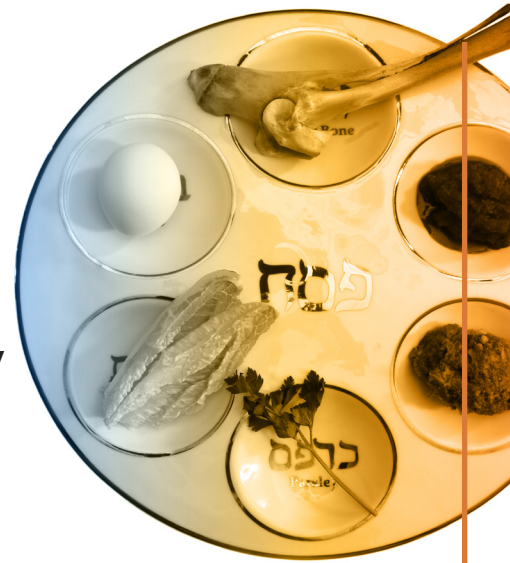
THE TEN PRAYERS

Traditionally at the Passover seder each person pours out 10 drops of wine/juice to commemorate the 10 plagues God visited upon Egypt when Pharaoh refused to free the Israelites. Each plague intensified in severity as the Pharaoh became more intransigent in his position. The 10 plagues remind us that Pharaoh could have changed his mind. He had free will to embrace freedom and liberty and chose instead authoritarianism. There are still Pharaohs in our midst today. The forces of authoritarianism must be challenged and democracy upheld, whether at home or abroad.

This year after we pour out the 10 drops for ancient plagues you may consider pouring out 10 drops for contemporary issues in our society that keep us from truly being free.

Some you might consider:

Systemic Racism
Climate Change
Voter Suppression
Lack of Access to Healthcare
Economic Inequality
Demonizing LGBTQ people and Trans Youth
The Rise in Antisemitism and Hate Against the AAPI Community
The Attack on Roe v Wade and Reproductive Freedom
Gun Violence
Homelessness
Poverty
Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic



But on this Passover night, we must pour back in 10 drops of wine into our glasses as we make these commitments as Democrats to actively create the world we want. We pledge to work for policy and legislative change that would liberate our communities and better protect people and our planet:

We pour a splash back in so our “cups runneth over” . Some things you might consider. What others might you add back in

1. Closing the gender gap in wages
2. Protect the right to choose
3. Creating national standards on use of force
4. Ensure that Corporations pay their share of taxes
5. Protect Voting Rights
6. End for-profit detention
7. Tackle income inequality
8. Bring U.S. greenhouse gas emissions down
9. Transform the asylum and refugee and immigration system as it now stands
10. Advance a Two-State Solution that Provides Peace, Security, and Opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians

PASSOVER PRAYER FOR REFUGEES

Reader: We are seeing unprecedented numbers of refugees in the world.

All: They flee from war and famine. They flee from violence, and plague, economic collapse, human trafficking and climate change.

Reader: More than 82.4 million people are displaced world-wide. The current situation in Ukraine has displaced more than 10 million people in only several weeks. We are watching it unfold in painful ways before our eyes.

All: And there are Afghan and Yemini refugees. There are Syrian and Venezuelan refugees; Guatemalan and Honduran and Haitian refugees awaiting entry to a Promised Land. There are people from Myanmar and South Sudan who are refugees.

Reader: There are more people that are refugees and asylum seekers than at any time since World War II.

All: As we observe this holiday of Passover that marks the Exodus from Egypt, we recall that the Israelites fled oppression and slavery. They too were refugees, walking mile after mile to seek a Promised Land.

Reader: Today's refugees walk on foot and come in trains and boats and planes seeking a Promised Land, a place of safety for themselves and their families in numerous countries around the world..

All: On this holiday of Passover we are reminded to let all who are hungry come and eat¹ at our table. May we welcome the stranger and the refugee into our country and our home.

Reader: On this holiday of Passover, let us open the doors not only for Elijah but for the refugees.

All: May God's outstretched arm, the z'roah netuyah (זרוע נטויה)², reach out toward the refugee and bring them safely to a land of peace and hope.



1. From the traditional Haggadah - "Let all who are hungry come and eat"

2. The Shank bone on the Seder plate represents God's outstretched arm that rescued the Israelites from slavery.

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