



Shalom and Welcome to our Seder- **Don't Passover Education Justice!**

Welcome to everyone who has come to join us tonight! Traditionally, Passover Seders commemorate the redemption of the Jewish people who were enslaved in Egypt. Tonight, we come together to examine education justice. We celebrate those who have struggled and today are free. We should also remember that there are those who are still not free. For as long as one person is oppressed, we are all oppressed. Education, particularly equitable access to public education, is one of the most powerful tools of liberation. Let us strengthen ourselves and join in the fight against education injustices in our community.

The book we read on Passover is called the Haggadah, which in Hebrew means "The Telling." The traditional Haggadah evolved over the centuries and includes stories, anecdotes, and legends as well as the story of the Exodus and the rituals of the Seder. The Haggadah is a living document; every year, people create their own haggadot to highlight different social justice issues, personal or systemic challenges and journeys. For this Haggadah, we draw from the rich history of our Education System.

Please join us in saying the Shehechyanu, a blessing that gives thanks to G-d for enabling us to experience a new or special occasion, first in Hebrew, then in English.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam. Shehechyanu, v'kimanu, v'higianu, lazman ha-zeh

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקימנו
והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Blessed are you, Source of Life, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this day.

**Appetizer:
Maggid- The Story**

The Torah commands us to “tell the story.” The Maggid section of the seder—recounting the story of the Exodus and various interpretations—is very complex, yet vital to the purpose and meaning of the seder. The story of Passover, and the change from slavery to freedom is told.

“Our stories are stories of people with a great deal of tenacity and courage, people who have been resisting for centuries. IF we do not resist, we will not survive. In native culture we think ahead to the seventh generation. However, we know that the ability of the seventh generation to sustain itself will be dependent on our ability to resist now.”

-Winona LaDuke (an environmentalist, land tribal rights activist, and daughter of a Chippewa man and a Jewish woman)

As we begin to dive into Education Justice, it is important that we also tell our own stories. To start off the meal, we are going to reflect on our personal educational experiences. Take a look at the photographs in front of you. Which photos speak to you? Pick 2-3 that represent things that you valued in your educational experience and/or what could have been improved. Once you are ready, please share with your table why you chose these particular photos.

**Entree:
The Seder Plate**

The Passover Seder plate is a special plate containing symbolic foods eaten or displayed at the Passover Seder. Between five and seven items arranged on the plate has special significance to the retelling of the story of passover the exodus from Egypt, which is the focus of this ritual meal. The plate has...

Karpas, a fresh vegetable
Betzah, an egg
Charoset, a mixture of wine, nuts, and fruit
Z'roah, a roasted shank bone
Maror and Hazeret, the bitter herbs
Tapuz, an orange

Rather than symbolizing the story of Passover, the Seder plate on our tables tonight symbolizes different topics in Edjewcation Justice. We have included facts and quotes from various news sources about each of these topics, as well as discussion questions to guide your conversation. Begin with whichever “item” speaks to you and get through as few or many texts and questions as you would like. They are meant to facilitate conversations about education justice, not constrain them.

Karpas-Green Vegetables

Karpas -- a vegetable other than bitter herbs -- is dipped into salt water at the beginning of the Seder. The dipping of a simple vegetable into salt water, and the resulting dripping of water off of said vegetables visually represents tears and is a symbolic reminder of the pain felt by the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. It also symbolizes the springtime, the green of hope and renewal, because Passover is celebrated in the spring.

Instead of dipping Karpas into the symbolic tears of our ancestors, tonight we dip them into the symbolic contaminated water of many schools across the USA.

“[Pennsylvania]’s abysmal letter grade resulted from the findings that it has no regulations on water safety in schools. No testing is required for school drinking water, and there are no limits on the allowable lead levels. The state also has no plan to remove lead infrastructure. Philadelphia has adopted regular testing and lowered its own allowable threshold of 10 parts per billion, which officials say is based on EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] guidelines, but does not plan to remove lead infrastructure in its buildings. Instead, the District is installing three filtered water fountains, known as hydration stations, in every school.”¹

Discussion Questions-

1. What connections do you see between these two metaphors?
2. Are there other components of social justice that resonate with the metaphor of the karpas?
3. Where in federal, state, and local government should public health concerns, such as clean water, fall?
4. In different religions, cultures and communities, how has water served both as a metaphor for hope and renewal and for destruction?

Please join in saying the blessing and then dipping the karpas into the salt water twice before eating.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam borei p'ri ha-adamah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה

Praised are you, Spirit of Life, Who creates the fruit of the earth.

¹ Pa. has done nothing about lead levels in schools, report says. By Greg Windle. The Notebook. 2/28/2017.

Betzah- Egg

On each of the three harvest festivals—Passover, Sukkot, and Shavuot—there was a commandment to go to Jerusalem and celebrate in the Temple. There was a special mitzvah to bring a festival offering to be enjoyed during the holiday. A roasted hard-boiled egg on the Seder plate symbolizes the korban chagigah (festival sacrifice) that was offered the night before Passover in the Temple in Jerusalem and roasted and eaten as part of the meal at the seder. The roundness of the egg also symbolizes the cycle of life, the continuous flow between life to death to rebirth, and the springtime renewal of Passover. The egg reminds us of the harvest festivals and the circularity of our calendars.

From time to sacrifice or renewal, the egg symbolizes many themes of Passover. Here, we utilize it to discuss the broadening of the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) calendar to include more holidays of religious minorities.

“The Philadelphia School District will officially recognize two Islamic holidays. Mayor Jim Kenney, Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr., and Superintendent Dr. William Hite announced Tuesday [May 31, 2016] they will add the holidays Eid al-Fitr, celebrated after the month-long observance of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha, celebrated at the conclusion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, to the school district’s official holiday calendar.”²

Eid al-Fitr celebrates the end of the 30 days of fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadan. Eid al-Adha honors Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac and the sacrifice of a sheep/goat/ram in his place. During the holiday, families split the meat into three, saving ⅓ for themselves, ⅓ for extended family, and ⅓ to be given to those in need. This holiday falls after the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Discussion Questions-

1. What connections do you see between these different interpretations of the egg’s symbolism? Which interpretation resonates the most with you?
2. To what extent should religious holidays be included in the public school calendar? How does this promote or detract from religious freedom?
3. How might the contrasting themes of renewal and sacrifice be present in your life?

² *Philly School District Adds 2 More Muslim Holidays to Calendar.* By David Chang. NBC Philadelphia. 5/31/2016

Charoset- Mixture of wine, nuts, and fruit

Charoset represents the mortar which the Jewish people used in doing Pharaoh's labor. It is a paste similar to clay reminiscent of the clay the Jewish people used while enslaved in Egypt. Jewish families and communities have different charoset recipes, influenced by local ingredients and culinary traditions. While Ashkenazi Jews traditionally use an apple-cinnamon-walnut- based mixture, Sephardi Jews traditionally use a dates-figs-raisin base for their charoset. The Abayudaya community in Uganda uses groundnuts (peanuts) and bananas in their charoset.³ In Moroccan Jewish families, charoset is often served rolled in small balls.

Almost thirty schools in the SDP have closed since 2011, due to budget cuts and shrinking enrollment. The majority of schools that closed were located in low-income neighborhoods, sending students to communities outside of their own. These closings have disproportionately affected traditional neighborhood schools that served communities of color. Tonight, the charoset symbolizes the brick and mortar of all the schools that have closed and the new question of how to utilize these empty spaces.

“A vacant school is more than a silent, empty building. It’s a public promise waiting to be renewed. Since closing 27 schools in 2013, Philly is ripe with these promises. As the city works to sell off these closed schools, there is a mix of optimism and nerves. For some, the future looks promising in terms of reuse: South Philly’s Bok could be reborn as a creative hub. University of the Sciences plans to turn West Philly’s Alexander Wilson into student housing. Several others could become schools again.”⁴

Discussion Questions-

1. What are the impacts of school closings on a community?
2. How should empty school buildings be used? What shouldn't these spaces be used for? Who should be responsible in determining their use?
3. Are there benefits of selling empty school buildings? If selling empty schools serves as income for local government, how should we take that into consideration when thinking about school closings? When empty school buildings are sold, who benefits?
4. Are there other topics that resonate with the metaphor of Charoset?

Z'roah- Roasted Shank Bone

This symbolizes the korban Pesach (Pesach sacrifice), a lamb that was offered in the Temple in Jerusalem, then roasted and eaten as part of the meal on Seder night. Each year at Passover, the Israelites would gather at the Temple to commemorate the Exodus from slavery. The Pesach sacrifice was a reminder that G-d passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt. Since the destruction of the Temple, the z'roah serves as a visual reminder of the Pesach sacrifice.

³ <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/jewish-and/7-charoset-recipes-to-give-passover-an-international-flair/>

⁴ *Reimagining Vacant Schools as Vibrant Community Spaces*. By Ashley Hahn. Plan Philly. 12/9/2014

“For vegetarians, who may object to using a lamb bone on the seder plate (as a remembrance of the paschal sacrifice): it is halakhically [legally] acceptable to use a beet as a replacement.”The beet used today in veggie seders is actually meant to replace the z’roah due to its blood-red color, which also reminds us of the Paschal sacrifice.

The shankbone/beet normally symbolizes the sacrifice that was made to allow for the passing over of the first-born son. Tonight, it represents the students who are passed over by the current educational system. The first quote is from a teacher in the DC Public School System. The second is an article from the NY Times about school choice.

“Having worked within a school-choice model of magnet schools and magnet programs, I can tell you there is no choice for students without advocates. For those in foster care, or for those whose parents are addicted, deceased, imprisoned, time-poor, have special needs themselves, are nonnative English speakers, or are uninformed and disconnected, there are sometimes no choices but to attend whatever school will take their children.”⁵

“The next results came a few months later, in February, when researchers published a major study of Louisiana’s voucher program. Students in the program were predominantly black and from low-income families, and they came from public schools that had received poor ratings from the state department of education, based on test scores. For private schools receiving more applicants than they could enroll, the law required that they admit students via lottery, which allowed the researchers to compare lottery winners with those who stayed in public school.

The new evidence on vouchers does not seem to have deterred the Trump administration, which has proposed a new \$20 billion voucher program. Secretary DeVos’s enthusiasm for vouchers, which have been the primary focus of her philanthropic spending and advocacy, appears to be undiminished.”⁶

Discussion Questions-

1. What are ways in which we can better inform and include families about choices in education, so that they are not passed over?
2. How much choice did you have in your own educational experience?
3. What did you or your parents sacrifice with the choices that they were or were not able to make in regard to your education?
4. Vouchers draw students from public to private schools. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this system?

⁵ *Teacher: What school ‘choice’ looks like from my classroom* by Valerie Strauss. The Washington Post. 3/7/2017

⁶ *Dismal Voucher Results Surprise Researchers as DeVos Era Begins*. By Kevin Carey. NY Times. 2/23/2017.

Maror- Bitter herbs

Maror in Hebrew means "bitter". It is a reminder of how bitter the Egyptians made the lives of slaves. It helps us to imagine ourselves in the place of those who suffer, those who are poor and hungry, and those who are sick and alone. The maror helps us to care about other people whose situations may be different than our own.

Although not every Philadelphian attends public school in the city, public education affects the entire population. It is our duty to imagine ourselves in the place of students, no matter when or where we might have graduated from high school.

In the school district of Philadelphia:

- 65% earn a High School diploma
- 32% will go to college, 10% will earn a 4 year degree
- 65% of jobs require a degree⁷

Discussion Questions-

1. What connections do you see between the metaphor of the bitter herbs and these statistics?
2. Are there other topics that resonate with the metaphor of the bitter herbs?
3. As Philadelphians, these statistics directly affect our community, and cause suffering for us all. What are the ways in which this suffering affect our city?
4. How do you sustain yourself and the people you love through bitter times?

Please join in saying the blessing as a table and then eating the maror.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bimitzvotav vitzivanu al achilat maror.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר

We praise G-d who hallow's our lives with commandments, and enjoins us' to eat the bitter herb.

⁷ *Changing Philadelphia's education system all starts with us.* By Stacy Holland. 2/11/2016

Tapuz- Orange

Orange, which represents our commitment to inclusivity of women, LGBTQ folk, and other marginalized communities. Susannah Heschel, Jewish feminist scholar and daughter of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, began the practice in the 1980's to symbolize the fruitfulness for the Jewish community as a whole once we embrace gay and lesbian Jews as a critical part of our community. However, there will be a few seeds, like homophobia, that the Jewish community must spit out in order to achieve this goal. This new symbol expresses our yearning to be free in ways which may be more relevant to us now in the 21st century.

Just as we have broadened our definition of what is traditional on a Seder plate, the Jewish community has more broadly embraced a wider variety of identities. In this vein, we must also expand our view of the traditional educational system and embrace innovation.

Building 21 is a non-selective district high school. At Building 21, the high school experience focuses on "learner as designer," where students create their own self-paced learning pathways and choose from a variety of instructional opportunities, including blended learning, problem-based learning and experiential learning.

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School gives young adults a second chance to earn a high school diploma, gain hands-on work experience, and transform their lives.

Discussion Question-

1. What connections do you see between these two metaphors?
2. Are there other topics that resonate with the metaphor of the orange?
3. To what extent should our educational system reflect the current times? How can we best shift education into the now?
4. What new ways of doing education would you like to see more embraced?

"In retelling this story from generation to generation, we are reminded of our ongoing responsibility to fight against all forms of suffering and discrimination...we reaffirm the ties that bind us all...these bonds are the source of inextinguishable courage and strength, and provide hope that we can repair this world"

-President Barack Obama on the importance of the Passover Seder

Dessert:
Next Steps - A Call To Action

As our Seder now ends, together we say:

L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim

לשנה הבאה בירושלים

Next year in Jerusalem, Next year may all people everywhere be free!

How to get involved with education justice work in Philadelphia-

- Come to Repair's Late Spring Cocktails with a Conscience at Bok (mentioned in the Charoset section!)
- **Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC)** provides middle school and high school students with volunteer opportunities throughout the greater Philadelphia Area. YVC aims to address community needs while inspiring youth to embrace a lifetime of service. Know students who want to get involved? Know a school that would be a good fit for a club? Contact julia.quintavalle@werepair.org
- **Neighborhood Bike Works** empowers local Philadelphia youth through cycling. They provide free after school and summer programs to teach youth how to repair their own bikes. Repair the World volunteers help "Shape Up the Shop" the first Saturday of each month, and you can also volunteer on a more regular basis with their youth and adult programs.
- **WePAC's** mission is to promote childhood literacy by engaging volunteers in Philadelphia public schools through re-opening and staffing libraries and academic mentoring. In our vision, every Philadelphia student will be empowered with the literacy skills vital to the success of the child and the prosperity of our community. WePAC is the only nonprofit in Philadelphia systematically working to open closed school libraries.
- **Books Through Bars** is a volunteer-run organization that distributes free books and educational materials to incarcerated people in the Mid-Atlantic region. They receive hundreds of letters from prisoners requesting books each week and send over 8,000 book packages each year. Looking for fulfilling volunteer work? BTB has opportunities for individuals and groups. Drop in to get started: Tuesdays 7:30–9:30 PM or 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 11:00 AM–2:00 PM. 4722 Baltimore Ave.
- **Lutheran Settlement House** provides a variety of services to children, adults, and families living in Philadelphia, including their Adult Education & Career Development Program. This program provides adults with literacy, basic education, GED preparation, computer class instruction, and career-readiness training and support to help learners achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.
- **Boys and Girls Club** enables all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Volunteering your time can make a huge difference in a young person's life as well as your own. Sign up to volunteer to make an impact that really counts — coaching a youth sports team, mentoring a teen after school, providing support for a family who needs you, or helping run an art project. You can make a difference.
