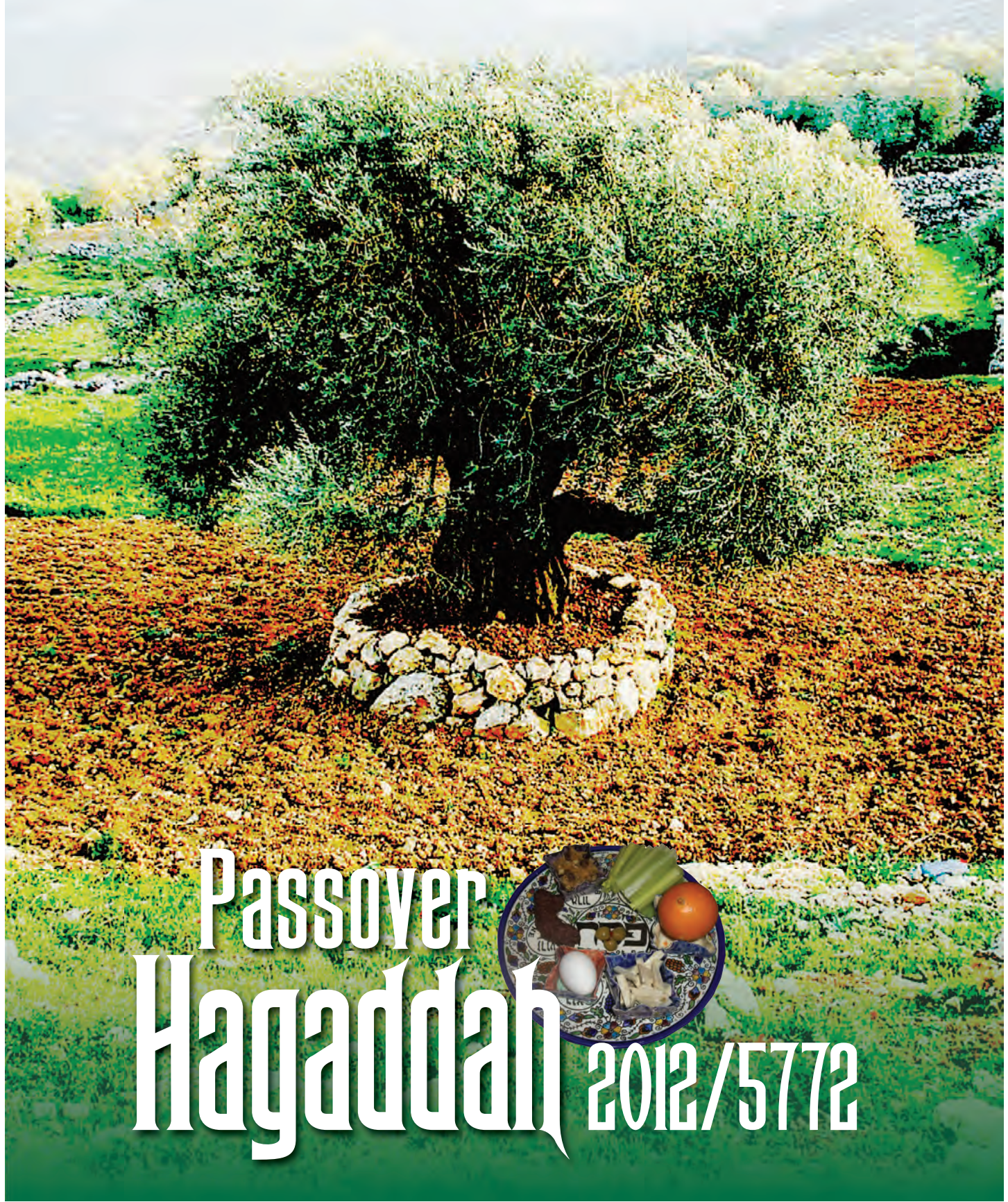


**Jewish Voice
for Peace**
Israelis and Palestinians. Two Peoples, One Future.



Passover
Hagaddah 2012/5772



Dear Friend, Happy Passover!

Since we last gathered around the seder table, Palestinian Freedom Riders attempted to board Jewish-only buses in the West Bank to reach Jerusalem, a second flotilla of international human rights activists attempted to break the siege of Gaza, and the spirit of Tunisia and Tahrir square continued to spread around the world, birthing the Occupy movement in this country.

The story we tell each year around the seder table is a story that we are, according to Jewish tradition, required to tell to our children generation after generation. In truth, I find, we actually tell it out of necessity. After all, our lives and experiences are part of the continuation of the liberation story of the Exodus. Our stories, too, are stories of solidarity and allyship, stories of healing and resilience, stories of celebration and gratitude.

This past June, as boats attempted to leave Greece and arrive in Gaza, we urged JVP supporters to step into Moses' shoes and urge: Let our people go. Let the ships sail. Break the seige of Gaza.

This past July, we held our first Regional Leadership Development Institutes. Among other notable outcomes of the weekend, included the birth of the idea for the Go & Learn Initiative, now in full swing, to bring conversation about BDS into Jewish institutional communities.

This past October, the JVP national office closed to participate in the General Strike as part of Occupy Oakland, and the broader Occupy movement nationwide. JVPers gathered in the square carrying signs that read "Occupy Oakland, Not Palestine."

In January, the We Divest Campaign targeting retirement fund giant TIAA-CREF transitioned officially out of being a JVP campaign to being a coalition effort, with our partners at the American Friends Service Committee, Adalah-NY, Grassroots International, US Palestinian Communities Network, and the US Campaign to End the Occupation.

As we head into this Passover, we are stopping to celebrate the community of organizers, activists and supporters that make up JVP. Be sure to raise your glass high, in appreciation and celebration for each other, as you take up your cup four times for four core elements of the movement for justice in Israel-Palestine, as we engage in it, support it, and see it at JVP – the first for education, the second for solidarity, the third for the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions Movement, and the final cup for community.

Thank you to Jessica Rosenberg, Vincent Calvetti-Wolf, and Wendy Somerson for revising and improving this Haggadah for 2012/5772. Thanks also to Jews Against the Occupation (JATO) "After Exodus" Haggadah and the JVP-Seattle Haggadah for holding such a meaningful set of words and rituals and for their authors' willingness to share freely.

Onward to liberation,

Rabbi Alissa Wise

Rabbi Alissa Wise

JVP Director of Campaigns



Photo: Seth Schneider/Wikimedia Commons





The Seder

1. **Kadesh** – Sanctification of the gathering
First cup of wine: L'chayim to education!
2. **Ur'chatz** – Washing hands before eating green vegetables
3. **Karpas** – Eating a piece of vegetable dipped in salt water
4. **Yachatz** – Breaking the middle matzah
5. **Maggid** – Telling of the story
Second cup of wine: L'chayim to solidarity!
6. **Rach'tzah** – Washing hands before eating matzah
7. **Motzi** – Blessing over matzah as food
8. **Matzah** – Blessing over matzah as a special mitzvah
9. **Maror** – Eating the bitter herbs
10. **Korech** – Eating a sandwich of haroset & bitter herbs
11. **Shulchan orech** – Eating the festive meal
12. **Tzafun** – Eating the afikomen
13. **Barech** – Grace after meals
Third cup of wine:
L'chayim to the BDS Movement!
14. **Hallel** – Praise
Fourth cup of wine: L'chayim to community!
15. **Nirtzah** – Conclusion



Brass plate used for Passover, adorned with animal figures and flowers and containing an Arabic inscription in Hebrew characters.
Made in Constantinople.



Song: Hinei Mah Tov

Hiney ma tov u'ma nayim shevet akhim gam yachad
 Hiney ma tov u'ma nayim shevet akhot gam yachad
 Hiney ma tov u'ma nayim shevet kulanu gam yachad

**How good and pleasant it is,
 brother, sisters, all of us, sitting together.**



This symbol is known as a khamisa (Arabic), hamesh (Hebrew), or as The Hand of the Prophet (Muslim)



or The Hand of Miriam (Jewish). It is an ancient symbol of good luck shared by Muslims and Jews.

Thoughts about Mitzrayim and Yisrael

In the wake of the revolutions throughout the Arab World, and particularly in Egypt, we want to acknowledge the distinction between “mitzrayim” — the narrow place, where the story we tell at Passover takes place — and Egypt, the modern-day nation state. We are not conflating contemporary Egyptians with the pharaoh and taskmasters that appear in the Passover story. In the U.S., and worldwide, anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia saturate our media and our culture, and we must be vigilant to oppose it and interrupt it at every turn.

The word Yisrael (Israel) when found in the liturgy (religious text) does not refer to the modern nation/state of Israel, rather it derives from the blessing given to Ya'akov (Jacob) by a stranger with whom he wrestles all night. When the stranger is finally pinned, Ya'akov asks him for a blessing. The stranger says, “Your name will no longer be Ya'akov but Yisrael for you have wrestled with G-d and triumphed.” Therefore when we say “Yisrael” in prayer we are referring to being G-d-wrestlers, not Israelis.



I lived my childhood in a world so dense with Jews that I thought we were the great imposing majority and kindness had to be extended to the others because, as my mother said, everyone wants to live like a person.

In school I met my friend Adele, who together with her mother and father were not Jewish. Despite this, they often seemed to be in a good mood. There was the janitor in charge of coal, and my father, unusually smart, spoke Italian to him. They talked about Italian literature, because the janitor was equally smart. Down the hill under the Southern Boulevard El, families lived, people in lovely shades of light and darkest brown. My mother and sister explained that they were treated unkindly; they had in fact been slaves in another part of the country in another time.

Like us? I said.

Like us, my father said year after year at seders when he told the story in a rush of Hebrew, stopping occasionally to respect my grandmother's pained face, or to raise his wine glass to please the grownups. In this way I began to understand in my own time and place, that we had been slaves in Egypt and brought out of bondage for some reason. One of the reasons, clearly, was to tell the story again and again—that we had been strangers and slaves in Egypt and therefore knew what we were talking about when we cried out against pain and oppression. In fact, we were obligated by knowledge to do so.

But this is only one page, one way to introduce these Haggadah makers, story tellers, who love history and tradition enough to live in it and therefore by definition be part of its change.

*~ Grace Paley (1922–2007)
 American-Jewish short story writer,
 poet, and political activist*



The Seder Plate

At your tables, discuss the significance that each of the items on the seder plate has for you. Below is a list of what appears on the seder plate and an example of meaning that can be assigned to each.

Karpas – A green, spring vegetable symbolizing spring's bounty.

Beitzah – A boiled egg symbolizing the cycle of life.

Z'roah – A roasted shank bone (or roasted beet for vegetarians) symbolizing the sacrifices offered.

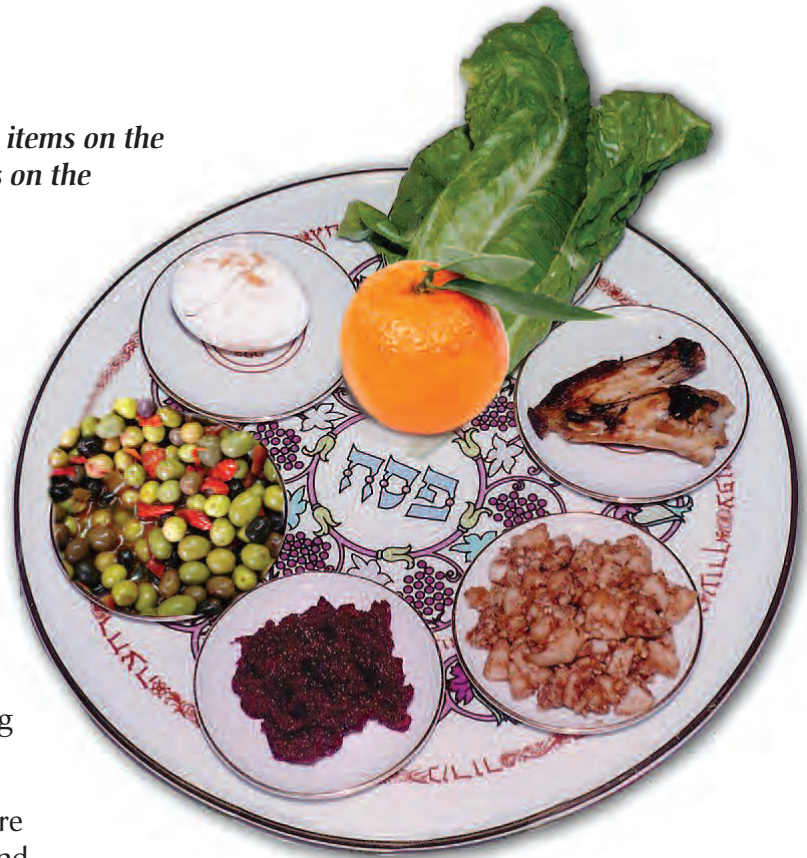
Maror – Bitter herbs symbolizing the bitterness of oppression.

Charoset – A mixture of nuts, fruit and wine symbolizing the mortar Israelite slaves used to lay bricks.

Orange – Symbolizing building Jewish community where women, queer, and transgender people are welcomed and recognized as full, valued participants.

Olive – Symbolizing the self-determination of the Palestinian people and an invitation to Jewish communities to become allies to Palestinian liberation struggles.

Matzah – As our ancestors were fleeing Mitzrayim, they did not have enough time to let the bread dough rise. They carried the unfinished dough on their backs and the hot sun baked it into hard, flat matzah. For the eight days of Passover, we eat no leaven (chametz) of any kind in memory of their hasty flight.



Seder plate ritual

From the "After Exodus Haggadah"

It is a tradition in some Sephardic families to pass the seder plate over everyone's head while singing (or reciting) the order of the seder. The ritual of passing the seder plate is meant to offer a blessing to our guests—may you only know sweetness and may the bitterness and affliction of oppression "pass over you."



All: Recite the order of the seder (page 1)

Volunteer: Pick up the seder plate and bless each person at the table. Move the seder plate around each person's head in a circular motion, then lightly touch the seder plate to the head before blessing the next person.

After everyone has been blessed, someone should bless the volunteer.



Candle Lighting

At your table, light your candles together.



TOGETHER:

Baruch atah Adonai eloheynu melech ha'olam asher
kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel yom
tov pesach b'zman cherutaynu.



Photo: Olat Herfurth/Wikimedia Commons

Blessed is the spirit of freedom in whose honor we kindle the lights of this holiday,
Passover, the season of Freedom.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר
שֶׁל (שֶׁבֶת ו) יוֹם טוֹב.

Shehechianu

*This blessing is recited when we do something for the first time. We recite now for the
unique gathering of people here and in honor of tonight as the last night of Passover 5771.*



TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shehechianu v'kiamanu v'higianu lazman hazeh.

Blessed is the Eternal for giving us life, for sustaining us and for bringing us to this time.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחִיָּנוּ
וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוּ הַזֶּה.

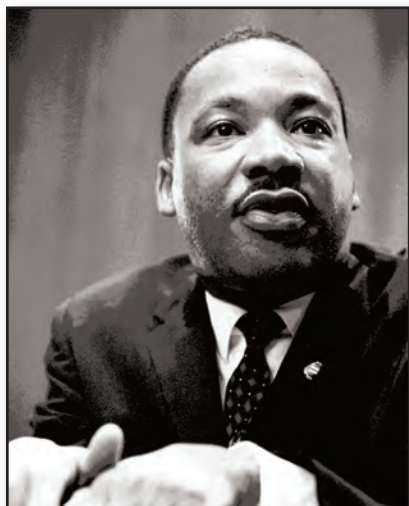


Photo: Marion S. Trikesko, Library of Congress

Social Action Blessing

*A blessing to mark the purpose of our gathering –
to strengthen our commitment to together pursue justice.*


"I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

– Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

Tonight we have a powerful group of people, gathering around this table telling the Exodus story as one way to gain a deeper understanding of oppression and refuel our work for liberation in our time. While JVP focuses on peace and justice in the Middle East, we are involved in many struggles, in our local communities and around the world, all intersecting and inseparable.

At this seder we have a participants involved in many different facets of the struggle for justice and liberation. Before we say a blessing for social justice, we invite everyone here to share campaigns they are involved in, issues they are working on, struggles they feel passionately connected to. We know that all of our disparate work is but different parts of the same struggle for healing and justice.

Participants share struggles they are involved in.

 **TOGETHER:**
Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melek ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu lirdof tzedek
Blessed is the source who shows us paths to holiness, and commands us to pursue justice.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְרַדּוֹף צְדָקָה.

Kadesh: The first cup of wine

L'chayim to education

"...Education is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world." – Hannah Arendt, 1968

We raise the first glass to education. At JVP we continually are educating ourselves on the history of the conflict, the history of social movements that came before, the political analysis of today, the Jewish textual tradition and more. We value popular education that sees the learner as the primary text. May we all continue to learn and value education in all its many forms.



This first cup we raise, L'chayim, to education!



TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגָּפֶן.



Ur'chatz:

Washing hands before eating a green vegetable

There is a bowl of water, a cup, and a towel near your table.

We invite each person to pour water over their neighbor's hands, helping them to wash.



TOGETHER:

As we help each other to wash our hands, we reflect on the mutual dependence that water creates. We commit to work for justice with others, rather than in isolation.

Karpas:

Eating a piece of vegetable dipped in salt water

We dip a spring vegetable into salt water—the spring vegetable reminding us of potential and promise and the salt water reminding us of the tears and the pain along the way. This is an invitation to hold complexity – a reminder that change is possible even in what seems like endless darkness. As you dip the green vegetable into the salt water, affirm for yourself the potential for justice even as we hold the tears of occupation.



TOGETHER: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri ha'adamah

Blessed is the One, who sustains all life, and brings forth fruits from the earth

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרִי הָאֲדָמָה.



Yachatz: Breaking the middle matzah

Born in rural Galilee in 1931, Muhammad Ali was left without a home when his village was destroyed in 1948. He fled to Lebanon along with most of the village's residents, only to return a year later and settle with his family in Nazareth – one mile away from the village of his childhood. A souvenir salesman by trade and a devotee of old Mickey Mouse cartoons, Muhammad Ali is self-taught in the arts of poetry and short fiction.

There Was No Farewell by Taha Muhammad Ali

<p>We did not weep when we were leaving – for we had neither time nor tears, and there was no farewell. We did not know at the moment of parting that it was a parting, so where would our weeping have come from? We did not stay awake all night</p>	<p>(and did not doze) the night of our leaving. That night we had neither night nor light, and no moon rose. That night we lost our star, our lamp misled us; we didn't receive our share of sleeplessness – so where would wakefulness have come from?</p>
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A Palestine refugee woman cut off from her home by the armistice line established after the 1948 Arab Israeli war. More than 420 Palestinian towns and villages were destroyed, sealed or expropriated by Israel in 1948. UNRWA photo, 1948

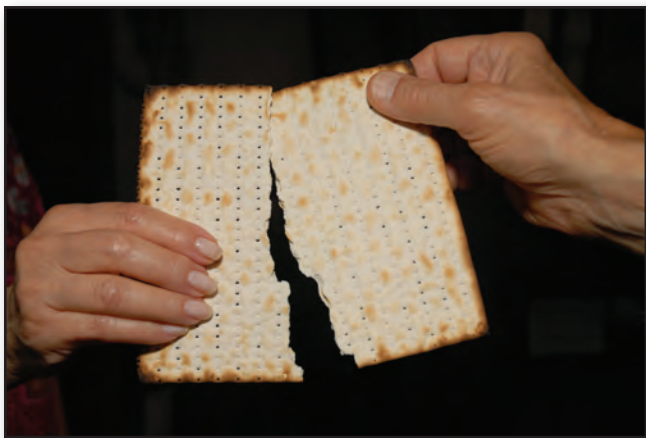


Photo: Barbara Beretfield

We will now break the middle matzah, hiding one half to be found later as the afikomen. Once the matzah is broken, it cannot be repaired completely. Irreparable damage has been done – but the pieces can be reunited.

As we break the middle matzah we acknowledge the break that occurred in Palestinian life and culture with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 when hundreds of villages were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of people displaced. This damage cannot be undone – but repair and return are possible.

Inspired by the Israeli organization Zochrot, remembrance, who put up signs on streets and buildings around towns in Israel to reveal the Palestinian communities that once existed there, we will now recite the names of the villages destroyed on April 6 and 7 in 1948:

Saydun, Khulda, Sirin, Dayr Muhaysin, Bayt Far, Khirbat, Umm Kalkha



Maggid: Telling of the story

Four More Questions for Pesach from Rabbi Brant Rosen

We will ask two now, and two more along the way throughout the seder.

Question 1: Maggid, Telling the Tale

A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war, they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground." So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them... (Exodus 1:10-11)

As we begin the Exodus story, we read that the oppression of the Israelites resulted from Pharaoh's fear that their growth would somehow overwhelm the Egyptian nation. These verses certainly have an ominous resonance for the Jewish people. Indeed any member of a minority faith or ethnic group knows all too well the tragedy that inevitably ensues when a nation views their demographic growth as a "threat."

Today it is all too common to hear Israel's leaders and supporters suggest that the "Jewish character" of Israel is threatened by the demographic growth of the Palestinian people. How should we react to the suggestion that the mere fact of this group's growth necessarily poses a national threat to Israel? As Jews living in the Diaspora, how would we respond if our leaders raised questions about the "demographic threat" of a particular minority group to the "national character" of our country? **In a multi-ethnic society, can a state's identity ever be predicated upon the primacy of one ethnic group without the oppression of another?**

Question 2: Zayit, Olive

As we ask this question, pass olives around the table


Zayit: al shum mah? – This olive: why do we eat it?

The olive tree is one of the first plants mentioned in the Torah and remains among the oldest species in Israel/Palestine. It has become a universal symbol of peace and hope, as it is written in Psalm 52: I am like a thriving olive tree in God's house, I trust in God's loyal kindness forever and ever.



Photo: Jimmy Johnson

We add this olive to our Seder plate as a reminder that we must all be God's bearers of peace and hope in the world. At the same time, we eat this olive in sorrow, mindful that olive trees, the source of livelihood for Palestinian farmers, are regularly chopped down, burned and uprooted by Israeli settlers and the Israeli authorities. As we look on, Israel pursues systematic policies that increasingly deny Palestinians access to olive orchards that have belonged to them for generations. As we eat now, we ask one another: How will we, as Jews, bear witness to the unjust actions committed in our name? Will these olives inspire us to be bearers of peace and hope for Palestinians – and for all who are oppressed?

 **Together: B'rucha at Shekhinah, b'tocheynu, ruach ha'olam, borayt p'ri ha-eitz**
Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who is within us, spirit of the world, who brings forth fruit from the trees.



The Ten Plagues

The idea of justice embodied in our story is direct and unquestioned – suffering for suffering. The people of Mitzrayim suffered because of their own leader, who is in part set-up by an angry G-d eager to demonstrate his own superiority. In our story, all of this was necessary for freedom.

Jews have been troubled by this for generations, and so, before we drink to our liberation, we mark how the suffering diminishes our joy by taking a drop of wine out of our cup of joy for each of the ten plagues visited on the people of Mitzrayim. We are about to recite the ten plagues. As we call out the words, we remove ten drops from our overflowing cups with our fingers.

We will not partake of our seder feast until we undergo this symbolic purification, because our freedom was bought with the suffering of others. As we packed our bags that last night in Egypt, the darkness was pierced with screams. May the next sea-opening not also be a drowning; may our singing never again be their wailing. We shall all be free, or none of us shall be free because our liberations are intertwined.

Dam.....Blood
 Tzfardeyah.....Frogs
 Kinim.....Lice
 Arov.....Wild Beasts
 Dever.....Blight
 Shichin.....Boils
 Barad.....Hail
 Arbeh.....Locusts
 Choshech.....Endless Night
 Makat B'chorot.....Slaying of the First-Born

The Ten Plagues of the Israeli Occupation

As we read each of the ten plagues, spill a bit of the wine out of your cup.

1. Poverty (from The Canadian International Development Agency)

Almost 58 percent of Palestinians live in poverty, and about half of this group lives in extreme poverty. About 50 percent of Palestinians experience or risk experiencing food insecurity. Food insecurity is particularly severe in Gaza, where the majority of the population relies on humanitarian assistance to survive.

2. Restrictions on movement

In addition to more than 100 permanent checkpoints and the separation wall that snakes throughout the West Bank, the IDF has erected hundreds of physical obstacles: flying checkpoints, concrete blocks, dirt piles, boulders, trenches, and more to block roads and prevent movement between Palestinian communities.



The Frog Song

One morning when Pharaoh awoke in his bed
 There were frogs on his bed and frogs on his head
 Frogs on his nose and frogs on his toes
 Frogs here!
 Frogs there!
 Frogs just jumping everywhere!



3. Water shortage *(from B'tselem)*

Israel's citizens, like those of developed countries worldwide, benefit year-round from unlimited running water to meet their household needs. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffer from a severe water shortage throughout the summer.

This shortage of water affects every function that water plays in human life: drinking, bathing, cleaning, and watering of crops and animals.

The shortage drastically affects the residents' health and economic well-being. The shortage of drinking water can cause dehydration and the inability to maintain proper hygiene and thus lead to illness. Failure to water crops and animals affects the livelihood of the residents.

The water shortage violates the basic human rights of Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories such as the right to health, to adequate housing, to equality, and to benefit from their natural resources. This harm results from Israeli policy, in effect since 1967, based on an unfair division of resources shared by Israel and the Palestinians.

4. Destruction of Olive Trees

Olive trees have long been a symbol of Palestinian culture and livelihood. Israeli military and settler violence and the construction of the Wall have destroyed hundreds of thousands of Palestinian olive trees since 2000, and more than a million since 1967.

5. Home demolitions

Since 1967, over 18,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, leaving tens of thousands of families traumatized and without shelter.

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, all occupying powers are prohibited from destroying property or employing collective punishment. Israel's policy of house demolitions seeks to confine Palestinians to small enclaves, leaving most of the land free for Israeli settlement.



Photo: Jimmy Johnson

6. Settlements

Illegal settlements and the network of "bypass roads" that connect them, continue to claim Palestinian land and escalate violence against Palestinian communities with the complicity of Israeli military. Under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel is prohibited from establishing settlements.

7. Political prisoners *(from www.jvp.org)*

Palestinians who are struggling for their freedom are increasingly joined by Israelis and internationals inspired by the Palestinian model of unarmed resistance to occupation and discrimination. But the Israeli government has responded to this hopeful movement with a brutal crackdown on human rights advocates.

While many internationals and Israeli Jews work with great passion for human rights for all peoples, it is Palestinian advocates who are typically targeted by the government with the greatest intensity. Palestinians like Abdallah Abu Rahmah, who was convicted in an unfair trial and sentenced to a year in prison for organizing protests





in Bil'in against the theft of the village's land, then saw his sentence extended 2-3 months after the Israeli military appealed to make it harsher. He was finally released after serving 16 months. Or Mohammed Othman, a human rights advocate who was jailed last year and only freed after an international campaign. Or Khalida Jarrah, the President of Addameer, the Palestinian prisoners' support and human rights association, an organization that has documented the ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees. Ms. Jarrah is also a legislator, but even her parliamentary privileges apparently do not allow her to travel to Jordan for urgently needed medical care. In a Kafkaesque twist, Israel does not allow her to travel without proof of illness, but she cannot diagnose her illness unless she can travel.

8. Profiteering (from *www.WeDivest.org*)

JVP's petition to financial giant TIAA-CREF highlights five companies that profit from the Israeli occupation. These companies are just 5 of hundreds of companies that TIAA-CREF invests in.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN profits from the production of parts for the Apache helicopters and F-16 aircrafts used by Israel against civilians in Gaza during Israel's 2008-09 assault.

CATERPILLAR profits from the destruction of Palestinian homes and the uprooting of Palestinian orchards by supplying the armor-plated and weaponized bulldozers that are used for such demolition work.

VEOLIA profits from the construction and expansion of illegal Jewish-only settlements by operating a landfill in the West Bank, exploiting Palestinian natural resources to serve the settlements, and by contracting for the future operation of an illegal light rail system connecting these settlements with Jerusalem.

ELBIT profits from the confiscation of Palestinian land by providing surveillance equipment that is mounted on the Separation Wall, which was declared unlawful by the International Court of Justice.

MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS profits from Israel's control of the Palestinian population by providing surveillance systems around Israeli settlements, checkpoints, and military camps in the West Bank, as well as communication systems to the Israeli army and West Bank settlers.



Photo: Barbara Barfield

9. Denial of the Right of Return

The original Palestinian refugees and their descendants are estimated to number more than 6.5 million and constitute the world's oldest and largest refugee population. Israel implements a Law of Return giving every Jewish person rights to settle in Israel as a citizen and denies Palestinians the Right of Return guaranteed under international Law.

JVP's position on Palestinian refugees and the right of return:

The plight of Palestinian refugees needs to be resolved equitably and in a manner that promotes peace and is consistent with international law. Within the framework of an equitable agreement, the refugees should have a role in determining their future, whether pursuing return, resettlement, or financial compensation. Israel should recognize its share of responsibility for the ongoing refugee crisis and for its resolution.



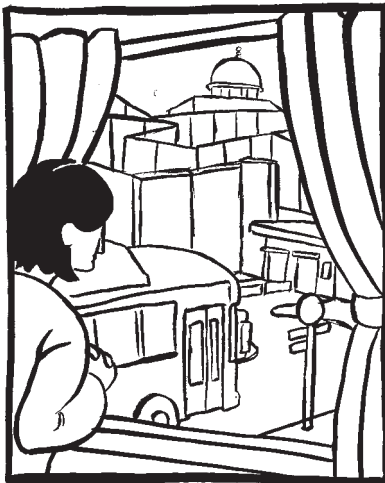
10. Erasing histories

Many Jewish schools and communities wrongly teach that in 1948 Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land.” Yet the place where Israel was founded was never empty or barren, it was home to almost one million Palestinians living in over 700 villages and cities, who share a vibrant history and culture. Most of these villages and cities were depopulated and renamed during and after 1948, as part of the still ongoing efforts to undermine and disavow Palestinian identity and history.

 **Palestinian Freedom Riders Song**

This song was written to be sung at solidarity actions across the U.S. on November 15, 2011 when six Palestinian human rights activists boarded buses in the West Bank, attempting to reach East Jerusalem.

To the tune: “Will the Circle be Unbroken”
 Words by Mark Gunnery, JVP-Baltimore



A
 I was standing by my window
 D A
 I saw that bus for Jerusalem
 A
 And I wanted so bad to go
 E A
 But they said you can't get on.

Well I told that bus driver
 I won't stand for apartheid
 Because separate is never equal
 I'm gonna ride, I'm gonna ride.

I've seen walls and I've seen checkpoints
 I've seen segregated highways
 But I've never seen al-Quds
 Even though I live ten miles away.

And if you lock me in your prison
 For demanding equality
 You won't stop people from riding
 Toward a day when we're all free.

Can the occupation be broken
 Freedom Ride, yeah, Freedom Ride
 There's a better future waiting
 In a free, free Palestine



Nakba Dayenu

For tonight's Dayenu, let us all stand. This Dayenu, from Jews Against the Occupation-NYC, is call and response – if you are so moved to read one of these statements, speak up. An uneven chorus of voices, a lone voice and periods of silence are all acceptable. The bolded **“We should have said enough”** responses we all say together.

When the Etzel and the Stern Gang massacred 250 Palestinians at Deir Yassin, outside of Jerusalem

we should have said enough.

When in villages throughout Palestine, Jewish brigades implemented a procedure of expulsion –

we should have said enough.

When soldiers rounded up Palestinian men and massacred them collectively –

we should have said enough.

When other men were forced to dig their neighbors' graves –

we should have said enough.

When women and children were ordered to walk towards Arab countries, while Jewish soldiers fired shots over their heads –

we should have said enough.

When Palestinian men were forced into labor camps, where their labor included destroying Palestinian homes –

we should have said enough.

When the on the Eve of Passover, in an operation called, “Cleaning Out Chametz” the Haganah shelled the Palestinian residential quarters of Haifa, forcing 70,000, 90% of the city's Palestinian residents, to flee –

we should have said enough.

When similar operations were carried out in Jaffa, Tiberias and Safad –

we should have said enough.

When the 10,000 Palestinian residents of Majdal, now Jewish Ashkelon, were enclosed for two years in a ghetto, or closed militarized area, and later forced on trucks and transferred to Gaza –

we should have said enough.



Last days in Jaffa, 1948. Barefoot and pushing their belongings in parms and carts, Arab families leave the Mediterranean coastal town of Jaffa. UN Photo, 1948



When the IDF forced the inhabitants of the cities of Lud and Ramle out of their homes at gunpoint and forced them to march west towards Jordan –

we should have said enough.

When, after villages were depopulated, they were obliterated by the IDF, houses and mosques bombed and bulldozed, all signs of former life destroyed –

we should have said enough.

When Palestinian homes were confiscated by Israel and repopulated with Jews –

we should have said enough.

When the Haganah used live fire to prevent villagers from returning to their homes –

we should have said enough.

When Israel continues to deny that the forced expulsions happened –

When Israel and the American Jewish community continue to deny the Right of Return to the refugees of 1948 –

We say: enough!

Dayenu!

Traditional Dayenu

Ilu hotsi, hotsianu, Hotsianu miMitzrayim, Hotsianu mi Mitzrayim, Dayenu!

Ilu natan, natan lanu, Natan lanu et haShabbat, Natan lanu et haShabbat, Dayenu!

Ilu natan, natan lanu, Natan lanu et haTorah, Natan lanu et haTorah, Dayenu!

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים, דינו.
אלו נתן לנו את השבת, דינו.
אלו נתן לנו את התורה, דינו.



Palestinians have faced two centuries of orientalist, colonialist and imperialist domination of our native lands. As countless Palestinian activists and organizers, their parties, associations and campaigns, have attested throughout the last century, our struggle was never, and will never be, with Jews, or Judaism,

We reaffirm that there is no room in this historic and foundational analysis of our struggle for any attacks on our Jewish allies, Jews, or Judaism; nor denying the Holocaust; nor allying in any way shape or form with any conspiracy theories, far-right, orientalist, and racist arguments, associations and entities. Challenging . . . the illegitimate power of institutions that support the oppression of Palestinians, and the illegitimate use of Jewish identities to protect and legitimize oppression, must never become an attack on Jewish identities, nor the demeaning and denial of Jewish histories in all their diversity. It leaves one squarely outside true solidarity with Palestine and its people.

...We stand with all and any movements that call for justice, human dignity, equality, and social, economic, cultural and political rights. We will never compromise the principles and spirit of our liberation struggle. We will not allow a false sense of expediency to drive us into alliance with those who attack, malign, or otherwise attempt to target our political fraternity with all liberation struggles and movements for justice.

When the Palestinian people call for self-determination and decolonization of our homeland, we do so in the promise and hope of a community founded on justice, where all are free, all are equal and all are welcome. Until liberation and return.

US Palestinian Communities Network statement "Granting No Quarter"



Second cup of wine

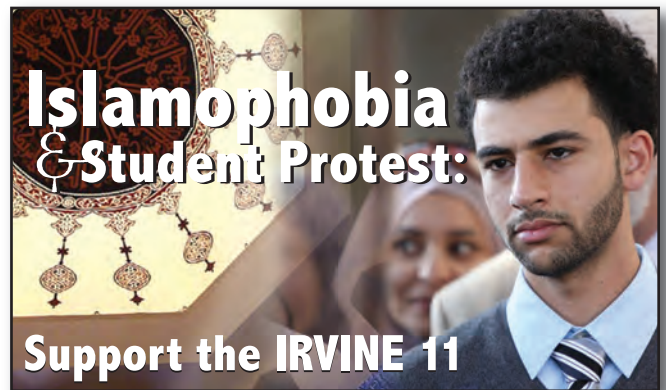
L'chayim to solidarity!

Solidarity is hard work. It means ongoing self-reflection, clear accountability structures, continual learning and critical thinking. Also, humility, empathy, commitment, hope and love. Solidarity is about communities with different levels of oppression and privilege uniting in the struggle for liberation. It involves community building, support in struggle, awareness of our own relationship to different forms of oppression, and commitment to action that is accountable to those most directly affected by injustice.



Irvine 11 and Solidarity

Tonight as we celebrate the story of our liberation from Mitzrayim, we recognize that liberation remains far from a reality for folks both in the US and around the world. In the US, we are witnessing an insidious new wave of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. In 2010, two major protests made the news for bringing attention to the Israeli Occupation and other violations of international law committed by the Israeli government. On September 23rd, UC Irvine students stood up and spoke out to protest Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren's talk on their campus. On November 10th, inspired by the students at UC Irvine, JVP attendees at the Jewish Federations General Assembly in New Orleans stood up and spoke out to protest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's keynote speech.



They were very similar protests with very different outcomes, as JVP documented with a video, Can You Spot the Difference. The "Irvine 11" were charged and put on trial for disturbing a speech. Ten of the eleven were convicted of misdemeanors, including one conspiracy charge for planning their protest.

The protestors who interrupted Prime Minister Netanyahu, some of whom were Israeli and all of whom were Jewish, were met with hisses, boos, verbal harassment and even physical attacks from other members of the audience. But criminal charges were never so much as mentioned.

While Islamophobia and racism clearly determined the outcome of this trial, JVP, as an organization and as individual members, chose to stand in solidarity with the Irvine 11. By making the video, issuing press releases, showing up at the trial with a petition, and creating a campaign of support, JVP insisted that our struggles for justice as Jews and Muslims are inseparable.

So as we join together tonight to celebrate liberation, we recommit to struggling together for a world where everybody can have their voices heard.

We raise our glass and re-ignite our commitment to the work, responsibility and the joy of solidarity.

L'chayim to solidarity!



TOGETHER: Baruch atah adnai eloheinu
melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.



Rach'tzah:

Washing hands before eating matzah

From www.mecaforpeace.org

In the West Bank and Gaza, the Israeli Occupation systematically denies Palestinian adequate quality and quantities of water. Palestinian communities inside the state of Israel have less access to water than their Jewish counterparts, as well.

Water is diverted from Palestinian resources in the West Bank

(and previously in Gaza) to illegal Israeli settlements and into Israel. Israel denies materials, fuel, and permits to sustain and expand water systems. Military attacks predictably – and often deliberately – destroy wells, water tanks, pipes, treatment plants, and sewage systems. Widespread poverty prevents people from purchasing clean water or repairing their wells and plumbing. The health and well being of virtually every Palestinian child and adult is affected by the shortage of clean, safe water.



Photo: www.mecaforpeace.org

Acknowledging the water shortage in Palestine, we will refrain from washing our hands right now.

Motzi & Matzah:

Blessing over matzah as food and as a special mitzvah

We will now bless the matzah, “the bread of affliction”, and as we bless it and eat it we dedicate our selves to fighting oppression in all its forms so that never again shall anyone have to eat this bread of affliction, even as we understand so many currently suffer.



Together: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz

Blessed is our God, determiner of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.



Together: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat matzah

Blessed is our God, determiner of the universe, who has made us holy through commandments and has commanded us to eat unleavened bread.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.



Maror:

Eating the bitter herbs

We taste a bit of maror, the bitter herb, as it calls to mind the bitterness of slavery, the bitterness of life under occupation.

Korzech:

Eating a sandwich of haroset & bitter herbs

As we prepare to eat the Hillel sandwich with the sweetness of haroset and the bitterness of maror, highlighting the challenge to us to taste freedom in the midst of oppression, to be aware of oppression even as we are free, we hold the contradictions of bitter and sweet.

REVENGE by Taha Muhammed Ali

At times ... I wish
I could meet in a duel
the man who killed my father
and razed our home,
expelling me
into
a narrow country.
And if he killed me,
I'd rest at last,
and if I were ready—
I would take my revenge!

But if it came to light,
when my rival appeared,
that he had a mother
waiting for him,
or a father who'd put
his right hand over
the heart's place in his chest
whenever his son was late
even by just a quarter-hour
for a meeting they'd set—
then I would not kill him,
even if I could.

Likewise ... I
would not murder him
if it were soon made clear
that he had a brother or sisters
who loved him and constantly
longed to see him.
Or if he had a wife to greet him
and children who
couldn't bear his absence
and whom his gifts would thrill.
Or if he had
friends or companions,
neighbors he knew
or allies from prison
or a hospital room,
or classmates from his school ...
asking about him
and sending him regards.

But if he turned
out to be on his own—
cut off like a branch from a tree—
without a mother or father,
with neither a brother nor sister,



Adrienne Rich, *feminist, poet, activist*,
died March 27, 2012. She was a member
of the JVP advisory board. May her mem-
ory be for a blessing

I have wished I could rest among the
beautiful land common weeds I can
name, both here and in other tracts of
the globe. But there is no finite knowing,
no such rest. Innocent birds, deserts,
morning-glories, point to choices, lead-
ing away from the familiar. When I speak
of an end to suffering I don't mean anes-
thesia. I mean knowing the world, and
my place in it, not in order to stare with
bitterness or detachment, but as a power-
ful and womanly series of choices: and
here I write the words, in their fullness:
powerful; womanly.

Adrienne Rich, XXIII of Sources

wifeless, without a child,
and without kin or neighbors or
friends,
colleagues or companions,
then I'd add not a thing to his pain
within that aloneness—
not the torment of death,
and not the sorrow of passing away.
Instead I'd be content
to ignore him when I passed him by
on the street—as I
convinced myself
that paying him no attention
in itself was a kind of revenge.

All: Make and eat a Hillel sandwich



Photo: Barbara Barfield

Ella's Song

Lyrics and music by Bernice Johnson Reagon

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
 We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes
 Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons
 Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons
 That which touches me most is that I had a chance to work with people
 Passing on to others that which was passed on to me
 To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail
 And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale
 The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
 Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm
 Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine on me
 I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny
 Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize
 That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives
 I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
 At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word
 We who believe in freedom cannot rest
 We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Shulchan orzech: Eating the festive meal

It is now time to eat and shmooze with new and old friends and comrades! Enjoy!

Tzafun: Eating the afikomen

We now find the afikomen and bring it together with the piece it was separated from. One comment on this ritual is that it symbolizes the reunification of the 12 tribes of Israel. Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav, a famous rabbi and storyteller who lived in Ukraine during the 19th century, used to call the Patriarch Jacob, who was the father of the 12 sons who would lead the tribes of Israel, "the little that holds a lot." This is because from one person came many different ways to live, act, and be Jewish.





This year we saw one way that a little could do a lot.

In 2010, the Olympia Food Co-op (OFC) in Olympia, Washington became the first grocery store in the U.S. to boycott Israeli goods until the State of Israel meets its obligations under international law in solidarity with the Palestinian call for BDS. The decision was met with wide support immediately. Farihan Bushnaq, a Co-op member since 1983 said “as a Palestinian refugee and a member of the Olympia Co-op I wholeheartedly support the boycott, as a way to save Israel from its own excesses, and to end the continued dehumanization of the Palestinian people under Israeli control.”

However, this past year this landmark victory was under attack. Five Pro-Israel community members, angered by the boycott, reacted by filing a lawsuit on behalf of the membership against present and former board members of the OFC, as punishment for refusing to heed their call to rescind the boycott. Ordinary community members in Olympia and people from across the country acted to

support the co-op against an undemocratic attack on a volunteer-run institution. They acted by writing letters, making videos, tabling, signing statements of solidarity, and attending rallies in Olympia to show that the five individuals who filed the lawsuit did not speak for the greater co-op community. Lawyers for the co-op filed for a dismissal of the lawsuit as an infringement of free speech. After months of fear and tension the case was thrown out as an attempt to stifle public discussion of a vital human rights issue.

Omar Barghouti, a Palestinian human rights activist, noted the importance of the co-op’s stand. Though it is a small, member-owned grocery store, it’s action had ripple effects that have inspired BDS activists everywhere to work through their local communities and democratic institutions to effect change on a global scale. The movement for human rights in Israel and Palestine grows not through huge, showy actions, Omar asserted, but through small local victories that are sustained through global solidarity. The victory of the Olympia Food Co-op is an example of the little that does a lot.



Photos: Rachel Corrie Foundation.org

As we eat the afikomen, let us acknowledge that what is broken can never be completely undone. The divisions that threatened to break apart the Olympia community must still be healed and members will struggle to move forward from their feelings of pain and resentment.

As we eat the afikomen, let’s do so with the hope engendered by communities, like the Olympia Food Co-op and Jewish Voice for Peace, that stand up to bullying and intimidation and emerge with stronger, renewed commitments to democracy and social justice.



Barzeh: Grace after meals

Four More Questions for Pesach from Rabbi Brant Rosen

Question 3: Return

When God returns Zion from captivity, it will be as in our dream; Our mouths will be filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy...
(Psalm 126: 1-2)

We begin the blessing after the meal with the image of return: a vision that has always been central to our collective Jewish “dream.” Today, of course, this Jewish ideal has been realized by means of political nationalism. Zionism has succeeded in “returning” the Jewish people to sovereignty in its historic homeland.

The founding of the Jewish state, however, has tragically created a nightmare for another people. The creation of Israel in 1948 displaced 700,000 indigenous inhabitants from their land. As a result, over 4,000,000 Palestinian refugees now yearn passionately to return to their homes.

And so we ask: what has the Jewish “return” to Zion wrought? How do we understand a Jewish “right of return” to Israel that grants automatic citizenship to any Jew anywhere in the world while denying that same right to the very people who actually lived on this land not long ago? Can any “return” truly be complete as long as it denies that right to others? **Could there possibly be a way that both peoples might realize their respective dreams of return?**



Photo: Jonathan Melchior/Wiki Commons



Third cup of wine

L'chayim to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement

The broad consensus among Palestinian civil society about the need for a broad and sustained Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) resulted in the Palestinian Call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel that was launched in July 2005 with the initial endorsement of over 170 Palestinian organizations. The signatories to this call represent the three major components of the Palestinian people: the refugees in exile, Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the discriminated Palestinian citizens of the Israeli state.

The call for boycotts, divestment campaigns, and government sanctions are tried and true non-violent resistance tactics as history shows us: In Alabama in 1955 it was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 1965 in Delano, California, it was the United Farm Workers' strike and call for boycott of California grape growers. And in 1985, it was Artists United Against Apartheid organizing in Sun City, South Africa.



These movements succeeded because – instead of telling people to wait for government leaders to do the right thing – they gave people powerful tools they could use to end injustice. Here. And now. Here at JVP, we are bringing these tools to bring an end the Israeli occupation of Palestine with our We Divest Campaign demanding that one of the world’s largest retirement funds divest from the Israeli occupation.

We raise this third cup to the powerful history of boycotts, divestment campaigns and government sanctions, to Palestinian civil society, and to all of us organizing for an end to the Israeli occupation.

L'chayim to the BDS movement!

בָּרֹךְ אַתָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגָּפֶן.



TOGETHER: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu
melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen.

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Hallel:

Praise

Together we will sing songs of peace & hope

LO YISA GOY

Lo yisa goy el goy cherev
Lo yilmedu od milchama

Nation shall not war against nation,
and they shall study war no more

OSEH SHALOM

Oseh shalom bimromav
Hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu
V'al kol ha olam
V'imru v'imru amein

The one who makes peace on high,
make peace upon us,
upon all the world
and let us say: amen



Photo: Barbara Barefield



Fourth cup of wine L'chayim to community!

From the JVP 2011 National Membership Meeting:
Building a Community of Respect and Trust,
a note from Stefanie Brendler, JVP Board member

We come together as JVP members to strengthen and build community. We come together to envision the world we want to live in: a world where every individual has the right to self-determination by participating in shaping our future together. In this world, we look out and care for one another; we practice trust and kindness; we respect each other's personal (physical and emotional) space; we lend an ear or ask for a helping hand; we believe that everyone comes to do this work with good intent; and, we hold each other accountable when we err.

JVP is home to a multitude of diverse identities (including race, class, gender, sex, sexuality, age, physical ability, size, religion, religious/secular, etc.), and we will affirm each other in our spectrum of identities. We will model our shared vision of the world by creating a space that is as safe, inclusive and supportive as possible for all of us. This includes having thoughtful conversations with each other if/when we hear language used pejoratively or language that perpetuates stereotypes.

We all feel the stress of the present state of affairs, and it is physically and emotionally draining. Though it is sometimes difficult to see, we know there is a rainbow on the other side of the storm cloud of injustice; if we didn't know this, we wouldn't be participants in the movement for peace and justice. It is because of the rainbow, not the storm cloud, that we act.

With our best critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, we will practice community building as an alternative to perpetuating the violence of an oppressive security-culture state.



We raise the fourth cup to the rainbow. L'chayim to community!

TOGETHER: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מְלֶכֶד הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגָּפֶן.



Most of our youth are taken away to prison. I have been arrested ten times and placed under administrative detention. For my whole life most of the Israelis I met were soldiers and interrogators. But when we started the popular resistance in 2009 I began to see that there were some Israelis who had removed the occupation from their minds. Like Jonathan [Pollack], who was the main person to bring Israelis and internationals here in the beginning. So we became friends.

We don't hate them on the other side; we simply demand that they end the occupation of their minds. The separation between us is between different ways of thinking, not between



land. If we change our ways of thought and remove the mentality of occupation from our minds — not just from the land — we can live together and build a paradise.

~ Bassem Tamimi

Photo: AlisonKamer.com



Nirtzah: Conclusion

Four More Questions for Pesach from Rabbi Brant Rosen

Question 4: “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

We now end our Seder meal once again with the proclamation “Next Year in Jerusalem!” And so we ask: what will we do to ensure that Jerusalem lives up to its name as a city of peace? How will we respond as the Jewish state increasingly implements policies that claim this holy city in the name of one people only? Do we dare to dream of a city divided or a city truly united for all its inhabitants?

...and if we do believe that Jerusalem must be, once and for all, a true City of Peace, what are we willing to do to make it so?

CLOSING

As we close tonight, go around your table and say goodnight and one thing that you are taking away with you from this evening's seder.



TOGETHER: Next Year in Jerusalem! Next Year in al-Quds! Next year in a City of Peace!



OD YAVO SHALOM ALEINU

Od yavo' shalom aleinu
 Od yavo' shalom aleinu
 Od yavo' shalom aleinu
 Ve al kulam (x2)
 Salaam (Salaam)
 Aleinu ve al kol ha olam,
 Salaam, Salaam (x2)

Peace will come upon us
 Peace will come upon us
 Peace will come upon us
 and on everyone.

Salaam ('peace' in Arabic)
 On us and on everyone
 Salaam, Salaam



An illustrated page from the Sarajevo Haggadah, written in fourteenth-century Spain. Top: Moses and the Burning Bush. Bottom: Aaron's staff swallows the magicians'.



Photo: AlisonRamer.com



Addendum

I. Pinkwashing Letter

from Wendy Somerson, JVP-Seattle

Pinkwashing

The story of Passover is the story of how all of our liberations are intertwined.

Recent activism that we did in Seattle around Pinkwashing highlights how coalition work can further our collective liberation.

My friend Selma and I were gripping each other's hands tightly on Thursday night, March 15th, as Seattle's LGBT Commission voted on whether to cancel an Israeli pinkwashing event that was scheduled to happen the next day at Seattle City Hall. We had both spoken in favor of cancelling the event, and I knew that Selma, a queer Palestinian American activist, couldn't help but feel like they were deciding on the legitimacy of her personal history.

For a few weeks prior to this eventful night, activists in the Pacific Northwest were mobilizing to respond to the March pinkwashing tour, "Rainbow Generations: Building New LGBTQ Pride & Inclusion in Israel" coming to our region. StandWithUs and the Israeli Consulate sponsored four leaders of Israeli LGBT organizations to "share the innovative work they are doing in Israel, learn from counterparts in the US, and build relationships for future collaboration."

What could be wrong with inclusion, pride, and collaboration? Nothing until you realize that this warm and fuzzy rainbow disguises a cynical government campaign. Events like this are part of "Brand Israel," a public relations program launched in 2005 to promote Israel as the progressive center of cultural advances in the Middle East in order to deflect criticism of Israel's violations of Palestinian rights. Pinkwashing refers to the arm of this campaign that uses racism to position Israel as an oasis of gay freedom surrounded by uncivilized and homophobic Arabs, particularly Palestinians.

Inspired that queer anti-Occupation activists across the

Puget Sound successfully got events in Tacoma and Olympia cancelled, a coalition of Jewish and Palestinian American queer activists decided to attend a public meeting the night before the event. Three of us Jewish Voice for Peace activists (Stefanie, Katie, and I) explained to the commission that we could not support a tour backed by the hateful group StandWithUs and the Israeli government. We also differentiated between being critical of Israeli government propaganda and actual instances of anti-Semitism.

By addressing objections to cancelling the event, we worked to be allies to our Palestinian American friends, Selma and Laila, so they could have the space to tell their stories. Selma read from her letter to the Commission about how her father became a refugee when their home in Palestine was ethnically cleansed in 1948. She linked this dispossession to how pinkwashing covers up Israeli policies that hurt her and her community and explained that her queer and Palestinian identities are inextricably linked together. Then Laila, a queer Palestinian whose family has Israeli citizenship, explained that her family members are treated as fourth-class citizens within Israel. She described how her visits to Israel are accompanied by government harassment simply because of her ancestry.

While these stories appeared to affect everyone in the room, it seemed as if the event would take place as planned. But then something extraordinary happened. With tears in his eyes and a voice shaking with emotion, one of the Commissioners said that he felt they had made a huge mistake because they had no idea



that holding this event meant marginalizing and invisibilizing Palestinian LGBT folks. Many Commissioners described their own naiveté when they agreed to host this event and their subsequent confusion.

Stefanie jumped in to point out how it was no coincidence that they felt confused because pinkwashing propaganda is designed to obfuscate the truth. Selma beseeched the commissioners to listen to their consciences:

By being courageous and taking a stand and canceling this event, you will be standing alongside many other national and international organizations and leaders who have said no to the exploitation of our queer community to wash away war crimes that continue to subjugate and oppress my family and my community.

We then watched as six out of the eight Commissioners raised their hands in favor of cancelling the event. My grip on Selma's hand tightened, and I just kept repeat-

ing, "it was a majority, a majority!" We hugged in joyful disbelief. Something unusual happened that night in City Hall: Palestinian American stories were put at the center. The Commissioners listened to Selma's and Laila's moving testimonies about their experiences and activism as queer Palestinians, and these stories prompted them to change their minds.

Outside of city hall, our small group of activists and supporters literally jumped up and down with excitement and joy to celebrate a victory made possible by years of working together in coalition.

When the LGBT Commissioners took the courageous stance of cancelling this event, they privileged the voices of individual queer activists in our communities over a nation-state that wants to use our queerness to forward their pro-Occupation agenda. This time around, as anti-Occupation activists, we got to call off our protest and instead celebrate how we made our queer Jewish and Palestinian voices heard. This is what working for our collective liberation looks like.



Photo: theonlydemocracy.org



II. JVP Rabbinical Council's No War on Iran Letter

We, the undersigned American Jewish clergy, are deeply concerned about reports that Prime Minister Netanyahu will demand of President Obama, at their meeting at the White House today, that either the United States attack Iran, or else, Israel will.

We do not welcome the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran. We call on all the military forces in the region – including Israel's – to divest themselves of their nuclear armaments and renounce any belligerent nuclear aspirations. The State of Israel refuses to acknowledge its own nuclear arsenal or to submit to international monitoring. We believe it is hypocritical of Israel to demand of Iran what it refuses to agree to itself.

Most of the people of the State of Israel oppose Prime Minister Netanyahu's military threats against Iran. They fear the consequences of an attack on Iran. As Jewish leaders, we too believe that the path of wisdom towards achieving peace and stability in the region is through dialog and engagement and not through acts of war. We call on the United States government to safeguard the interests of the people of Israel and Iran.

Nine years after the United States launched a war against Iraq that is widely recognized as having been badly executed and unjustified, Israel would have the U.S. implicate itself in a new war in the region, this time against Iran. We believe that Jews, and other Americans, will not support more reckless adventurism in the Middle East.

In this election year, we call on President Obama not to give in to warmongering. As Jewish leaders we cannot endorse an Israeli act of war against the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Bible teaches us: "bakesh shalom v'rodfehu – seek peace and pursue it." We urge President Obama to stand firm and to use his power as Israel's chief supporter to draw Israel to the path of peace and justice.

Cantor Michael Davis, Evanston, IL
 Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom, Re'ut, Israel
 Rabbi Rebecca Lillian, Malmö, Sweden
 Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt, Lanesboro, MA
 Rabbi Brant Rosen, Evanston, IL
 Rabbi Rebecca Alpert, Philadelphia, PA
 Rabbi Julie Greenberg, Philadelphia, PA
 Rabbi Margaret Holub, Albion, CA
 Rabbi Shai Gluskin, Philadelphia, PA
 Rabbi Zev-Hayyim Feyer, Claremont, CA
 Michael Ramberg, Rabbinical Student, RRC, Philadelphia, PA
 Rabbi Joseph Berman, Jamaica Plain, MA
 Alana Alpert, Rabbinical Student, Hebrew College, Boston, MA
 Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, Stony Point, NY
 Rabbi Howard Cohen, Bennington, VT
 Rabbi Brian Walt, West Tisbury, MA
 Rabbi David Mivasair, Vancouver, BC
 Rabbi Eyal Levinson, Israel, OT
 Rabbi Alissa Wise, Oakland, CA
 Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman, Madison, WI

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