



## HOPE AMIDST THE TEARS

*A reflection on karpas during the time of COVID-19*

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In the telling of the Passover story, we recount the oppression that our ancestors experienced when we were slaves in Egypt. We dip a growing vegetable—*karpas*—into saltwater, to taste their tears of grief mingled with our hopes for life, health and renewal for a more just world.

This year, the tears are *ours*.

They are the tears of the sick and their loved ones who worry or mourn.

They are the tears of those who have lost their jobs, are uninsured, live in isolation, or must go to work each day to provide essential services to others.

They're the tears of courageous health care workers who save lives and risk their own.

We must acknowledge this pain and suffering and allow ourselves the space to grieve. Yet, as the *karpas* ritual beckons, we must also look toward the future with a sense of hope and possibility. Passover arrives on the precipice of spring, when new growth is just around the corner. All over the world, resilience, strength, compassion and innovation will grow from under this tragedy.

### **We honor the tears, but we also bless the hope.**

*Raise the karpas, dip it in saltwater and say:*

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה**

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei peri ha-adama.*

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruits of the earth.

This Passover, may the brightness of our hope break through our tears and strengthen us in this moment together.



To download AJWS's social justice Haggadah and other original resources for Passover, visit [www.ajws.org/passover](http://www.ajws.org/passover)

# Passover Seder Refugee Supplement

**Prayer and Poem to be included during Yahatz (יחץ) – breaking of the middle matzah, before or after the poem Halachma Anya (הא לחמא עניה) – this is the bread of affliction.**

## **Prayer:**

If there is a moment in the Seder that should leave us feeling self-conscious, it is now. This year we are slaves, next year the liberated ones. This year we are slaves, next year the liberated ones? Aren't we, who sit around these tables overflowing with food and drink, the liberated ones, while many of the 60 million people displaced worldwide, torn from their homes due to civil war, famine, or persecution are truly the bent, the ones in need?

*Eloheinu V'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu - Our God and God of our fathers and mothers, help those who flee persecution as our ancestors did some 3000 years ago. Show chesed (loving-kindness), compassion to those hemmed in by misery and captivity, to those who take to the open ocean, or treacherous landscape seeking freedom and liberty. Rescue and recover them - delivering them from gorge to meadow, from darkness to light. Inspire us to act on behalf of those we don't know, on behalf of those we may never meet because we know the heart of the stranger. We too ate the bread of affliction whose taste still lingers. And so, dear God, inspire us to be rodfei tzedek, pursuers of righteousness for those who seek the same freedoms we enjoy tonight. Do it speedily and in our days, and let us all say, Amen.*

*Rabbi Daniel Gropper, Community Synagogue of Rye, NY*

[rac.org/refugees](http://rac.org/refugees)

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# A Poem

## He Wore the Same Shoes as My Benny

He wore the same shoes as my Benny, Blue  
velcro, brown stitching, rubber-soled.

"Mama, I want to wear shorts!" he yelled.  
She wondered what the future would hold.

*This is the bread of affliction...*

He packed a small bag with "essentials,"  
A tiny brown bear and his book,  
"Shhh," brother said in the quiet of night  
The last journey that they ever took.

*This is the night of affliction...*

And so they arrived and got ready to board,  
With "life vests" and people all over.  
Daddy was trying to calm mommy's fears,  
Although it was freedom that drove her.

*This is the fear of affliction...*

Not five minutes into the harrowing ride  
The nightmare began, they were all terrified.  
There was no escape from the cruelty of war  
The rude awakening; so close yet so far.  
Water was rising, gasping for air  
Panicking, struggling, are you still there?

*This is the water of affliction...*

Early the next morning,  
Though sadly too late,  
The world took notice of this family's fate.

And though it is easy to turn a blind eye,  
We ought to be mindful;  
This was once You and I.

For we too were slaves who fought for  
redemption.

We cannot turn away. There is no exemption.  
*This is the history of affliction...*

This year as we sit at our Passover seder,  
We all take a moment to pause.  
There are millions enslaved in our world to  
this day,

We must stand up and fight for this cause.  
*This is the fight of affliction...*

He wore the same shoes as my Benny,  
The similarities do not end there.  
Each child has hope for a much better world,  
The burden is on us to care.

*This is the bread of affliction...*

*Cantor Aviva Marer, Temple Emanu-El Edison, NJ*

# Discussion

As we join together at the Seder table, in remembrance and in celebration of our liberation from Egypt, we cannot forget the far too many people still seeking refuge. With over 60 million people displaced worldwide, we are facing the largest global refugee crisis since World War II, and as a Jewish community, we must take action. Use the following questions to discuss the connections between this contemporary crisis and the biblical teachings of Passover. For more resources and tools to take action visit [rac.org/refugeecrisis](http://rac.org/refugeecrisis).

1. On Passover we are told, "In every generation all of us are obligated to regard ourselves as if we ourselves went forth from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 13:8). How does this season of Passover remind us of and inspire us to take action in response to the 60 million seeking a safe haven worldwide?
2. Our community knows too well the struggle for freedom. Does this history motivate us to engage on this issue? How so?
3. During Passover and throughout the year, how can I help respond to this global refugee crisis?

[rac.org/refugees](http://rac.org/refugees)

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## Considering "Next Year in Jerusalem"

MARCH 17, 2014 DASEE BERKOWITZ



On a recent trip to Jerusalem, my son decided that his favorite color was gold. Whenever he's asked why, he replies with a wry smile befitting a 5-year-old.

"Jerusalem is the city of gold, of course," he says.

When we told him our family was moving to Israel this summer, he was quite pleased.

"*Ima*, will we live there until I'm a grown-up?" he asked.

That's the idea, we nodded.

While I know what my family will mean when we reach the end of the Passover seder this year and say "Next year in Jerusalem," for those not making the trek to the Holy Land anytime soon, what do these words mean? Are we being disingenuous? Or, as the rabbis encourage with every other part of the Haggadah, are we expounding, embellishing, interpreting, and reading ourselves into the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

The end of the Haggadah, with the promise to arrive "next year in Jerusalem," is just as ripe for exploration as the beginning.

I am always struck when Israelis, especially Jerusalemites, say "Next year in Jerusalem" with the same intention as their Diaspora brethren. Jerusalem surely cannot only represent a physical destination. It must represent more: an ideal, a hope, a possibility.

In the language of the Haggadah, the land of Israel and Jerusalem represent the final stage of redemption. When we lift the four cups of wine during the seder, we are giving ritual expression to the four stages that the Jewish people move through, with God as their guide, to reach freedom and leave Egyptian slavery in the dust.

people" (cup 4). But there is a fifth mention of redemption just a few verses later in the narrative: "And I will bring you into the land (of Israel)."

Arriving to the land is the final stage of redemption and corresponds to the cup of Elijah, the prophet who is said to be the one who ushers in messianic times. The cup, untouched yet filled with wine to the brim, represents the future ahead, filled with possibilities and promises for peace on earth.

As the late Rabbi David Hartman writes in *The Leader's Guide to the Family Participation Haggadah: A Different Night*, "The cup is poured, but not yet drunk. Yet the cup of hope is poured every year. Passover is the night for reckless dreams; for visions about what a human being can be, what society can be, what people can be, what history may become. That is the significance of 'Le'shanah ha'ba'a b'Yerushalayim' [Next year in Jerusalem]."

Now that we are freed from the bondage in Egypt, we are called to embrace our biggest dreams, and our wildest aspirations for ourselves, for Israel and for the world.

Or when we say "Next year in Jerusalem," are we referring to a more modest endeavor?

There is a midrash about the etymology of the word Jerusalem, or *Yerushalayim*. The Rabbis look at the word "*Yerusha*," which means inheritance, and "*ayim*," which connotes doubling, and understand that there are two Jerusalems - a heavenly one ("*Yerushalayim shel ma'alah*") and an earthly one ("*Yerushalayim shel ma'ata*"). While the heavenly Jerusalem might refer to the possibilities of a world redeemed, an earthly one is rooted in the complexities of politics, economics and daily life. It is a place filled with energy, vibrancy and urgency.

In the late poet Yehuda Amichai's terms, Jerusalem is a place where its inhabitants are longing for God's presence. Jerusalem, he writes, is "saturated with prayers and dreams like the air over industrial cities. It's hard to breathe." And according to the Midrash, the earthly Jerusalem is the place where God will arrive even before reaching the heavenly Jerusalem. As the Midrash imagines God saying, "I will not come into the city of Jerusalem that is above until I first come into the city of Jerusalem that is below."

What does it mean to make earthly Jerusalem a place in which God - whatever God means for us - can enter and reside? Let us create partnerships with Israelis that help let a sense of godliness, justice and love permeate the city. Let us devote more time to learning more about the complexity of life in Israel through travel and research. Let's partner with Israelis working on the ground to improve society through education, social and economic equality, and religious pluralism. Let's read more Israeli literature and honor Israeli artists.

Or is Jerusalem a state of mind?

More than physical places, rabbis have noted that Egypt and Jerusalem represent two inner spiritual states. Egypt, or *mitzrayim*, has at its root "*tsar*," or narrowness. Egypt represents the places in which we live in narrow places, where we feel constricted and confined. It is a state in which we are quick to anger, to react, to put our own ego needs before the needs of others.

Jerusalem, on the other hand, has at its root "*shalem*," or "wholeness." It is the feeling of expansiveness, when the disparate parts of ourselves weave together into a seamless whole.

As the seder winds down and the matzah crumbs are swept off the table, let the question of "next year" continue to echo - with all its hopes, plans and the self-understandings of where Jerusalem resides for each one of us.

PASSOVER

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## About the Author

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