

AN ANTIRACIST PASSOVER SUPPLEMENT FOR THE 2021/5781 HAGGADAH



NOT FREE  TO DESIST

KAVANAH: INTENTION

The purpose of this supplement is to provide potential starting-points for critical conversations around racial justice which are appropriate to the themes of Pesach. These topics can be challenging! Explore the contents of the supplement before your Seder and consider how you feel about them. Perhaps you will only want to use one or two pages from this resource, or you may not want to use any of them and come up with your own ways to open these important conversations. We urge you to find something to say, if only how you are feeling. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.

*This supplement was collaboratively produced by the volunteer curriculum and design teams of **Not Free to Desist**.*

Not Free to Desist (NFD) is dedicated to bringing about an anti-racist Jewish community. NFD envisions a world in which all Jewish institutions and funders make a commitment to the concrete racial justice goals as outlined in the 7 obligations of the Not Free to Desist letter. With a guiding focus of centering Jews of color in the work, and a commitment to anti-racist policies and practices, NFD seeks to help organizations achieve long-term structural change and a more just allocation of resources.

To learn more or to get involved, visit notfreetodesist.org.



A NEW 10 PLAGUES

There are injustices that we would not wish even upon our enemies. We sacrifice droplets of our wine to mourn the plagues that fell upon Egypt on our behalf, yet many of us sacrifice nothing when the same plagues present themselves today.

1. BLOOD

We differentiate ourselves by bloodlines and inheritance. We ask non-white non-Ashkenazi Jews, "Where are you really from? How are you Jewish?"

2. FROGS

We are easily frightened and disgusted by people whose lives are different from ours, even when they do no harm. We call the police on Black men barbecuing.

3. LICE

We are parasitic - we benefit directly from the suffering and poverty of others. Exploitation of workers and prison labor make our commodities cheaper and immediately accessible.

4. WILD ANIMALS

We give into our fears and irrationally follow the pack, refusing to think critically for ourselves. We surrender to our biases, and act without compassion.

5. LIVESTOCK

We dehumanize others. We treat asylum seekers like cattle and herd their children into cages.

6. BOILS

We ignore that racism is a national health emergency. We tolerate an infant mortality rate for Black babies that is double that of all other babies.

7. HAIL

We are content to let others suffer while we are protected. We perpetuate inequality in the impacts of climate change. We dump toxic waste near communities of color and continue to build pipelines through sacred lands.

8. LOCUSTS

We oppress those who grow our food. We do nothing while farm workers live in food deserts, often without access to clean water and sanitation.

9. DARKNESS

We ignore violence against people who don't look like us. We have failed to protect our Asian siblings and neighbors from violent attacks. Our silence allows violent hatred to go unchecked.

10. DEATH OF THE FIRST BORN

We are bystanders to mass incarceration. We imprison 1 of 9 Black men between the ages 20 and 34, affecting entire generations.



OPENING THE DOOR FOR ELIYAHU: WHO'S NOT COMING TO DINNER

PART 1: HISTORY

It began with fear. In the Middle Ages, Jews began the custom of opening the door for Elijah to protect themselves against the accusation of using the blood of Christian children to bake matzahs. So we opened our doors in self-defense, showing our neighbors this was not the case.

PART 2: INQUIRY

How can we open our doors as an act of courage? Today a closed door is seen as protection, a barrier between us and the rest of the world. How may we commit to opening our doors this year?

PART 3: CALL

Once we open our doors, then what? Is there a place at our tables? How can we make everyone feel not just invited in, but that we all belong and are at home?

Shirley Chisholm, the first Black U.S. Congresswoman, taught “if they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” How can we make our tables—in our homes, our community centers, our places of worship—radically inclusive so no one needs to bring a folding chair?



FOUR CHILDREN, REGARDLESS OF AGE

The Haggadah tells of four children: the Chacham, the wise one; the Rasha, the wicked one; the Tam, the simple one; and finally, the one who doesn't know what to ask.

THE CHACHAM
THE WISE says *"How do I become antiracist"*
to that child we say...

Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better(1). Educate yourself about your own role in the mechanics of racism and how you can make choices to disrupt the structures and systems of injustice rather than perpetuating them.

THE RASHA says *"I'm not a racist, so racial justice is not about me."*
THE WICKED to that child we say...

You are complicit in a white America that slammed the door shut on the opportunity for the fundamental transformation of the civil rights movement(2). You may not be guilty but you are responsible(3).

THE TAM says *"How do I even begin to confront racism?"*
THE SIMPLE to that child we say...

Repentance means a new insight, a new spirit. It also means a course of action(3). Choose a place to begin, and that will be good enough for a start.

THE ONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO ASK

We, too, are either ministers of the sacred or slaves of evil(4). Your liberation is bound up with mine; let us work together(5).

Citations

(1) <https://www.oprah.com/oprahs-life/class/the-powerful-lesson-maya-angelou-taught-oprah-video>

(2) <https://time.com/5859214/james-baldwin-racism/>

(3) <https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/heschel-religion-and-race-speech-text/>

(4) https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/f10/Heschel_Insecurity_of_Freedom_excerpt.pdf

(5) <https://lillanetwork.wordpress.com/about/>



DAYENU FROM THE GRANDSON OF IMMIGRANTS FROM VILNA (PRESENT DAY LITHUANIA)

Had You only **taken my family out of Czarist Russia** before the First World War, and before the gates of immigration closed in 1924, it would be enough for us.

Had You only **taken my family out of the Lower East Side** and allowed them to work and live during the Great Depression in Brooklyn, it would be enough for us.

Had You only **allowed my family to free themselves from Yiddish and assimilate into White America**, it would have been enough for us.

Had You only **allowed my father and uncles to serve and survive the Second World War**, and join the many fraternal organizations that flowered in the post-war period, it would have been enough for us.

Had You only **allowed my family, as educated White Americans, to profit and amass capital** during the great economic expansion beginning after World War II and ending in 1975, it would have been enough for us.

Had You only **allowed us to witness the establishment of the State of Israel**, to look on as David became Goliath, feeling better about ourselves as American Jews, it would have been enough for us.

Had You only **allowed us to transform ourselves from being outsiders to becoming insiders**, enjoying the safety brought on by unimaginable success—we thought it would be enough for us.

Had You only brought together Abraham Joshua Heschel and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that would have been enough for us. But was that enough for them? **Have we not let them down by abandoning the march for social, racial, and economic justice?** A struggle for justice that demands that it proceed?



DAYENU FROM YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

As you prepare for Passover, we encourage you to reflect on your own family's dayenu moments by using the prompts below or writing your own. Fill in the blank spaces with your own family story, adapting these prompts in a way that resonates with you.

Had You only taught my ancestors _____ it would have been enough for us.
[Jewish value instilled in your family]

Had You only allowed my family _____ it would have been enough for us.
[story of family finding safety or security]

Had You only permitted my family, of _____, to survive and thrive,
[place an ancestor was born]

generation to generation, their memory still with me in _____, it would have been enough for us.
[your location today]

Had You merely let my family _____, enjoying success, it
[defining moment of pride for your family]

would have been enough for us. We thought it should have been enough for us.

Had You only enacted _____ in the United States, it
[laws or policies that allowed my family to prosper or exist here]

would have been enough for us.

Had You only given _____ a platform that helped to
[activist in history you draw inspiration from]

uplift others and benefit all by improving our society, it would have been enough for us.

But what if it weren't enough? Have we not let _____ down in our
[above leader or movement]

silence, our indifference, our complacency?

Is this our Esther moment? What does that mean? In all of Hebrew literature there is no moment as when Mordechai (on the outside of the Palace of Power and at risk of losing his life) challenges Esther (who is inside, safe, and close to power) saying, "Who knows? Perhaps you have come to power for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). Esther chose to stand up and confront power with courage.

Perhaps we have been given our privilege and position for such a time as this.

