

# JEWISH DEMS PASSOVER SEDER COMPANION

*Brought to you by the  
Jewish Democratic Council of America,  
the political home and voice of Jewish voters,  
advocating for policies, and supporting  
Democrats who share our core values.*

***The Jewish Democratic Council of America (JDCA) is the political home and voice of Jewish voters, advocating for policies and supporting Democrats who share our core values.***

Each year, we gather to celebrate the festival of freedom, Passover. Around our Seder tables, we tell the story of freedom from oppression. While our *Haggadot* focus on the Jewish liberation from bondage in Egypt, we also reflect on different forms of oppression in the modern day. This year, we are thinking of the more than 100 hostages held in captivity in Gaza by Hamas, and the families of all those with empty seats at their seder tables as a result of October 7.

This Seder supplement looks at the parallels between the Passover story, current events and political dynamics, and steps we can take to ensure elected officials represent our values and protect our freedoms.

At the end of the Seder, we commit to "next year in Jerusalem," which has different meanings to different people. For some, it may be a call to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem next year. Over six months since the horrific attacks by Hamas on October 7, it could also mean doing all we can to ensure the release of more than 100 hostages still held by Hamas. For others, it may mean helping to elect those who share our values, including support of freedom. In this spirit, we encourage you to add a fifth question to tonight's Seder and to consider how this election is different from all others:

***What actions will you take to expand opportunities for equity, equality, justice, freedom, safety, and democracy in the United States, Israel, and worldwide?***

We know this election is different from all others because the distinction between presidential candidates has never been more stark, with our democracy, rights, and freedoms on the ballot. In this critically important election year, we hope you'll [take action with JDCA and support our work](#) advocating for our shared values, and helping to elect candidates who share those values

Chag Pesach Sameach from JDCA!

חג פסח שמח!

# How is this Passover Different from all other Passovers?

On October 7, Hamas launched a horrific terrorist attack on Israel and perpetrated the single deadliest day for the Jewish community since the Holocaust. In the six and a half months since then, Israelis and Jews from around the world have come together to mourn, advocate, and rebuild. More than 100 hostages taken from Israel remain in captivity, over 600 Israelis have lost their lives in combat, millions of Israelis and Palestinians are displaced, Iran launched an unprecedented direct attack against Israel, and civilians in Gaza face a dire humanitarian crisis.

Pesach is the festival of freedom and liberation, but this freedom isn't guaranteed. It is our collective responsibility to protect and extend this freedom and liberation for ourselves and to others, lest we lose it.

This year, amid the ongoing conflict, trauma, and grief, the story of Pesach takes on a new meaning. **What does freedom look like today?** How can the Jewish people, once enslaved in Egypt, advocate for those now in captivity, including those held in Gaza by Hamas? How can we incorporate the values of *Ha Lachma Anya*, letting all who are hungry come and eat, even as there are humanitarian crises around the world, including in Gaza? Throughout the Seder, we invite you to think about the Pesach story in the context of today's world and keep all those suffering in mind.

As we celebrate our liberation from Egypt, we mourn the hostages murdered in captivity, and we remember those unable to join their loved ones at the Pesach Seder and pray for their safe and immediate return. Some in our community are choosing to set an empty place at their Seders to represent the 1,200 lives lost on October 7 and the more than 100 still held hostage. Others may choose to add prayers or psalms to their seders and services. We included one such prayer for those held captive, which Jews have recited for centuries.

## Prayer for the Hostages

Acheinu kol beit yisrael,  
han'tunim b'tzara uvashivyah,  
haomdim bein bayam uvein  
bayabasha. Hamakom y'racheim  
aleihem v'yotziem mitzara lirvacha,  
umi'afaila l'orah umishibud lig'ulah,  
hashta ba'agala uvizman kariv,  
V'nomar: Amen

אֲחֵינוּ כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַנְּתוּנִים בְּצָרָה  
וּבְשִׁבְיָה, הָעוֹמְדִים בֵּין בָּיִם וּבֵין בִּיבְשָׁה,  
הַמְּקוּם יָרַחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם, וַיּוֹצִיאֵם מִצָּרָה לְרוּחָה,  
וּמֵאֶפְלָה לְאוֹרָה, וּמִשְׁעֶבֶד לְגֹאֲלָה, הַשְּׂתָא  
בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב.  
וְנֹאמַר: אָמֵן.

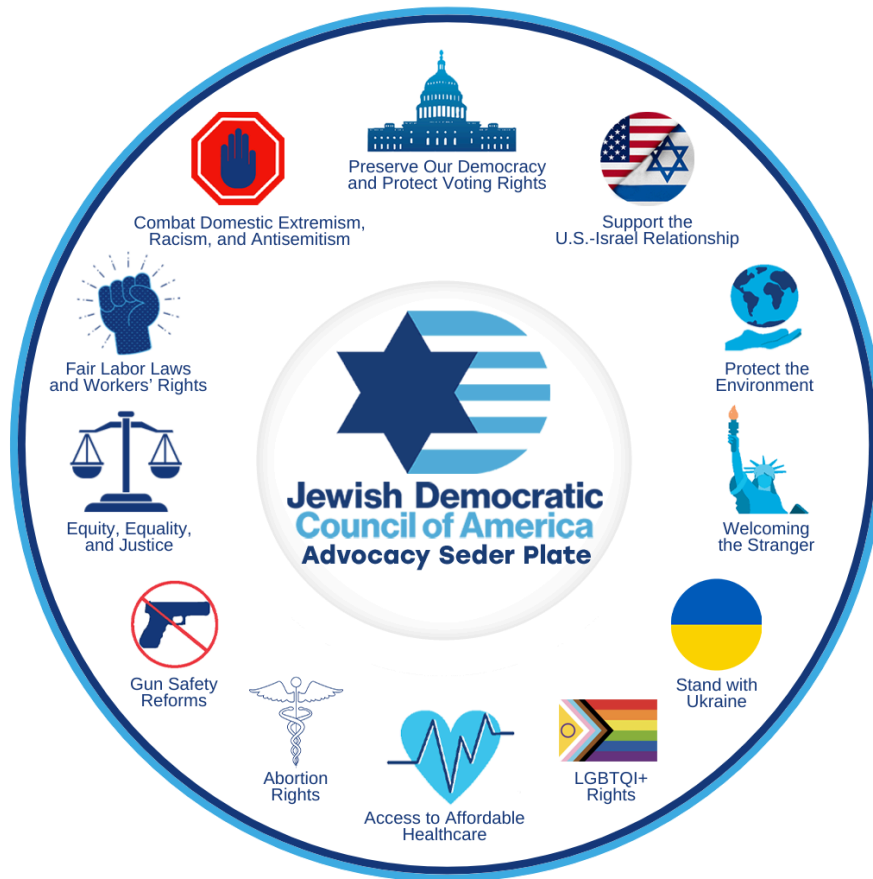
Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu  
Melech Ha'olam, matir asurim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעֶלְמִים,  
מְתִיר אֲסוּרִים.

*Our brothers, our sisters, the entire family of Israel, all who have been forced into distress or taken into captivity, whether on the sea or on dry land, may the Divine bring them from suffering to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption, now, speedily, and soon. And let us say, Amen.*

*Blessed is the Divine, who frees the captives.*

# Discussing our Values at the Seder



## Freedom & Democracy

חירות | *Cherut*

Throughout history, the Jewish people have thrived in pluralistic democracies that guaranteed the rights and freedoms of all. We believe that only a vibrant **democracy** can ensure **freedom** and protect against tyranny, and we support measures that **strengthen and safeguard our democratic institutions**.

## Dignity, Equity, and Equality

בצלם אלקים | *B'tzelem Elokim*

We believe that all peoples are created in the image of the divine and that we should treat each other as we would like to be treated. We work toward a more equitable world in which the **basic human dignity of all people** is realized, and where the government works equally for all people to achieve their potential and aspirations.

## Justice

צדק, צדק, תרדף | *Tzedek, Tzedek, Tirdof*

The concept of a just society upheld by a system of laws, ethics, and accountability is a central principle of our Jewish tradition. **The pursuit of justice** compels us to work toward a fairer world that includes **racial, social, economic, environmental, and reproductive justice**. We support policies that uphold the rule of law and build a more just world for all.

## Peoplehood & Community

אהבת ישראל | *Ahavat Yisrael*

As Jewish Democrats, we celebrate the histories and traditions that have sustained the Jewish people throughout time. Our sense of belonging and shared purpose, including our connection and ties to Israel, drives our work to ensure **thriving, safe, and secure Jewish communities** in the U.S., Israel, and around the world.

## Welcoming the Stranger

אהבת הגר | *Ahavat HaGer*

Jews are called to **welcome the stranger** more than any other commandment in the Torah, and are reminded that we were once strangers in a strange land. We are obligated to act with **compassion toward all oppressed and marginalized peoples, including refugees and immigrants**, as we too know what it is like to experience marginalization and oppression.

## Repairing the World

תיקון עולם | *Tikkun Olam*

Our Jewish tradition compels us to make a more **liveable, sustainable, and just world through advocacy and action**. We are commanded to not stand idly by, and while we are not obligated to complete the work, neither are we free to abstain from it.

**These values are intertwined with the Passover story. As we recall our liberation from Egypt, we also recognize the importance of liberation and justice for all. Until all of us are free, none of us are free.**

At the start of the Seder, we chant *Ha Lachma Anya* and invite all who are hungry to join our meal – a reminder to uplift those in need and welcome the stranger. Whether or not you can physically invite a stranger into your home for the Seder, this tradition is a meaningful reminder to recognize our shared humanity.

**Use these conversation starters to discuss what the Seder can teach us about creating a world that more strongly reflects Jewish and Democratic values.**

On Passover, we reflect on our liberation from Egypt. Throughout history, the Jewish people have been displaced and have become immigrants and refugees searching for security around the world. As Jewish Americans, we recognize the importance of welcoming others in their quests for safety and opportunity. ***How does the history of our people inform our advocacy for present-day migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers? What can we do to protect and fight for them?***

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and their Egyptian pursuers drowned behind them, the Divine was upset with the angels who celebrated, saying; "How can you sing for joy when my children are dying? Are they not my children too?" ***How do we maintain empathy for those with whom we disagree politically and even those who wish us harm? How can we extend this to the current war, protecting Israel's security, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza?***

When the Israelites left their homes in Egypt to begin their journey to the land of Israel, they did not know what lay before them. Right now, we are at a pivotal moment here in America, in Israel, and around the world. ***How do we summon the strength to keep working toward a better future – and stronger democracy – when there is so much uncertainty? What grounds us as we pursue our path to a more just and equitable world?***

Our tradition teaches that each year at the Seder, we must tell the story of the Exodus as if we, ourselves, were leaving Egypt. ***Today, if we were to retell our modern-day experiences as Jewish Americans, what are our stories? What are the stories and moments we would want future generations to retell?***

# The Four Questions

**1. Matzah | מצה :** Survival is about taking bold action. The Israelites had to act quickly and had no time for their bread to rise as they fled Egypt. More recently, Vladimir Putin's unconscionable assault on Ukraine forced over eight million Ukrainians to flee their homes. Many have had to act quickly to survive. Hamas's brutal attack on October 7 killed more than 1,200, took nearly 250 hostages, and displaced hundreds of thousands of Israelis in northern and southern Israel. ***How can we support those who have been forced to flee?***

**2. Bitter Herbs | מרור :** As we remember the bitter conditions of the slaves in Egypt, we recognize the bitter conditions around the globe and injustices in the United States. The epidemics of gun violence, systemic racism, right-wing extremism, bigotry, and economic inequities plague our country. ***What are the steps Jews can take to stand with marginalized peoples in the face of oppression? What steps can we take to make our communities more secure and equitable?***

**3. The Freedom to Dip Twice | שתי פעמים :** Dipping twice is an expression of our freedom from bondage. Attacks on abortion rights and reproductive freedom, voter suppression and subversion, and anti-LGBTQI+ measures restrict our basic freedoms and rights in many states across America. ***What are some ways we can advocate for these rights, defend democracy, and safeguard freedom?***

**4. Reclining | כלנו מסבין :** We have seen that the Jewish vote can make a difference in tight races. Since 2018, JDCA has helped to flip the House, Senate, and White House from Republican to Democratic control. Together, we restored the soul of our nation by electing President Biden in 2020 and expanding our Democratic Senate majority in 2022. Most recently, the Jewish vote helped to flip a critical House seat from red to blue in New York.

**5. *You may also want to add a fifth question this year – “why is this election different from all other elections?” The stakes are higher and the distinction between presidential candidates has never been more stark, with our democracy, rights, and freedoms on the ballot. Let’s do everything we can to protect democracy and freedoms by supporting candidates who align with our values in November.***

**Tonight, let us recline – let’s “lean left!” – to celebrate our past success and commit to electing more Democrats who share our values in 2024.**



# Four Cups of Wine

The four cups of wine represent the four ways we experienced deliverance when we were led out of Egypt. **How are we delivered when we advocate for our Jewish and Democratic values?**



President Biden and Democrats fought to protect reproductive health care by defending access to FDA-approved medicated abortion, ensuring patients' and medical professionals' privacy, and strengthening access to affordable contraception, which is more important after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.



We must take action to combat climate change and protect our environment. That's why President Biden and Democrats passed the largest package of climate investments in U.S. history as part of the Inflation Reduction Act.



President Biden has uplifted working-class Americans and strengthened the economy. Today, inflation is down, 4.3 million borrowers were relieved of student debt, unemployment remains at a 50-year low, and nearly 11 million jobs, including 750,000 manufacturing jobs, have been created since President Biden took office.



President Biden has nominated over 175 life-tenured judges, 65% of whom are people of color and over 65% of whom are women. This group of judicial appointees includes the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, and the first Muslim American to serve in the federal appeals court.

# The Four Children:

## Four Approaches to Political Activism

### **The Wise Child | חכם: Spreading truth and facts.**

Republican leaders and right-wing media continue to promote election denialism and dangerous conspiracy theories, including those targeting Jewish Americans. We need to restore a shared understanding of the truth and push back against misinformation. We must replace ignorance with education, and that starts with educating and imparting our values to our children.

**The Wicked Child | רשע: Pushing back against the politics of exclusion.** Many in the Republican Party have embraced extremism and made excluding voters from the electoral process their official policy. We should strive to create a country where all citizens are included, where their voices are heard, and where their votes are counted. Our democracy works best when every American has access to the ballot.

### **The Simple Child | תם: Educating and empowering citizens to seek help.**

As politically active citizens, we must spread the facts. People must know how President Biden and Democrats are delivering for Americans and continue to work toward humane immigration reform, codifying reproductive health care access, and advancing human rights and civil liberties, and that – all too often, including in the case of voting rights – Republicans are obstructing progress and curtailing freedoms.

### **The Child Who Doesn't Know How to Ask | שאינו יודע לשאול: Asking hard questions.**

To create change and repair the world, we must ask hard questions. Discuss social, racial, and economic justice in America, and do your part to ensure a more just and equitable society, including by advocating with Jewish Dems.

# Shaping the Future

Each year, we complete the Passover Seder by reflecting upon changes we want to bring about in the coming year. This year, we're preparing for the critical 2024 elections. With less than 200 days to go until November 5, that means **now** is the time to shape our future and make sure that we continue to elect Democrats who share our values.

**What actions will we take in the coming days and months to ensure that our country is more equitable, just, and safe for all people?**

**How will you take action to help Democrats win in 2024?**

Together, we can shape the future. We hope you will join JDCA in taking our voices and values to the polls in November.

**[Join us by supporting JDCA's work to advocate for policies and elect Democrats who share our Jewish and Democratic values.](#)**

Thank you for welcoming us into your homes as part of your Seder. We encourage you to visit [www.jewishdems.org](http://www.jewishdems.org) to learn more about all of our policy priorities and how you can join us as we work toward a better future for us all.

Chag Pesach Sameach! חג פסח שמח