

Young Democrats of America Jewish Caucus 2007 Passover Supplement



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After presenting the order of the Seder, but before the recitation of the Kadesh:

Leader:

Passover is perhaps the most applied holiday in any major world religion. From the first century C.E., when Rabbi Akiba used the Seder to plan a revolutionary struggle against the Romans to the additional matzot thousands of families enlisted in recognition of Soviet Jews who were unable to celebrate, the purpose of recalling our slavery in Egypt has always been about the modern world. We are called upon to identify the forces that still instill slavery in our lives and to think of those who remain enslaved.

All:

Tonight, as we go through the rituals of the Seder, we recall not only the historical events, but also the contemporary issues that prevent us from being truly free.

Preceding the recitation of the Ten Plagues:

Leader:

In Judaism, a full glass of wine represents joy. When we remove ten drops of wine from our glasses, we are dampening our happiness for the suffering of the Egyptians. Indeed, we cannot be truly happy when others are suffering.

In this respect, our world has been replete with modern plagues: from the crisis of AIDS in Africa and the ongoing genocide in Darfur to suicide bombings, human rights violations, and the looming threat of Bird Flu. Are

there valuable lessons that we can learn in today's disasters? As we look past our temptation to hide from these crises, we recognize a world that is crying out. Unlike Pharaoh, we must not harden our hearts to the crises of our day. We take a moment to think of the challenges we face, recognizing that we must work to mend the problems, and not simply mask the symptoms.

At the conclusion of the Seder, but before the Nirtzah (Next Year in Jerusalem):

Leader:

Tonight we recalled the bitterness of our slavery in Egypt and the joy of our freedom. Reclining around our table, however, we are forced to recognize that we are the lucky ones. Our ability to celebrate tonight is not universal. Millions in our world live in modern forms of slavery. When we think of our fortune, we cannot help but notice these injustices. As Jews, and as attendees of the Seder, we must not stop at finding injustice in the world. We have an obligation not only to notice, but to act.

All:

We think tonight not only of the brokenness in our world, but of what we can do to repair it. As we leave, we consider how we can actualize change.

Leader:

We end the Seder with the statement "Next Year in Jerusalem." With the creation of the State of Israel, it seems funny that next year could actually be in Jerusalem. Indeed, this year could have been in Jerusalem. Jews celebrating Pesach in Jerusalem utter the same line. Are they simply ignoring the meaning of the text and following the ritual?

In fact, the statement "Next Year in Jerusalem" implies more than simply a location. Next year we want true freedom for everyone. "Next Year in Jerusalem" is about celebrating, next year, in a world without oppression, a world without injustice, a world without slavery.

“Next Year in Jerusalem” is not simply a statement to end our Seder. With this line, we are obliging ourselves to celebrate next year in a world closer to that ideal. Indeed the only way we can mean this statement is with action.