

Jewish Solidarity with Native American People (JNAP) Haggadah Supplement

Contributed by [Jewish Solidarity with Native American People \(JSNAP\)](#)

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JSNAP PASSOVER HAGADDAH INSERT

Thinking About Issues of Native Rights and Social Justice

Jewish Solidarity with Native American People (JSNAP) works with Native American communities to link our Jewish values towards supporting Native land and cultural rights. Add sections from JSNAP's insert at the recommended places in the seder or simply have it available for guests to read over as they like!

Use this piece during the discussion of Miriam's Cup.

In the Passover story, Miriam the prophetess is a true community organizer, leading her people across the Red Sea in song and dance and helping them to feel the power of liberation! Miriam knows that their power lies in the full diversity of the community. Everyone, man or woman, can be a great leader.

Another story is told about Miriam and her brother Aaron challenge Moses' prophetic authority asking: "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Numbers, 12:2). Like women throughout history, Miriam bears the brunt of the penalty for her and Aaron's actions. While Aaron is left unpunished, Miriam suffers leprosy and is sent to live outside of the camp for a week.

Though G-d and Moses instruct the community to continue in the wilderness, they refuse and insist on waiting until Miriam returns. This story illustrates the power of fierce women in our communities, demonstrating that gender diversity is critical on our long path to liberation.

The example Miriam sets is reflected in the work that women organizers are doing all over the country, including those in Native American communities. Winona LaDuke is a fiery Anishanaabe Native rights and environmental activist who founded the White Earth Land Recovery Project in Minnesota and the international Indigenous Women's Network. Winona's calls for action against destruction of sacred land

have made tremendous impacts on both indigenous people and the world at large. She speaks to women's experience and, like Miriam, maintains a feminist perspective in her work. She writes:

"We, collectively, find that we are often in the role of the prey, to a predator of society, whether for sexual discrimination, exploitation, sterilization, absence of control over our bodies, or being the

subjects of repressive laws and legislation in which we have no voice. This occurs on an individual level, but equally, and more significantly on a societal level. It is also critical to point out at this time, that most matrilineal societies, societies in which governance and decision making are largely controlled by women, have been obliterated from the face of the Earth by colonialism, and subsequently industrialism. The only matrilineal societies which exist in the world are those of Indigenous nations. We are the remaining matrilineal societies, yet we also face obliteration.”

Like Miriam, Winona and the organizations she helped to form provide spaces for indigenous women to develop political consciousness and a powerful national voice. During Passover, we can all be moved by Miriam and Winona’s work and strive to be conscious of creating inclusive communities as we cross from slavery to freedom.

Use this piece before singing Hallel and think about what it means to transition from slavery to freedom.

Exodus and Liberation translate many different ways for different communities, religious groups, and individuals. Chief Tom Dostou of the Wabanaki Nation of Massachusetts offers the following prayer in an excerpt from a larger piece describing his journey across his ancestral homeland of “Turtle Island.”

“We will pray for the American peoples who send their sons and daughters out to foreign lands to be mutilated and or die for the flag which has been prostituted for the oil profits of a few to the expense of many.

We will pray for the children of those brought over here in chains from Africa and the children of Abraham, Issac and Ishmael.

And we will pray for the children of the Pilgrims and Puritans whose ancestors came here to escape religious persecution and economic slavery but who once offered hospitality and safety lost their vision and became the oppressor.

And finally we will pray for the American Indian people who are now exiles in our own homelands. We will pray that the spiritual connection which the indigenous peoples of this land have cherished and maintained despite overwhelming odds and obstacles will continue to be the backbone and staff upon which this land rest.”

Use this piece in tandem with the telling of the Exodus story. Think about the connection between the Jewish story of Exodus from Egypt to more contemporary examples of persecution and forced

migration. How did the formation of the territory now known as the United States depend upon the forced migration of people already residing on the land?

The Hebrews' Exodus from Egypt is a climactic moment in the Passover story. After suffering for generations as slaves in Egypt, the Hebrews cross the Sea of Reeds and head into the desert with only matzah, the bread of affliction. Led by Miriam and Moses, the community seeks its freedom from slavery, oppression, and violence by wandering in the desert for forty years. Though this is a long struggle, the Hebrews' persistence leads them to the Promised Land.

More contemporary examples demonstrate that forced migrations are not a thing of the past. In 1863 and '64, the United States government forcibly removed the Navajo Nation from its ancestral homeland in Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado. Prior to this forced move, the US Army went to war with the Navajo and Apache tribes, destroying much of their community. The US Army, led by Kit Carson, then forced 8,500 Navajo people to march 400 miles to their internment in Bosque Redondo, a forty square-mile area. This is now known as the Navajo Long Walk.

Over 200 people died after walking through the harsh winter for two months. Many more perished after arriving in the barren Bosque Redondo reservation, where disease, crop failure, and poor irrigation made survival almost impossible. The Navajos also had their own "bread of affliction." They were given meager rations of only flour and coffee beans, but because the coffee beans were unfamiliar to this community, they tried to boil them and starved.

After the Navajo were recognized as a sovereign nation under the Treaty of 1868, they returned to their homeland on the Arizona- New Mexico border (one of very few tribes who were allowed to do so).

Though their lands were greatly reduced by the US Army and government, the Navajo worked hard to take care of their livestock and rebuild their community.

Can you draw parallels between the Jewish Exodus from Egypt and the Navajo Long Walk? What are the key similarities and differences between these histories? What do you know about the long-term effects of forced migration and persecution on contemporary American Indian communities?

As we observe Passover to commemorate the hardships of our ancestors, how can we act in solidarity with American Indian communities' histories of persecution, forced migration, and genocide?