

Our Pleasure Diminished By The Pain of Others

Contributed by [Machar Congregation](#)

Source: Machar

Leader:

Let us all refill our cups.

[Take turns reading. Each person is invited to read a grouped set of lines - or to pass.]

Tonight we drink four cups of the fruit of the vine.

There are many explanations for this custom.

They may be seen as symbols of various things:

the four corners of the earth, for freedom must live everywhere;

the four seasons of the year, for freedom's cycle must last through all the seasons;

or the four matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel.

A full cup of wine symbolizes complete happiness.

The triumph of Passover is diminished by the sacrifice of many human lives

when ten plagues were visited upon the people of Egypt.

In the story, the plagues that befell the Egyptians resulted from the decisions of tyrants,
but the greatest suffering occurred among those who had no choice but to follow.

It is fitting that we mourn their loss of life, and express our sorrow over their suffering.

For as Jews and as Humanists we cannot take joy in the suffering of others.

Therefore, let us diminish the wine in our cups

as we recall the ten plagues that befell the Egyptian people.

Leader:

As we recite the name of each plague, in English and then in Hebrew,
please dip a finger in your wine and then touch your plate to remove the drop.

Everyone:

Blood - Dam (Dahm)

Frogs - Ts'phardea (Ts'phar-DEH-ah)

Gnats - Kinim (Kih-NEEM)

Flies - Arov (Ah-ROV)

Cattle Disease - Dever (DEH-vehr)

Boils - Sh'hin (Sh'-KHEEN)

Hail - Barad (Bah-RAHD)

Locusts - `Arbeh (Ar-BEH)

Darkness - Hoshekh (KHO-shekh)

Death of the Firstborn - Makkat B'khorot (Ma-katB'kho-ROT)

[Take turns reading. Each person is invited to read a grouped set of lines - or to pass.]

In the same spirit, our celebration today also is shadowed

by our awareness of continuing sorrow and oppression in all parts of the world.

Ancient plagues are mirrored in modern tragedies.

In our own time, as in ancient Egypt, ordinary people suffer and die as a result of the actions of the tyrants who rule over them. While we may rejoice in the defeat of tyrants in our own time, we must also express our sorrow at the suffering of the many innocent people who had little or no choice but to follow.

Leader:

As the pain of others diminishes our joys,
let us once more diminish the ceremonial drink of our festival
as we together recite the names of these modern plagues:

Hunger

War

Tyranny

Greed

Bigotry

Injustice

Poverty

Ignorance

Pollution of the Earth Indifference to Suffering

Leader:

Let us sing a song expressing our hope for a better world.