

The Ten Plagues

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Source:



(image from JewBelong; text derived from Machar Congregation of DC's Haggadah)

Let us all refill our cups.

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 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.

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) דם

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

Gnats - Kinim (Kih-NEEM) כנים

Flies - Arov (Ah-ROV) ערוב

Cattle Disease - Dever (DEH-vehr) דבר

Boils - Sh'hin (Sh'-KHEEN) שחין

Hail - Barad (Bah-RAHD) ברד

Locusts - `Arbeh (Ar-BEH) ארבה

Darkness - Hoshekh (KHO-shekh) חושך

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

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.

As the pain of others diminishes our joys,
let us once more diminish the ceremonial drink of our festival
as we name some of the plagues of our own world:

Everyone is encouraged to call out names of plagues of today.
