

## Water, Bitter and Sweet

Contributed by [Truah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights](#)

Source:



*Picture drawn by an immigrant child detained at the Tornillo tent city, Tornillo, Texas, December 2018, shortly before the facility was closed. The quetzal is significant in Central American culture and mythology, including as a sign of spring and symbol of freedom. Photograph by Justin Hamel.*

As the Four Questions will soon point out, we dip twice in our seder. The two dippings are opposites. The first time, as we prepare to enter a world of slavery, we dip a green vegetable into saltwater, marring its life-giving freshness with the taste of tears and death. The second time, as we move towards redemption, we

moderate the bitterness of maror with the sweetness of charoset. Any time we find ourselves immersed in sadness and suffering, may we always have the courage to know that blessing is coming.

The dipping of karpas also recalls the Israelites' first stop after crossing the Red Sea, which was called Marah. After a three-day journey, they found water there, but it was bitter, undrinkable. God showed Moses a piece of wood to throw (dip) into the water, which made it potable. (Exodus 15:22-27)

Even after a major initial victory, our elation can collapse swiftly under the weight of the next steps we have to take. Karpas reminds us that the journey to freedom — like the seder — is long, and we have to pace ourselves.

This episode is also the source-text for the rabbis' instituting reading Torah on Mondays and Thursdays, so we never go more than three days without water/Torah. Karpas reminds us that on the long road to redemption, we have to make sure we stop and nourish ourselves wherever we can.