

KARPAS

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The saltwater on our table traditionally represents the tears of the Israelite slaves. The green vegetables we dip in the water suggest the possibility of growth and renewal even in the midst of grief.

The greens on the table also remind us of our commitment to protect the planet from ecological destruction. Instead of focusing narrowly on what we may “realistically” accomplish in today’s world, we must refocus the conversation on what the planet needs in order to survive and flourish. We must get out of the narrow place in our thinking and look at the world not as a resource, but as a focus for awe, wonder, and amazement. We must reject the societal story that identifies success and progress with endless growth and accumulation of things. Instead we will focus on acknowledging that we already have enough; we need to stop exploiting our resources and instead care for the earth.

We are descended from slaves, people who staged the first successful slave rebellion in recorded history. Ever since, our people has kept alive the story of liberation, and the consciousness that cruelty and oppression are not inevitable “facts of life” but conditions that can be changed.

The task may seem more overwhelming to us today than in previous moments. Today there is no longer some easily identifiable external evil force playing the role of Pharaoh. Instead, we live in an increasingly unified global economic and political system that brings well-being to some even as it increases the misery of others.

We are in the midst of a huge spiritual and environmental crisis. Our society has lost its way. Yet most of us

are even embarrassed to talk about this seriously, so certain are we that we could never do anything to transform this reality, and fearful that we will be met with cynicism and derision for even allowing ourselves to think about challenging the kind of technocratic and alienating rationality that parades itself as “progress” in the current world.

The Exodus story teaches us to see that all this could be changed.

We are the community of *Tikkun*, the Network of Spiritual Progressives of all faiths – the religious and spiritual community formed around the ancient Jewish idea that our task is to be partners with God in healing and transforming our world. We know that the world can be healed and transformed – that is the whole point of telling the Passover story. Our task is to find the ways to continue the struggle for liberation in our own times and in our own circumstances. Some of the steps include:

- a. Recognizing each other as allies in that struggle, and supporting each other even though we see each other’s flaws and inadequacies, and see our own as well.
- b. Pouring out love into the world, even when we don’t have a good excuse for giving that love to others, even when it seems corny or risky to do so – breaking down our own inner barriers to loving others and to loving ourselves.
- c. Rejecting the cynical view that everyone is out for himself or herself, that there is nothing but selfishness. Instead, we will allow ourselves to see that we are surrounded by people who would love to live in a world based on love and justice and peace if they thought that others would join them in building such a world.
- d. Taking the risks of being the first ones out in public to articulate an agenda of social change – even though being that person may mean risking economic security, physical security, and sometimes even risking the alienation of friends and family.
- e. Allowing ourselves to envision the world the way we really want it to be – and not getting stuck in spiritually crippling talk about what is “realistic.”

The story of Passover is about our people learning to overcome the “realistic” way of looking at the world. Tonight we want to affirm our connection with a different truth: that the world is governed by a spiritual power, by God, by the Force of Transformation and Healing, and that we are created in Her image, we are embodiments of the Spirit, and we have the capacity to join with each other and transform the world we are in.

Affirming that, we dip the greens on our Seder plate in joy at the beauty and goodness of this earth and its vegetation, and recommitting ourselves to do all we can to stop those processes in our society that are contributing to the destruction of the earth.

Dip the greens in saltwater and say blessing.

(from this point on you can eat anything on the table that is a vegetable or vegetable-based)