

The first time I heard a trafficking survivor speak many years ago, she told the story of her parents' trafficking her for sex from the time she was a young girl until she was an adult. I sat in horror, listening to her calm recollection of how both her mother and father trafficked her, sometimes leaving her for days at a time in a makeshift brothel when she was barely old enough to read and write.

Her story was my t'ruah – a decibel-defying call to action to open doors, pull back curtains, and shout from the rooftops the pain and suffering of trafficked individuals in our midst.

The call guides my work at the National Council of Jewish Women, alongside incredible and passionate advocates around the country, to raise awareness about trafficking in the United States, where children are bought and sold in every state, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

And the call informs my work to create lasting social change through legislative advocacy – working with lawmakers to address the systemic issues that allow trafficking to exist, including lack of education and opportunities, and passing legislation to reform the child welfare system, which effectively serves as a supply chain to traffickers.

The sound of the shofar, a sign of liberation, reminds me not only of one woman's unspeakable journey, but of my greater responsibility to ensure my call becomes a collective call to action for all of us in the Jewish community.

- Jody Rabhan,  
Chief Policy Officer,  
National Council of Jewish Women

וּרְחַץ

Ur'chatz

“The beauty of Ur'chatz was revealed to me during a women's seder. Each participant washed the hands of another with care and *kavanah* (intentionality) — and without words. The sisterhood created in the sacred silence elevates communal consciousness. How will we utilize this state of purity? *V'ahavta lere'akha kamokha* - to love the other as ourself.

How will this ancient wisdom propel us forward to empower the silent? How will we elevate the hands of all those still in *Mitzrayim* [Egypt/the narrow place]?”

- Rabbi Jessica K. Shimberg,  
Kehilat Sukkat Shalom,  
Columbus, Ohio

קִדְּשׁ

Kadesh

We begin our seder with the Kiddush, the sanctification of this moment in time.

The text of the Kiddush reminds us that the choice to uphold the sacred is in our hands. We do not directly bless wine, or praise its sweetness. Rather, we thank God for the fruit of the vine. That fruit can also be used to make vinegar, which is sharp and bitter. Our actions determine whether this sacred moment in time inspires bitterness or sweetness, complacency or action.

**Bless and drink the first cup of wine/grape juice.**

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ

מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

**Blessed are You ETERNAL our God, Sovereign of time and space,  
creator of the fruit of the vine.**

# כַּרְפָּס

## Karpas

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.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech* בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
*ha'olam borei pri ha'adamah.* הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרִי הָאָדָמָה.

**Blessed are You ETERNAL our God, Sovereign, of time and space,  
who creates the fruit of the earth.**

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.



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.