



**JEWS UNITED
FOR JUSTICE**

original art by Liora Ostroff

2020 SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER SPONSORS

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USING THIS YEAR'S SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER HAGGADAH

As an inclusive community centered around Jewish values and social justice, we welcome you to use and explore Jews United for Justice's 7th annual Social Justice Seder Haggadah. As is traditionally said at the Passover seder: "Let all who are hungry come and eat!" To that we add, "Let all who are eager come and act!"

In the wake of the global pandemic of COVID-19 (commonly known as coronavirus), our community is unable to physically come together for our Social Justice Seder this year. **But despite our physical distance, we are united in spirit, in hope, and in the relentless pursuit of justice — ever more so when our common humanity is made so apparent.**

We have published this Haggadah in hopes that you will use it in any of the following ways:

- Read it any time to learn more about the crucial need for paid family and medical leave (see more below)
- Use excerpts of it in your own Passover seder this year. Page breaks have been designed so that key sections — such as the four children, the four questions, the 10 plagues, etc. — can be easily printed on their own.
- Use it in its entirety as your Haggadah for an alternative Passover seder this year.
- Be inspired to share your own story; see the Call to Action at the end.

Throughout this Haggadah, we will learn about Maryland's Paid Family and Medical Leave bill, known as the Time to Care Act. The Time to Care Act will help all families in our state, especially those with low-paid or part-time employment who often have fewer financial resources to cope with extended or unexpected medical needs. All Marylanders who work — whether new parents, single parents, people with chronic conditions, families of military personnel, low-income and part-time workers, small business employees, or self-employed people — need time to care for relatives or themselves. This bill:

- Provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave for the birth of a child, to care for a sick or injured family member, to address family matters related to a service member's deployment, or to recover from your own serious health condition;
- Calls for a progressive wage replacement: paid leave includes ninety percent of wages less than \$38,580/year, plus 50% of earnings above that amount. Total benefit is capped at \$1,000 per week.¹
- Distributes benefits from an insurance fund made up of equal contributions from both employers and employees, at a reasonable rate.²

Many people have been directly affected by the issues addressed in this Haggadah. We'll learn about some of their stories here. Whether you're learning about this issue for the first time or are well acquainted with it already, whether you've been to dozens of seders or have never attended one before, you can both contribute to and learn from your seder experience with this Haggadah. We hope to end our seders, wherever they happen, feeling like a *kehillah kedoshah*, a sacred community, who work together to stand up for the rights and dignity of all our neighbors.

¹ As currently drafted, subject to amendment.

² As currently drafted, an employee making the minimum wage of \$11/hour in 2020 and working 40 hours/week (\$22,880/year) would contribute \$1.47/week out of their weekly paycheck of \$440. Those working half-time would contribute less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of 1% of their weekly pay (\$ 0.73.3/week).

WHY A SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER

The Passover seder serves many purposes. First and foremost, it is a ritualized celebration of the biblical Israelites' dramatic journey from slavery to freedom. But even from its earliest days, the seder was not just about history. As the format of the seder was finalized in Mishnaic and Talmudic times (50 BCE - 500 CE), rituals were included to make participants feel as if they were personally experiencing the journey from slavery to freedom. The Passover seder has always been a lens through which to see the contemporary world.

We know too well that the fight for justice and freedom is a fight that continues throughout time and space. The Passover seder teaches us that just as we alone could not free ourselves from *Mitzrayim* ("the narrow place," the Biblical name for ancient Egypt), **we have an obligation to fight for the freedom of all peoples in every generation.** The injustices of the world are many, but the Passover story, as *Pirkei Avot*, an ancient Jewish code of ethics, teaches: "It is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."

When we use this haggadah, we continue in this tradition; we strive to move closer to justice and to freedom.

WHY A SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER ABOUT PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE IN MARYLAND?

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse," says the book of Deuteronomy, "choose life, that you and your children may live."³ The conviction that we have both the freedom and the responsibility to choose how we will act and live not only lies at the very heart of the Passover seder, but also defines Jewish theology and spirituality.

As we will learn throughout this haggadah, when individuals and families do not have access to Paid Family and Medical Leave, they are prevented from exercising their sacred right to choose how they will act and live. They are obstructed from "choosing life" by choosing health. Their choices are constrained by the economic reality of our social construct. Our tradition teaches that in a society where some are oppressed, all are implicated.

This year, let us choose health, let us choose freedom.

As slaves under Pharaoh's regime, Israelite families suffered physical and mental health traumas too numerous to list. Although not slaves today, many families in Maryland suffer the physical and mental health tolls of returning to work too soon after childbirth, working while undergoing serious medical treatments, juggling work and caring for a loved one, or scrambling to plan for a spouse's sudden military deployment. In 2018, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that only 16% of US workers in private industry, and only 25% of state and local government employees, had access to paid family leave.⁴

Families in Maryland cannot continue this kind of life. They need to be free to "choose life," to choose health. In the Babylonian Talmud, the rabbis state that, "in contrast to other animals,

³ Deuteronomy 30.19

⁴ ["Family and Medical Leave Insurance," Maryland Department of Legislative Services, Dec. 2019.](#)

human beings are always held responsible.”⁵ For them, the meaning of human freedom is not that we can decide whether or not we are responsible for others (we know that we are), but that we can decide whether or not we will live up to that responsibility. The Jewish peoples’ fidelity to Torah will be measured, in large part, by the kind of society, and by the kind of social relationships, we create.

Let us choose choice, let us choose freedom.

Currently, too many Marylanders are unable to take time away from work to care for new babies, aging parents, ailing loved ones, or their own serious health condition, without losing vital household income.

More than 20 years ago, in an article titled “What is the Point of Equality?” the philosopher Elizabeth S. Anderson examined a troubling and strange feature of our country’s current social contract.⁶ When a person is laid off from a job, a situation not in their control nor of their own fault, they are eligible for unemployment benefits. But if a person needs to stop working to care for a new baby, other family members, or themselves, they are on their own. There is no public benefit, no safety net.

This unethical contradiction, in which “the desire to procreate is just another expensive taste,” reflects a sexist assumption that leaves primarily women on their own to support themselves and their families. This cultural attitude should prompt us to rethink how our society functions. What kind of society and social relationships do we want to create and sustain? From a global standpoint, in this regard, our society stands nearly alone.

Let us choose family, let us choose freedom.

In this Haggadah, we remember our ancient ancestors’ struggles and journey toward justice and liberation. We may read and sing together from this social justice Haggadah, which is a contemporary interpretation of an ancient commentary on the Israelites’ exodus from *Mitzrayim*. It is also the book that guides us through our Passover ritual. We shall recite an interpretation of the holiday’s traditional four questions, engage four types of children, and as we drink four ritual cups of wine (or juice), we will discover both ancient and modern Jewish ways of interrogating our society and world with the steadfast hope that next year we move closer toward a just society. We hope to inspire you to take action. Like our ancestors of old, it is time for us to cry out against injustice. This year, we choose a just life, this year, we choose freedom.

And we should be encouraged. The leadership of the General Assembly has said that the Time to Care Act has a good chance of moving forward, but they need to see strong community support to move it. This issue could be winnable in the next few years. JUFJ already has a track record of engaging our grassroots base to win important labor reforms in Maryland, including Earned Sick and Safe Leave and the \$15 Minimum wage. JUFJ was already a lead organization in the successful campaign to pass Paid Family and Medical Leave in Washington, DC, and is now working on strong implementation of the policy. We have an incredible opportunity to make this happen.

Let us choose freedom, let us pass The Time to Care Act.

⁵ Bava Kamma 2:2

⁶ [Elizabeth S. Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality,” Ethics, vol. 109, no. 2 \(Jan 1999\), pp. 287-337.](#)

CANDLE LIGHTING

We take time to light candles, which serve not only to sanctify our gathering, but as a reminder throughout the night of those in search of light in this world.

We also say the *shehecheyanu*, a blessing of thanks for bringing us together again this season, in whatever form that means for us this year.

Recite together:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב

*Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who makes us holy with *mitzvot* and commands us to kindle the light of the festival day.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

*Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam,
shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigianu lazeman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

[Click here to listen to the shehecheyanu prayer.](#)

TABLE DISCUSSION

Havruta is a Jewish practice of deeply studying a text together with another person to learn what that text can teach us. We encourage you to find a partner or two to read the text study below, and discuss the questions that follow.

TEXT STUDY

In a widely cited verse in the Torah, we are commanded:

“Do not oppress the hired laborer who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your people or one of the sojourners in your land within your gates. Give him his wages in daytime, and do not let the sun set on them, for he is poor, and his life depends on them, lest he cry out to God about you, for this will be counted as a sin for you.”⁷

According to this passage, workers should never fear that they will not receive their wages. According to rabbis in the Talmud, this also includes work that was not completed due to unexpected incidents like the weather, illness, etc.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. More than half of Maryland workers — 1.1 million people — work in small businesses. Many small businesses can't afford to provide paid family and medical leave, even when business owners want to provide those benefits. How does The Time to Care Act help employers ensure that, in the spirit of Torah, their “employees will receive their wages?” What are the pros and cons of creating a public insurance fund to care for our community members, rather than relying on private employers to provide this benefit?
2. Employees who have access to paid family and medical leave report higher job satisfaction and loyalty, factors that increase productivity. Have you ever had to leave or change a job you enjoyed due to not having paid leave time? Have you ever feared you may not be able to maintain your income when having to care for yourself or others?
3. Does the current public health crisis related to COVID-19 (coronavirus) change the way you think about any of the above questions?

⁷ Deuteronomy 24:14-15

B'CHOL DOR VA'DOR (IN EVERY GENERATION)

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר

In every generation, each person is obligated to see ourselves as if we had personally left *Mitzrayim*. This obligation ensures that we remain empathetic to anyone experiencing oppression and slavery, and that we work in solidarity with those seeking liberation.

According to a well-known Midrash, Pharaoh placed “a heavy burden on a child and a light burden on an adult; a man’s burden on a woman and a woman’s burden on a man; the burden of an elderly person on a youth, and the burden of a youth on an elderly person.”⁸ **Caring for loved ones should not be a financial burden or hardship for anyone.** Yet the lack of paid leave forces people to make difficult decisions about how to provide necessary care and whether they can afford to take unpaid time away from work in order to do so. In our current moment when schools are closed and the number of people falling ill with COVID-19 grows every day, caregiving is becoming a challenge for more families than ever.

Let us learn from these experiences how vital paid family and medical leave is. Let us come out of this crisis ready to fight, to ensure that no one has to choose between the paycheck that lets them feed their family and the time they need to care for them. That egregious choice is a burden no one deserves. **Our generations must resist becoming like the Pharaoh.**

Sing together:

עֲבָדִים הָיינוּ הָיינוּ. עֲתָה בְנֵי חוֹרִין

Avadim hayinu l'pharaoh b'Mitzrayim, ata b'nai chorin

We were slaves to Pharaoh in *Mitzrayim*, now we are free

[Click here to listen to this song](#)

FIRST CUP OF WINE: THE CHILD

The first cup of wine is for our children. “A baby should be as well looked after as a king, a high priest, and a learned man.”⁹ The Hebrew word for infant is *tinok*, which means “suckling.” In Judaic literature, the word *tinok* is applied as long as the baby nurses¹⁰ — according to Rabbi Eliezer, the first twenty-four months; and according to Rabbi Joshua, up to five years of age.¹¹ The Time to Care Act asks for a modest 12 weeks to allow a mother, father, or primary caregiver time to nurture and bond with a newborn, or to care for a sick child.

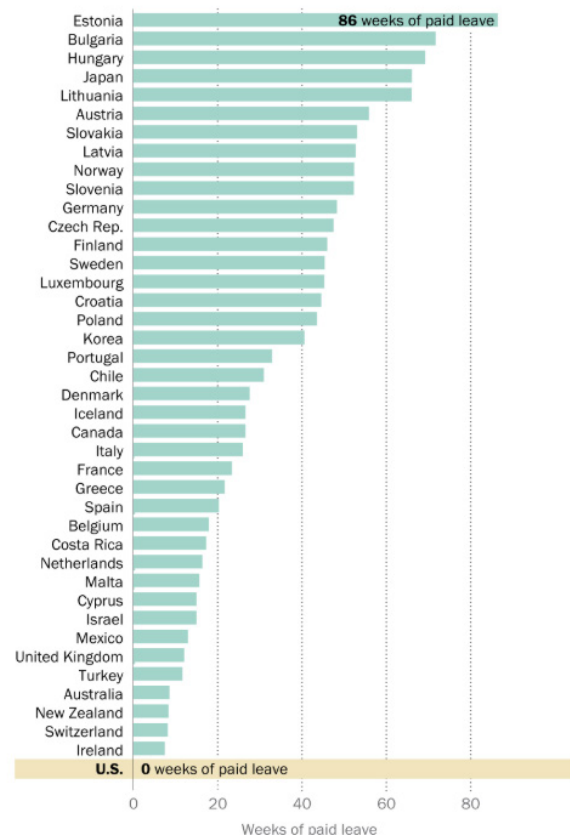
The US is the only industrialized nation in the world without mandated paid maternity leave, and many countries mandate paid paternity or gender non-specific parental leave as well.¹² Today, nearly 25% of new mothers take 10 or fewer days off for maternity leave, and 3 out of 4 new fathers take one week or fewer off when their babies are born. Nearly 60% of low-income fathers report taking no time off after the birth or adoption of a child. Mounting research shows that longer periods of leave have positive effects on maternal mental and physical health, reduce the incidents of child maltreatment, and promote more positive paternal involvement in their children’s lives.¹³

As we bless our first cup, let us be guided by Torah, which commands that parents may not sacrifice their children neither to a foreign deity,¹⁴ nor, by extension, to the demands of our work, which limit our ability to care for our children.

[Fill your cup]

U.S. ranks last in government-mandated paid leave for new parents

Total weeks of paid leave mandated by national government to new parents



9 A. Jellinek, *Beit Hamidrash*, 11:96.

10 Kettubot 60a; Iggerot Moshe 2:6

11 Kettubot 60a; Yevamot 43a

12 G. Livingston & D. Thomas. “Among 41 Countries, Only U.S. Lacks Paid Parental Leave.” Pew Research Center, December 16, 2019.

13 L. Weeldreyer, Op-Ed, *Washington Post*, January 24, 2020 (Executive Director of Maryland Family Network).

14 Leviticus 20:1

Raise the first cup high in the air, to be out of reach from others, just as actually taking time to care is out of reach of so many.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,

Creator of the fruit of the vine.

[Click here to listen to this prayer.](#)

MIRYAM'S CUP

Miryam's cup was added to many Passover seders in the twentieth century to recognize the often silent and unnoticed role of women in the Passover story. We fill Miryam's cup with water, not wine, in remembrance of the life-giving well of water that followed the Israelites through the desert as a reward for Miryam's courage and dedication to her people. As the Talmud states, "If it wasn't for the righteousness of the women of that generation, we would not have been redeemed from Egypt."¹⁵

Miryam may have been the first person in our history to have been granted Time to Care. She was a Hebrew and therefore a slave, but was freed from her duties to care for her baby brother Moses, who was recovered in the river by the Pharaoh's daughter. Later, she persuaded Pharaoh's daughter to release Yocheved, Moses' mother, from her other duties so that she could care for her baby until he was old enough to wean. The Torah also tells us that Miryam and Yocheved were in fact even paid for their work while staying home to care for the baby.¹⁶

We fill Miryam's Cup to honor all mothers and primary caretakers who fight for the freedom to care for their newborns and children in need without sacrificing their wages.

Who are the righteous caregivers in your life, and in our society at large, that you are thankful for?

[Click here to listen to "Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman](#)

¹⁵ Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 9a

¹⁶ Exodus 2:9

YACHATZ - THE BREAKING OF THE MIDDLE MATZAH

There are three symbolic pieces of matzah in the center of a seder table. The breaking of the middle matzah is one of many rituals that transform the food of the seder into symbols of meaning. We are told that the matzah is the bread of affliction, of poverty and persecution, of stretching one meal into two.

In tearing the matzah in half, we shake ourselves out of complacency. We express the anger and fear that occurs when our need to care for ourselves and our families is not protected. With the physicality of tearing, we move through anger so we can shift into action. The breaking of the matzah is a small act of empowerment.

As you break the middle matzah, imagine a world where we are not torn between work and family, not breaking our commitment to either.

HA LACHMA ANYA

Hold up or point to the matzah on the table as you say:

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate as they fled Mitzrayim. It was made in haste, and is devoid of nutritional value. Today, too many caregivers lack the time or money to provide nutritious meals for themselves and their loved ones. Balancing work and intensive caregiving can increase reliance on highly processed, low-nutrition convenience food. That is today's "bread of affliction".

All who are hungry, let them come and eat. All who are in need, let them come and celebrate Passover with us. Now we see people facing impossible choices; next year may their burdens be eased. Now we are enslaved to the status quo; next year may we all be free people with time to care for ourselves and our loved ones.

SECOND CUP OF WINE: THE ELDERLY PARENT

The second cup is for those caring for an elderly parent. “Honor your mother and your father,” the fifth commandment reads, “so that your days may be long on the soil that the Lord your God has given you.”¹⁷ For many ancient and medieval rabbis, honoring parents was akin to honoring God. Our tradition teaches that none of us should have to choose between earning a living and caring for an elderly parent.

Nearly one in three US households provide care for an adult loved one with a serious illness or disability. With an aging population, these numbers will only increase. In less than 15 years, the share of Maryland’s population age 65 and older will grow by nearly 30%.¹⁸

Most of us will be responsible for some type of caregiver role with elderly parents. Transitioning into old age is not easy. Finding the right balance for our parents’ wellness and contentment should not be a burden we endure alone. Working people need time to figure out the best way to provide the essentials necessary to the dignity and physical and emotional well-being of their parents.

These tasks may include self-feeding, functional mobility, dressing, bathing or showering, personal hygiene, and toilet hygiene. Other tasks may include cooking and preparing meals, cleaning and maintaining the home, shopping, running errands, managing money and paying bills, speaking or communicating on the phone or through other devices, and taking prescribed medications.

The Time To Care Act takes into consideration the unique challenges and burdens of caring for elderly parents. As we bless our second cup, let us fulfill the commandment to honor our parents by ensuring we all have access to Time to Care.

[Fill your cup]

Rise in body or in spirit with your cup, just as we must rise to respond to the call to advocate for what is just, tell our stories, and face those who block our way.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

[Click here to listen to this prayer.](#)

¹⁷ Exodus 20:12

¹⁸ “Paid Leave Means a Stronger Maryland Fact Sheet,” The National Partnership for Women and Families, January 2019.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Reader:

The four questions are not truly four questions at all. Rather, this section of the Passover seder poses one central question — *how is this night different than all other nights?* — and offers four answers to explain the meaning of our seder rituals.

Instead of this traditional question, we compel our community and our leaders to ask, and to answer:

Everyone:

Why don't we have Time To Care?

Sing Together:

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

Mah nishtanah halailah hazeh mi'kol ha'leilot?

[Click here to listen to the tune.](#)

Readers:

1. The status quo is entrenched in our society. Old fashioned views of a woman's role as an unpaid caregiver, and not as a critical income earner, persist in the assumptions of our economy.
2. We are told we can't afford a publicly funded paid family leave program, despite its success in almost every other country on Earth, and in states like New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and California.¹⁹
3. Small businesses, which employ 50% of Maryland's workforce, don't have the capital on hand to provide a paid family leave benefit on their own — even if they want to. They need everyone to go in on it together.²⁰
4. Those who oppose the bill have been louder than the advocates, many of whom are too busy working and caregiving to have their voices heard!

Recite Together:

But tonight, we **will** be heard. Tonight, we will raise our voices together to fight for the dignity of our families.

¹⁹ [“Paid Leave Works: Evidence from State Programs”; September, 2019 National Partnership for Women and Families.](#)

²⁰ [“Voices of Main Street: Paid Family and Medical Leave Stories from Small Business Owners,” The Main Street Alliance, Summer 2019.](#)

THE SEDER PLATE

The Seder Plate contains foods that are traditional symbols of Passover, each helping us to remember and recreate different aspects of the Passover story.

Hold up each symbol, if you have it, as you read the corresponding explanation. Take time to discuss the question posed at the end of each section.

Karpas (green vegetable) - Karpas represents the fresh fruits and vegetables we plant and harvest, as well as the flourishing period of the Jewish community prior to the period of slavery in Egypt. Just like plants, we need time to cultivate the life and health of our families and ourselves. *What do you do in your own life that you find nourishing for yourself and your family?*

Maror (bitter herb) - We eat the maror to remind us of the bitterness of the Israelites' suffering as they worked without pay, without relief. Today we still work without the guarantee that we will have the time to care for ourselves and our families. The Israelites became embittered by their forced labor, so much so that they were ultimately prevented from entering the promised land. It would be easy for us to become like the Israelites, to become bitter when we don't have the ability to take care of ourselves, a new child, or an ailing parent, and to allow the structural unfairness to keep us from crying out and demanding change. May this taste of bitter herbs wake our senses and encourage us to fight through that bitterness and prevent our own complacency. *How does the burden of both working and caregiving embitter your life?*

Egg - An egg is fragile, but its thin shell provides just enough to protect the tender new life from a rough world. Much like an egg's shell, the Time to Care Act provides just enough to protect us from life's precariousness and challenges. *Without this protective shell, how much more vulnerable do we become to life-changing events?*

Shank Bone/Beetroot - The Israelites used lambs' blood to publicly mark their doors as a signal to the Angel of Death to pass over their homes and spare the lives of those under that roof. *What kind of public markers and stigmas exist for those who take time off of work to care for themselves or their families, and does this change depending on gender?* The vegetarian version of the shank bone is the beetroot, whose red juice resembles blood. *What is the historical root of the injustice forcing people to choose between family and work?*

Charoet - This fruit and nut mixture symbolises the mortar the enslaved Israelites worked with to build Pharaoh's palaces. Just like the work done by the Israelites, caregiving work is often unpaid labor. People cannot afford to take time to care for themselves and their families if they are not receiving a paycheck. Just like an appropriate mortar mixture is necessary to hold the bricks together, families require the proper mixture of financial security and time together to hold strong. *What are the bonds that hold your family together?*

Matzah - The Israelites did not have time to bake bread before they left the house of bondage, so they carried unleavened bread, matzah. When Maryland military personnel are deployed, they and their families often do not have much time to prepare. *When we don't have this time to care, how can we provide real and substantial nourishment for our families and ourselves?*

Orange - The orange on the seder plate symbolizes our commitment to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer folks, and our dedication to work towards a more fruitful community where all are welcome at our table. The orange is not part of the traditional seder, but a later addition by a Jewish feminist scholar in the 1980s. Susannah Heschel's addition posed the question of whether the Passover seder was sufficient, or whether it needed to be expanded, and we should be following her lead. The Time to Care bill should be the start of a larger conversation of what our society should be providing to every individual. Just as the orange was a way to ask "who is missing?," we need to also be asking who is being left out of the laws and protections that our government currently offers. *Who needs space at our table, and how can we make it for them?*

THE FOUR CHILDREN

The haggadah presents four questioning children who approach the seder in four different ways. At traditional seders, we begin with the wise child and end with the child who doesn't know how to ask questions. But here, we have flipped the order. Why is this night different from all other nights? Because on this night, we may have begun by not knowing what questions to ask or even what the issues are, but like the child who asks the most probing questions, we will end up wiser, knowing that all Maryland workers deserve a paid family and medical leave program so that they will not have to choose between their families and their work.

The Child Who Doesn't Know How to Ask

This child doesn't know that they can question anything at all. They accept the reality they are handed. They are complacent, assuming that they can't have the time they need to care for themselves or a loved one.

We encourage this child to question more, by telling them how many other countries offer Paid Family and Medical Leave. We tell them that pediatricians recommend a minimum of 12 weeks of parental paid time off,²¹ and how the Time to Care Act makes it economically feasible for employers of all sizes to provide this benefit. We tell them that Paid Family and Medical Leave should be seen as a human right, and encourage them to start questioning the lack of justice and dignity present in our state.

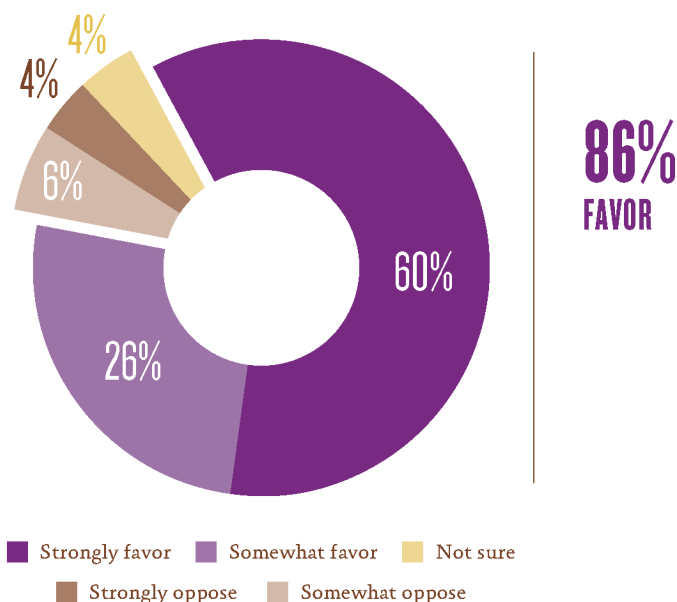
The Simple Child

The simple child asks: Why does this mother go back to work so soon after the birth of her child? Why doesn't that father take time off from work to bond with his child? Why is this grandmother alone in the hospital? Why isn't anyone with her, looking out for her? Why is this ill person still working instead of staying home to rest and heal?

We respond to the simple child with a simple, yet devastating answer: they can't afford not to.

The vast majority of people in Maryland are in favor of a paid family and medical leave law.²² To those who oppose it, we need to explain that the program is affordable, and how much good it will do to stabilize family finances, improve the health and well being of new parents, and reduce costly employee turnover.

The Time to Care Act will ensure that workers can keep earning income when they take the time they need to care for themselves or loved ones, so that they no longer have to choose between working and caring for themselves and their families.



²¹ [Paid Family Leave In The US: A Pediatrician's View : Shots - Health News](#)

²² [Time To Care, Maryland Family Network](#)

The Wicked Child

The wicked child separates themselves from the rest of the community by asking, “what does this mean to *you*?” For “you” and not for “us.” A traditional interpretation teaches us that the wicked child does not think that our traditions are relevant to their own life.

In our modern struggle for justice, the wicked child is ignorant of the vulnerabilities and suffering of others in their community, unaware that there are wrongs to be righted. Perhaps they are financially able to take unpaid leave from work when needed, or they already have generous family leave benefits from their employer.²³ Perhaps they don’t plan to have children, they are healthy, their parents aren’t ill. They look around and see only others who are like them, and wonder, “why are you bothering yourself with this issue?”

This child must be exposed to a wider perspective, to life experiences beyond their own. As a community, we must work to develop this child’s sense of curiosity about and empathy for those they see as apart from themselves.

To learn more about others’ stories, we recommend the documentary [Zero Weeks](#), available for rent or purchase on YouTube or other platforms, which features JUFJ campaigning for paid family and medical leave in DC.

The Wise Child

The wise child seeks to delve deeper into the impact paid family and medical leave would have on communities, and asks hard questions aimed at finding real solutions. The wise child asks: How much paid leave time is ideal, and what percentage of wage replacement is enough to sustain families? Why is it beneficial to have government mandated and supported family and medical leave, rather than allowing individual companies to determine their own leave policies? How do we encourage people of all genders to equally divide caregiving responsibilities so that women do not experience negative workplace effects? What other support might people need during a time when they incur additional expenses, such as medical bills or the cost of raising a child?

As it is written in the Torah, the wise child proposes:

כִּי־יִמּוֹךְ אָחִיד וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עַמּוּךְ וְהִחֲזִיקָהּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחֵי עַמּוּךְ

Strengthen the person so that he does not fall and become dependent on others.²⁴

The wise child is eager to partake in the Jewish tradition of questioning the world in which we live. We should encourage this child’s passion and curiosity by engaging them in conversation and helping them learn from those who are directly impacted by these issues. We must also teach this child that questioning is not merely about learning, but also seeking to act in a manner that helps promote justice in the community.

23 Under the current version of the Time to Care Act, employers that offer paid leave that is equal to or more generous than the benefits of the bill can continue to offer such benefits to their employees and “opt out” of participating in the new program. In such a case, neither the employer nor the employee would have payroll deductions applied.

24 Leviticus 25:35

10 PLAGUES OF NOT HAVING TIME TO CARE

During the Israelites' journey to freedom, God brought ten plagues upon the Egyptian people, which we recite together at our seders while we pour out our wine in remembrance of the suffering they caused. Today, we read ten modern plagues we face without the Time to Care.

As each plague is named, pour a small amount from your cup onto your plate. You may also dip your pinky and shake off a drop for each plague.

Recite Together:

1. **Fear:** having to choose between earning a paycheck or caring for an ailing family member, newborn baby, ill child, or yourself.
2. **Lost Wages:** The financial inability to take unpaid time off from work.
3. **Relapse:** Not healing properly because of returning to work too soon.
4. **Contagion:** In the wake of the spread of COVID-19 (the coronavirus), not having PFML is a public health liability.
5. **Stress:** Right now, schools are closing with no notice because of a possible pandemic and parents are left with no time to seek alternative child care.
6. **Frenzy:** Soldiers can be deployed at a moment's notice, leaving a single parent home alone to deal with childcare and household responsibilities.
7. **Vulnerability:** Knowing that you will not be able to care for your child, parent, or spouse while at their most vulnerable, or that your child, partner, or parent will not be able to care for you when you are at your most vulnerable.
8. **Resentment:** Difficulty investing in an employer who is not vested in our ability to care for ourselves and our families.
9. **Fragility:** All security can be lost in the unexpected instance of serious and prolonged illness.
10. **Detachment:** The inability to bond with a newborn because of the inability to afford 12 weeks away from work.

THIRD CUP OF WINE

The third cup of wine is for our military families. The Torah commands that “When a man has taken a bride, he shall not go out with the army or be assigned to it for any purpose; he shall be exempt for one year for the sake of his household.”²⁵ Our tradition values military families, and so does the Time to Care Act.

Fewer than 1% of U.S. adults are active duty service members,²⁶ and their families bear burdens that most cannot imagine. On Passover we are commanded to tell our people’s story as if we ourselves came out of *Mitzrayim*. It is within our tradition to imagine ourselves in others’ shoes, to be in fellowship with those whose life experiences differ from our own.

When a service member is called up for deployment, their partners are faced not just with the emotional toll of that impending separation, but also with the logistical challenges of re-arranging the rhythms of their household. A service member’s working partner may need to make new childcare arrangements if they counted on the service member to be home with the kids during their work shifts. They may need to make alternate arrangements to care for the service member’s parent who lives with them. They will have any number of time-consuming logistics to figure out, such as arranging bank accounts for being abroad, shipping personal items, putting the service member’s car in storage, or suspending phone service. If you work retail, customer service, on a factory floor, or as an ER nurse, how are you supposed to find the time to address these realities?

And let’s not forget the emotional toll. Imagine your partner was suddenly going to be away for six to twelve months, with a risk of not coming home at all. Imagine having young children who are scared and don’t understand what is happening. Families should have time to be together in the days and weeks leading up to deployment, without risking financial ruin. When that service member gets their “rest and recuperation” (R&R) leave with an opportunity to visit home, their working loved ones should be able to take time off to be with them, regardless of their employer’s paid vacation policy. Imagine a service member comes home from their deployment with a significant injury or mental health condition that needs to be addressed. Their working loved one needs this Time to Care.

The Time to Care Act includes specific provisions that address these unique challenges, burdens, and realities faced by military families. As we bless our third cup, let us commit to understanding the unique experiences of all families, whether alike, or unlike our own, and insist that our public policies be shaped to protect us all.

[Click here to learn about Tracie’s story.](#)

[Fill your cup]

Hold your cup with both hands, to symbolize the coordinated effort it takes to manage and care for a household.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha’olam, borei p’ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

[Click here to listen to this prayer.](#)

²⁵ Deuteronomy 24:5

²⁶ [Kristin Bialik, “5 facts about US veterans,” Pew Research Center, November 10, 2017.](#)

FOURTH CUP OF WINE

The fourth cup of wine is for each of us. None of us know if or when we will be afflicted by a serious illness or injury ([Click here](#) for the most current information on reported COVID-19 cases in Maryland). Without access to longer term paid medical leave — more than just a few days per year for colds and stomach bugs — workers face brutal circumstances. Should someone have to work while enduring the harsh side effects of chemotherapy? Should someone risk their long term health to return to work too soon after surgery? Though the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides unpaid job protection to some workers,²⁷ if someone cannot afford to go unpaid during that time, they will return to work when they should be caring for their health.

The Time to Care Act will provide job protection to a larger proportion of working Marylanders,²⁸ and, most importantly, provide critically needed income during a period of extended health-related leave. Paid leave will enable workers to take care of themselves and quickly return to the workforce.²⁹ They will be less likely to rely on other government safety net programs during their leave, and can return to their job without incurring the stress and cost (to both themselves and employers) of turnover. Nearly one in four workers in Maryland are age 55 or older,³⁰ and older workers are more likely to experience serious medical conditions. **No one, of any age, should have to choose between taking time to care for themselves or returning to work in order to maintain an income.**

We all need the time to care for ourselves and we need it now, more than ever.

[Fill your cup]

*Hold your glass out with your right hand. If appropriate for your gathering, join your left hand with your neighbor's glass (**seriously, only if it's a person in your household, who doesn't have symptoms of coronavirus**). We connect to each other as we do when we ask for healing and health.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

[Click here to listen to this prayer.](#)

²⁷ Only those who work at companies of 50+ employees, and who have been employed for at least 12 months, working at least 24 hours per week.

²⁸ All workers regardless of company size, who have worked at least 680 hours within the prior 12 months; for someone working full time (40 hours/week), that is ~4 months of work.

²⁹ In this time of coronavirus, we acknowledge that the current job losses due to closing businesses would not be protected by a PFML program.

³⁰ "Paid Leave Means A Stronger Maryland Fact Sheet," [The National Partnership for Women and Families, January 2019](#)

BRICH RACHAMANA - GIVING THANKS FOR OUR FOOD

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא, מַלְכָּא דְּעָלְמָא מְרִיךְ דְּהָאֵי פִתָּא

Brich rachamana malka d'alma ma'arey d'hai pita

Blessed is the merciful One, Ruler of the world, Creator of this bread.

SANCTUARY

HaShem prepare me to be a Sanctuary
Pure and Holy, Tried and True

[Click here to listen to this song aloud.](#)

CALL TO ACTION - SHARE YOUR STORY

Make a 1-3 minute video sharing YOUR experience needing Time to Care.

Use your phone or computer to record yourself.

[Upload your video here.](#)

Thank you for using this haggadah to learn more about the Time to Care Act, the paid medical and family leave bill for Maryland workers. While this seder has come to an end, our advocacy for all Maryland workers to enjoy wage replacement for the time they need to care for themselves and/or family members has not. As we conclude our seder, we individually and collectively ask, what else can we do to bring about the passage of this law?

We encourage you to bring tonight's message of paid family and medical leave to your colleagues at work, your friends and your family. Additionally, we ask you to prepare to email your Delegates and State Senator, as well as the Speaker of the House of Delegates and the President of the Senate when the Time to Care Act is reintroduced during next year's General Assembly legislative session.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah, may we:

“Learn to do good, seek justice. Relieve the oppressed, defend the orphan and plead for the widow.”³¹

³¹ Isaiah 1.17

GLOSSARY

Haggadah: The Hebrew word for “telling” or “narrative,” it is the name of the text that sets out the order of the Passover seder. Reading the Haggadah fulfills the Torah commandment that we must tell our children about our liberation from slavery in *Mitzrayim*.

HaShem: Literally translate to “the name.” The word “HaShem” refers to God.

Mishna: An authoritative collection of Jewish law compiled around 200 CE. The Mishna is based off earlier oral collections of Jewish law (also known as the oral Torah).

Mitzrayim: The Hebrew word for historical Egypt, ruled by Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus. The word *Mitzrayim* can be traced to its Hebrew root, *tzar*, meaning a narrow place of hardship and oppression.

Passover: The name of this holiday comes from the Hebrew word, *pesach*, whose root is to pass through, to pass over, to exempt, or to spare (referring to the story that G-d passed over the homes of the Israelites when slaying the firstborn in *Mitzrayim* during the tenth plague). *Pesach* is also the term for the sacrificial offering of a lamb that was made in the Temple on this holiday.

Pharaoh: The dictatorial leader of *Mitzrayim* who entrenched the enslavement of the Israelites.

Pirkei Avot: A tractate of the Mishnah that deals with ethical teachings.

Seder: A Hebrew word meaning “order,” this is what we call the ritual festive meal celebrated on the first one or two nights of Passover. The meal is called a seder because there is specific information and rituals that must be included, and tradition has come to specify a particular order for the rituals.

Talmud: Discussions and elaborations on the Mishna’s collection of Jewish law, compiled around the year 600.

Torah: The Hebrew name for the part of the Bible that consists of the Five Books of Moses.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

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The Maryland Family Network and the Time to Care Coalition, for inspiring and leading us to act on this issue and for the important work that they do to make Maryland a more just place for all. Learn more at marylandfamilynetwork.org/timetocare/

Ky Dickens and her film [Zero Weeks](#). Watch it on YouTube or elsewhere.

Those who donated their tickets and sponsorships to JUFJ, to so generously support this and all JUFJ programs.

Everyone who took the time to use this haggadah with your own community, and believes in our power to create a better, more just Maryland. We are honored to be working alongside you!

WE NEED YOU!

If you are interested in joining next year’s Baltimore Social Justice Seder committee, please contact Rianna at rianna@jufj.org. We welcome your ideas, energy, and enthusiasm!

ABOUT JEWS UNITED FOR JUSTICE

Since our founding in 1998, JUFJ has led Jews across Greater Washington and Baltimore to act on our shared Jewish values by pursuing justice and equality in our local community.

One day, everyone in the Washington-Baltimore region will have what they need to live and thrive, and a real voice in democracy, no matter the color of their skin, where they are from, or how much money they have. Our government will focus on equity and justice, and will respond to the needs of poor and working people, whether Black, brown, or white, who were once systemically barred from resources and power. We work so that our Jewish community is a proud and valued partner in bringing about that day through multiracial, multifait, cross-class movements working for social, racial, and economic justice.

Through organizing campaigns, education and training forums, and large-scale events, JUFJ builds relationships and mobilizes the Jewish community to demand and win meaningful change for all area residents. Our work is grounded in Jewish text and tradition, and the historical Jewish experience of both persecution and privilege. JUFJ helps Jews live out our sacred, shared tradition of tikkun olam by working in solidarity with local partners for a more just and equal region and world.

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FOR JUSTICE**
THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.