



Putting Social Justice on the Table.

A supplement for Passover Haggadot
created by the PJTC SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Putting **Social Justice** on the Table.

JUSTICE, JUSTICE
צדק צדק תרדף SHALL YOU PURSUE!
pjtcsocialjustice.wordpress.com

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In addition to its specific meanings for the Jewish people, Passover evokes and embodies broader social justice themes of resistance, freedom, and redemption. With this in mind, the PJTC Social Justice Committee has compiled this Haggadah supplement in order to amplify and deepen the Jewish connections to social justice and to underscore their application to the world we live in today.

Our purpose is not to write an alternative Haggadah, but to offer a considered collection of readings, activities, and songs that both extend the traditional Seder and resonate with it. We have tried to include selections that will be meaningful (and interesting) for children and young people as well as their parents and grandparents, and we invite you to pick and choose what will work best for your own Seder.

You will find a Song List at the back of the supplement, in the order they appear in the text. Each song also has a link to a performance of it. If you cannot open a link, look for the name of the song on YouTube.

Since this is "Putting Social Justice on the Table" version 1.0, we welcome your feedback and suggestions so that "L'shana HaBa'ah," we'll have an even better version 2.0.

Finally, we want to thank Rabbis Noam Raucher and Aimee Gerace for their help.

For the PJTC Social Justice Committee,
Hal S. Barron, Louise Derman-Sparks, and Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom
Bret Nicely, designer

March, 2018

Song Link: "I'm On My Way to Freedom Land"
<http://bit.ly/SJfreedom>

Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This year (2018), Passover falls on the 50th anniversary of Dr. MLK's assassination. Here are a few of his numerous inspiring statements to read and consider how they connect to the themes of the Seder. Discuss the meaning of Dr. King's statements to current human rights issues and movements and to the experiences of Seder participants who engage in social activism work today.

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed". (p. 51)

"Freedom has always been an expensive thing. History is fit testimony that freedom is rarely gained without sacrifice and self-denial". (p. 51)

"In a multiracial society no group can make it alone...Group unity was [is] always enlarged by joining in alliances with other groups' (p. 22)

"Our hope for creative living in this world house that we have inherited lies in our ability to reestablish the moral ends of our lives in personal character and social justice". (p. 58)

And, from Rosa Parks, who played a central leadership role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, here is another useful declaration:

"People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. ...No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in." ²



Watch Joan Baez singing "We Shall Overcome" at the March on Washington
<http://bit.ly/SJbaez>

1. MLK quotes from: King, Coretta Scott (ed). 1983. The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr. New York: New Market Press.
2. Parks, R with J. Hawkins. 1992. Rosa Parks: My Story. New York: Dial Books, p.116

Talking with Children about Slavery and Other Social Justice Issues in the Pesach Story

Social justice themes are part of the Pesach Story, but how children understand these themes changes as they get older. Thus, it is important to find out what reactions and questions our children have in order to explain misunderstandings and support their feelings. Some of the discussions and activities in these pages are meant to include younger children, while others are more appropriate for older children and young adults as well as adults. Encourage children to enter in the discussions and activities at their level of understanding.

Slavery and Resistance

Keep explanations about slavery to younger children simple: Slavery means being unfairly forced to work very long hours for no money and without enough to eat or a good place to live. Being enslaved means people suffer. Since young children do not yet have a sense of historic time and may worry that it could happen to them now, emphasize that the Pesach story happened a very long time ago.

For all children, link the telling about Jewish people's slavery in ancient Egypt with their resistance and successful freeing of themselves. Otherwise, some children may think that it was the Jewish people's fault and their weakness made them slaves. From a social justice perspective, it is also important to make clear that it was the "government" of Egypt that enslaved the Jews—not all of the Egyptian people.

The narrative of Jewish slavery opens up discussion of other people's experiences with oppression, and as with the Passover story, it is essential to also discuss their resistance. For example, some social justice-focused Haggadahs talk about the slavery of Africans in the United States and the subsequent struggle for equal rights of African Americans. With younger children make sure they understand that slavery of African Americans is in the past, and that the work for equal rights continues now.

The main message is that slavery and any oppression is not OK for anyone at any time.

Four Children

At Passover, we are confronted with the stories of our ancestors' pursuit of liberation from oppression. Facing this mirror of our history, how do we answer their challenge? How do we answer our children when they ask us how to pursue justice in our time? How do we answer these questions ourselves as adults?

What does the Activist Child ask?

"The Torah tells me, 'Justice, justice shall you pursue', but how can I pursue justice?"
Empower her always to seek pathways to advocate for the vulnerable. As Proverbs teaches, "Speak up for the mute, for the rights of the unfortunate. Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy."

What does the Skeptical Child ask?

"How can I solve problems of such enormity?"
Encourage him by explaining that he need not solve the problems, he must only do what he is capable of doing. As we read in Pirke Avot, "It is not your responsibility to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."

What does the Indifferent Child say?

"It's not my responsibility."
Persuade her that responsibility cannot be shirked. As Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "The opposite of good is not evil, the opposite of good is indifference. In a free society where terrible wrongs exist, some are guilty, but all are responsible."

And the Uninformed Child who does not know how to ask...

Prompt him to see himself as an inheritor of our people's legacy. As it says in Deuteronomy, "You must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Rethinking the characterization of the "wise child" and the "wicked child"

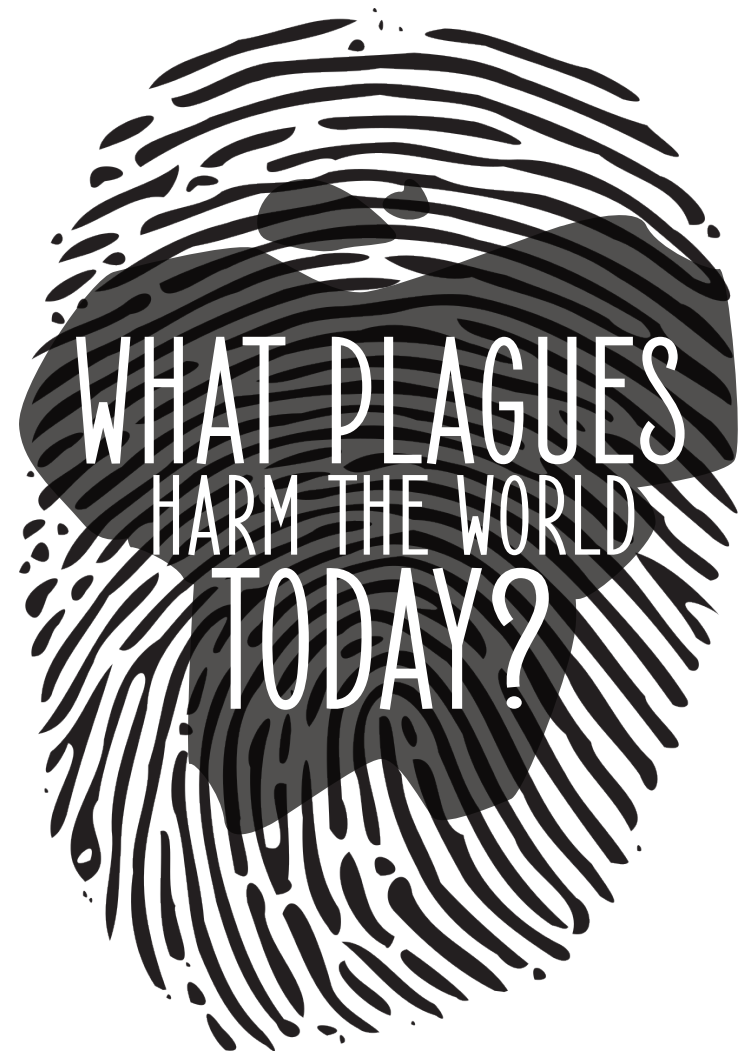
Another possible topic for discussion is the traditional characterization of the "four children." In it, the "wise child" listens to, acknowledges and accepts the lessons of the elders, while the "wicked child" is disrespectful because he/she asks questions rather than simply accepting what elders teach. Perhaps, we need to redefine the "wicked child" as being good since he/she asks questions, whereas the "wise child" mistakenly assumes he/she knows everything.



The Plagues in our Lives Today

This is an activity many families add to their Seders. It follows the “Ten Plagues” ritual. Everyone is invited to take turns calling out current “plagues” that harm the world today. (Examples that adults have named include, poverty, unequal pay for women, hate against transgender people, police brutality against African Americans, climate warming). We encourage children to think of something in their own lives they think is unfair to them and others. (They have named things such as “too much homework”, getting teased by a classmate, not liking a specific school subject.)

People take turns naming a plague in our lives today, while dipping their finger into their wine and shaking it on their plate (as done during the Ten Plagues ritual). The rest of the Seder participants repeat while also dipping and shaking their drops of wine. Children especially enjoy this activity, which goes quickly.



Dayeinu Commentary

This Dayeinu commentary can be used as an addition or an alternative to the traditional Dayeinu. It is for young adults and adults. If you have children at your Seder, you may want to preface this commentary with a few words such as, "This is about unfair, hurtful behaviors in the world we want to change. As we name them, think about one you would like to see changed."

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, *The Freedom Seder*

For if we were to end a single genocide but not to stop the other wars that kill men and women as we sit here, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to end those bloody wars but not disarm the nations of the weapons that could destroy all mankind, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to disarm the nations but not to end the brutality with which the police attack black people in some countries, brown people in others; Muslims in some countries, Hindus in others... it would not be sufficient;

If we were to end outright police brutality but not prevent some people from wallowing in luxury while others starved, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to make sure that no one starved but were not to free the daring poets from their jails, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to free the poets from their jails but not to train the minds of people so that they could not understand the poets, it would not be sufficient;

If we educated all men and women to understand but forbade them to explore their own inner ecstasies, it would not be sufficient;

If we allowed men and women to explore their inner ecstasies but would not allow them to love one another and share in the human fraternity, it would not be sufficient

How much then are we in duty bound to struggle, work, share, give, think, plan, feel, organize, sit-in, speak out, hope, and be on behalf of humankind!

For we must end the genocide, stop the wars, disarm the nations, end the police brutality, make sure that no one starves, free the poets from their jails, educate us all to understand their poetry, allow us all to explore our inner ecstasies, and encourage us to love one another and share in the human fraternity. All these!

Food Desert Seder Plate

As we voice the traditional call to “let all who are hungry come and eat” at our Seders, we need to remind ourselves that it is very difficult to even get good and wholesome food in many neighborhoods in our community. We include this Food Desert Seder Plate to remember this present-day plague.

Discussion questions for children: Choose ones appropriate to the age of the children at your Seder

The foods on this Seder plate are not healthy for people. What is healthy food and how do people get to eat it?

Some people do not have grocery stores with healthy food their neighborhoods, so it is hard for them to get good food for their families. If your family couldn't find healthy, good food where you live, how would that affect them?

Many families, including their children, do not have enough money to eat every day. How would you feel if the happened to you? What do you think we can do about people not being hungry?

Why do you think some people do not have stores in their neighborhoods that sell healthy foods? How do you think supermarket chains decide where to build their stores and put healthy food in them?

Share the story of living in a Food Desert. Pass this around your Seder table and each read a section.

BEITZAH—EMPTY

On the food desert seder plate, there is no egg. Fresh eggs are one of the luxuries lacking in these neighborhoods.

Is it harder to open a supermarket in a food desert than in a higher income neighborhood?

Absolutely not. The grocery industry often uses this argument to explain their abandonment of food deserts. In reality, operating costs are no different, land is often less expensive to develop, and the neighborhoods can fiscally support supermarkets.

CHAZERET—ROTTEN LETTUCE

A fresh leaf of lettuce symbolizes Chazeret. Fruits and vegetables in small stores in food deserts are often rotten and unhealthy.

Can Community Gardens and Farmers Markets solve this problem?

No. While community gardens and farmers markets can play a weekly solution for hundreds of residents, they can't reach the thousands of daily customers of a supermarket. Those working multiple jobs rely on the convenience of the long hours that supermarkets stay open.

CHAROSET—\$11.04

Charoet symbolizes the mortar that our ancestors used while slaves. Grocery workers in food deserts are paid \$7,000 less a year than grocery workers in other parts of the city (\$11.04 an hour vs. \$14.85 an hour) – an unnecessary economic injustice that pays workers below a living wage.

Why are small stores in food deserts inadequate shopping options?

While small stores in food deserts often advertise the sale of fruits and vegetables, they tend to offer a limited and sometimes rotting selection. Supermarkets would not only provide better and fresher variety, but would also offer the opportunity of better paying jobs that boost neighborhood economies.

Z'ROAH—CHICKEN WING

The bone on the seder plate represents the Passover lamb. Many residents in food deserts are forced to consume unhealthy fast food, but with more supermarkets, residents can regain the opportunity to purchase healthy food.

Can low-income communities support supermarkets?

Yes! Many low-income communities are densely populated, and incomes add up. In South LA, the annual income per acre is \$350,000, roughly four times that of the LA/Long Beach metro average. South LA residents spend hundreds of millions of dollars per year on groceries.

MAROR—PILLS

Maror symbolizes the suffering that our ancestors experienced as slaves in Egypt. Today, residents of food deserts suffer from health problems related to a lack of access to fresh and healthy foods.

What are the health impacts of food deserts?

Residents of food deserts have higher rates of health issues related to nutrition and diet. Diabetes, obesity, and problems with cholesterol are just a few of the health effects that a food desert has on its residents. Fresh food is less expensive than medical bills.

CARPAS—POTATO CHIPS

Carpas is often a cooked potato. In food deserts, where residents lack time and access to groceries, it is much easier to find a bag of processed potato chips than a fresh potato – replacing nutrients with high amounts of empty calories.

Where are the food deserts in LA?

There are three main areas of the city with neighborhoods that fit the criteria of food deserts: East Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, and North-East San Fernando Valley.



GET
INVOLVED
NOW

Join the campaign to
transform food deserts at
www.pjalliance.org

An Orange on the Seder Plate

This progressive Passover custom is surprisingly misunderstood.

BY TAMARA COHEN

In the early 1980s, while speaking at Oberlin College Hillel (the campus Jewish organization), Susannah Heschel, a well-known Jewish feminist scholar (and daughter of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel), was introduced to an early feminist Haggadah that suggested adding a crust of bread on the Seder plate, as a sign of solidarity with Jewish lesbians (which was intended to convey the idea that there's as much room for a lesbian in Judaism as there is for a crust of bread on the Seder plate).

Heschel felt that to put bread on the Seder plate would be to accept that Jewish lesbians and gay men violate Judaism like hametz [leavened food] violates Passover. So at her next Seder, she chose an orange as a symbol of inclusion of gays and lesbians and others who are marginalized within the Jewish community. She offered the orange as a symbol of the fruitfulness for all Jews when lesbians and gay men are contributing and active members of Jewish life. In addition, each orange segment had a few seeds that had to be spit out — a gesture of spitting out, repudiating the homophobia of Judaism.

While lecturing, Heschel often mentioned her custom as one of many feminist rituals that have been developed in the last 20 years.

She writes:

"Somehow, though, the typical patriarchal maneuver occurred: My idea of an orange and my intention of affirming lesbians and gay men were transformed. Now the story circulates that a man said to me that a woman belongs on the bimah [podium of a synagogue] as an orange on the Seder plate. A woman's words are attributed to a man, and the affirmation of lesbians and gay men is erased. Isn't that precisely what's happened over the centuries to women's ideas?"

Reprinted from www.ritualwell.org

See the video "An Orange on the Seder Plate"

<http://bit.ly/SJorange>

Song Link "Miriam's Song"

<http://bit.ly/SJmiriam>

Remembrance Circle

The purpose of the Remembrance Circle is to honor people who have contributed to making the world a better place for all.

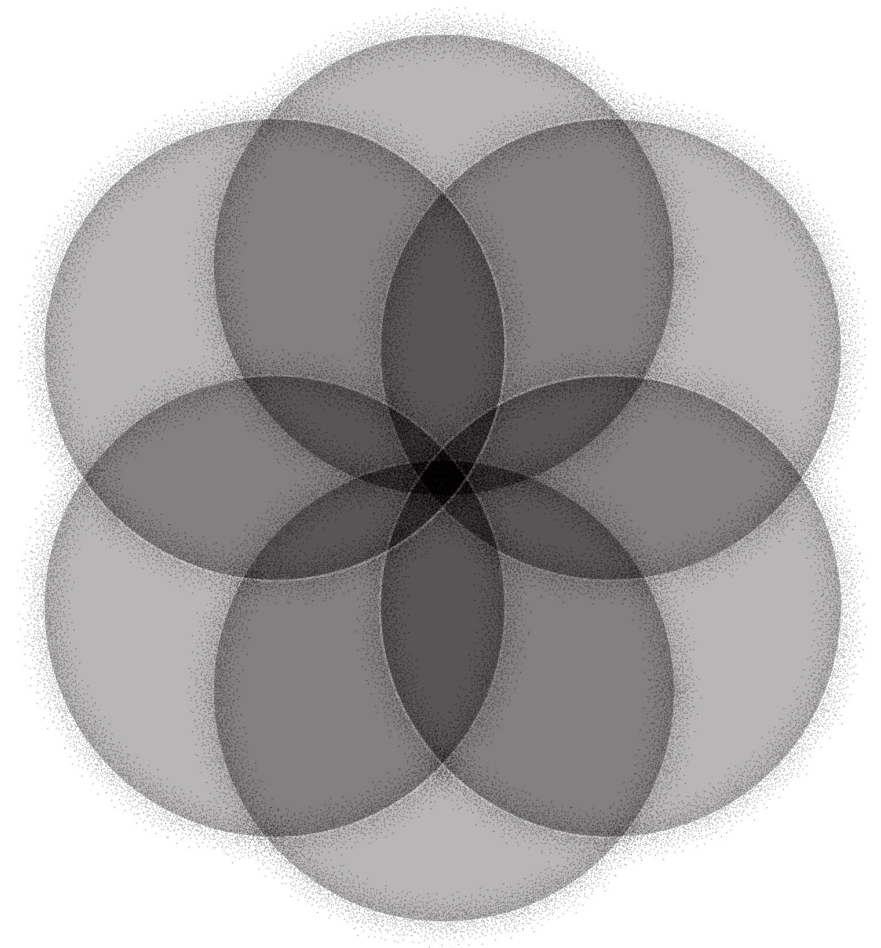
This is an activity for all ages.

The Seder leader explains this is a time for the adults to name people from the past who has been activists for social justice and for the children to name people they think are making the world a better place now. Then the Seder leader invites people to go around the table, each having a turn to name their choice and why they choose that person.

The leader may have to ask younger children directly, such as,

"Who has been a person who has helped you and your friends or classmates a lot this year?"

If the number of participants is small, you can go around the table again.



Let My People Stay

Excerpted from article by Jason Langsner on 25 January 2018.
Posted in community news, *Kol Ha Birah: Voice of the Capital*

Over 100 Jewish community leaders and activists from around the country staged a protest in the rotunda of the Russell Senate Office Building on Wednesday, Jan. 17. Bend the Arc Jewish Action — along with a coalition of 17 other organizations — led the sit-in, during which participants demanded that Congress pass the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act to protect young undocumented immigrants from deportation. The Capitol Police forcibly removed the protestors from the building and arrested 86 of them.

"Today, we came from all across the country to demonstrate what a policy rooted in love could look like," said Stosh Cotler, CEO of Bend the Arc Jewish Action, in a press release following the action. Cotler was arrested during the protest. As they sat in the rotunda, the group sang songs and chanted, "Let my people stay." This act of civil disobedience exemplified the spirit of the Jewish people's clarion call for social justice, Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof or "Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:18). "Fighting alongside Dreamers, and putting our own bodies on the line for them, is an expression of our deepest Jewish values. Congress must heed the will of the people and pass a clean Dream Act now," Cotler said.

"The nearly 800,000 kids given a reprieve from deportation by DACA — some still very young and many now grown up — are our children," said Nancy Kaufman, CEO of National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), in a recent op-ed. "They learned English and most speak it fluently ... They have little or no memory of their country of origin. They are as American as anyone born here."

It is "extremely important to express our solidarity with Dreamers," Kaufman explained, as they may lose their legal guest status to work and study in America. She described the advocacy event as a wonderfully collaborative initiative to not just advance social justice but also to "support families," and said that the Jewish people "only need to look back into the last generation to see doors closed" to recent Jewish American immigrants.

"It really speaks to who we are as a Jewish community, and specifically as an American Jewish community," said Barbara Weinstein, associate director of the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism. She echoed Kaufman's sentiments about the collective Jewish American memory of the immigrant experience. "As Americans, we're deeply aware of our history as a nation of immigrants, and that throughout that history immigrants have been a source of strength for this country," she said.

Senator Ben Cardin, D-Md., who is Jewish, heard the message sent by the protesters. He called it a "powerful action by American Jews and Dreamers," and also called on Congress to pass a clean Dream Act.

In 2017, HIAS and local refugee resettlement partners filed a lawsuit to stop the Trump Administration's restrictions on refugees. While the refugee and DACA issues are separate, they are part of a "much larger anti-immigrant and anti-refugee" policy approach that is counter to the foundations that our country was founded upon, said Naomi Steinberg, senior director of policy and advocacy for HIAS.

These individuals are "Americans in every way besides paperwork," Steinberg said.

Watch DACA activists singing Olam Chesed Yibaneh (after "We Shall not be Moved")
at the Capitol <http://wapo.st/2FWYIF5>
Song Link "Olam Chesed Yibaneh" <http://bit.ly/SJolamchesed>

Resistance

Remembering the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

We take a few moments to remember the courageous Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto, Poland. On a night like this the first night of Pesach in 1943, under the full moon, the revolt of the ghetto residents began against the Nazi oppressors who were starving and killing them. We remember them with affection, and we derive strength from their courage.

Blessed is the match consumed
In kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns
In the secret fastness of the heart.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop
Its beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed
In kindling flame.

—Hannah Szenes, 1924-1944

From: Haggadah, 1985, compiled & edited by Susan Freeman-Shapiro, Kolaynu/New Jewish Agenda of Santa Cruz, CA.

Discussion Questions & Topics:

What are we doing to resist injustice today towards ourselves and others?

What helps us to resist injustice?

Social justice activism and change takes more than one "super-hero" leader. It takes planning, time, persistence and people learning to work together. What helps people commit and stay committed?

For Children:

If you have preschool and elementary school children at your Seder Table, then first explain that you are going to talk about an event that happened many years ago during a very hard time for Jewish people, and in a country across the ocean.

Explain that a group of people we call Nazis, treated Jewish people very, very badly. One bad thing they did was force Jewish people in a city to all live together in what we call a "Ghetto". People couldn't leave and there was very little food, or heat or electricity or doctors, or medicine.

In a place called Warsaw, Poland, the Jewish people in the Warsaw Ghetto decided to fight back for their freedom. Although most were killed, we honor them as heroes and heroines because they stood up for their rights.

Answer any questions the children may ask, as simply and briefly as possible.

Rabbi Aimee has a list of books about the Holocaust for children of different age groups if you would like more ways to talk to the children about it.

Including Miriam's Cup with Elijah's Cup

Miriam Ha Neviah by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

Sing this after "Eliyahu Hanavi" to the same tune to commemorate the importance of women's contributions in the Exodus story.

*Miriam ha-n'vi'ah oz v'zimrah b'yadah.
Miriam tirkod itanu l'hagdil zimrat olam.
Miriam tirkod itanu l'taken et ha-olam.
Bimheyrah v'yameynu hi t'vi'enu el mey ha-y'shuah.*

Miriam the prophet, strength and song in her hand
Miriam dance with us in order to increase the song of the world.
Miriam dance with us in order to repair the world.
Soon she will bring us to the waters of redemption.



Song Link: "Miriam Ha Neviah" by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner
<http://bit.ly/miriamcup>

Songs

I'm on my Way to Freedom Land

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9spAWpQzmA&ab_channel=Thankful

The civil rights song "I'm On My Way" is an adaptation of the African American Spiritual "I'm On My Way To Canaan Land" (also known as "I'm On My Way To The Kingdom Land" and "I'm Bound For The Promised Land.")

I'm on my way to the freedom land (3x)
I'm on my way, great God
I'm on my way.

I asked my brother to go with me,
I asked my sister to go with me,
I asked my parents to go with me
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way.

If they say no, I'll go alone...

I'm on my way, and I won't turn back...

We Shall Overcome

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7akuOFp-ET8&ab_channel=BostonUniversity

We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day.

Chorus:
Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We'll walk hand in hand...
We shall live in peace...
We shall all be free...
We are not afraid...
The whole wide world around...

Olam Chesed Yibaneh

by Rabbi Menachem Creditor

<https://hazon.bandcamp.com/track/olam-chesed-yibaneh>

Olam chesed yibaneh

I will build this world from love... yai dai dai
And you must build this world from love... yai dai dai
And if we build this world from love... yai dai dai
Then G-d will build this world from love... yai dai dai

Ani Ve'Ata (You and I)

by Arik Einstein and Miki Gavrielov

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU4hBaZwAEc&ab_channel=HebrewSong-sWithEnglishSubtitles

Ani ve'ata neshaneh et ha'olam
ani ve'ata, az yavo'u kvar kulam
Amru et zeh kodem lefanai, (zeh) lo meshaneh
ani ve'ata neshaneh et ha'olam.

Ani ve'ata ne-naseh meha-hatchalah
Yihyeh lanu ra? Ein davar, zeh lo nora.
Amru et zeh kodem lefanai
(Zeh) lo meshaneh,
Ani ve'ata neshaneh
et ha'olam. (3x)

Singable translation:

You've gotta believe, we can change this world of ours
You've gotta believe, there's a new world to be found...
We said it before, yes we did, so many times:
You've gotta believe, we can change this world of ours

Miriam Ha Neviah

by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

https://ritualwell.org/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/im-age.2005-07-22.3940936502.mp3

Miriam ha-n'vi'ah oz v'zimrah b'yadah.
Miriam tirkod itanu l'hagdil zimrat olam.
Miriam tirkod itanu l'taken et ha-olam.
Bimheyrah v'yameynu hi t'vi'enu el mey ha-y'shuah.

Miriam the prophet, strength and song in her hand
Miriam dance with us in order to increase the song of the world.
Miriam dance with us in order to repair the world.
Soon she will bring us to the waters of redemption

Go Down Moses

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3OjHhLCDs&ab_channel=beralts

"Go Down Moses" is an African American spiritual. It describes events in the Torah, specifically Exodus 8:1: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me", in which God commands Moses to demand the release of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The opening verse as published by the Jubilee Singers in 1872:

When Israel was in Egypt's land
Let my people go
Oppress'd so hard they could not stand
Let my people go

Refrain:

Go down, Moses
Way down in Egypt's land
Tell old Pharaoh
Let my people go

We need not always weep and mourn
Let my people go
And wear these slavery chains forlorn
Let my people go (Refrain)

As Israel stood by the waterside
Let my people go,
By God's command it did divide,
Let my people go (Refrain)

O let us all from bondages flee
Let my people go,
And soon may all this world be free
Let my people go (Refrain)

Miriam's Song

by Debbie Friedman

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZdSEsZ8bMo&ab_channel=songbird1329

Chorus:

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song
"Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted."
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety
The tapestry she wove was one, which sang our history
With every strand and every thread she crafted her delight
A woman touched with spirit she dances toward the light.

When Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the sea
The wonder of this miracle she soon came to believe
Whoever thought the sea would part, with an outstretched hand,
So we could pass to freedom and march to the Promised Land

And Miriam the prophet took her timbrel in her hand
And all the women followed her, just as she had planned
And Miriam raised her voice in song, she sang with praise and might:
We've just lived through a miracle; we're going to dance tonight!