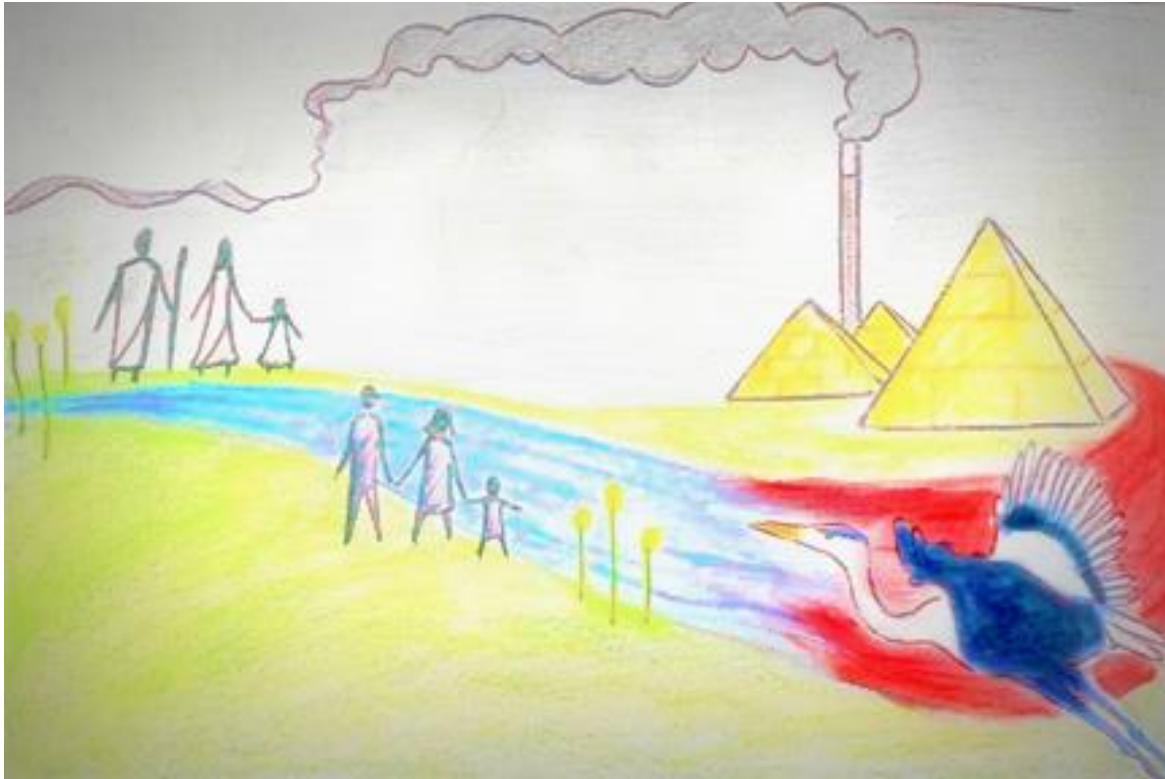


FROM THE NILE TO CURTIS BAY...

NO COMMUNITY IS DISPOSABLE



Original art by Mira Menyuk

2ND ANNUAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER

MARCH 15, 2015

BETH AM SYNAGOGUE ▲ BALTIMORE, MD

JEWS UNITED FOR JUSTICE, BAYITT, REPAIR THE WORLD: BALTIMORE,
BIYA, BETH AM SYNAGOGUE, B'NAI ISRAEL CONGREGATION,
PEARLSTONE CENTER, UNITED WORKERS,
FREE YOUR VOICE, INTERFAITH POWER AND LIGHT

WHY A SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER?

The Passover seder serves many purposes. First and foremost it is a ritualized celebration of the Israelites' dramatic journey from slavery to freedom. But even early on, the seder was never just about our history. As the format of the seder was finalized in Mishnaic and Talmudic times, rituals were included to make each participant feel as if they personally were experiencing the journey from slavery to freedom. This theme of the seder goes beyond the Jewish people's flight from Egypt and into the recurring fight for justice and freedom, a fight that is persistent throughout history and across the globe. The Passover seder tells us that just as our people experienced slavery, and just as we could not free ourselves, we have an obligation to also fight for freedom. The injustices of the world are many, but the Passover motif reminds us of the words of Pirkei Avot: "It is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it." Together, this Passover, let us use our collective power to further the causes of justice and freedom.

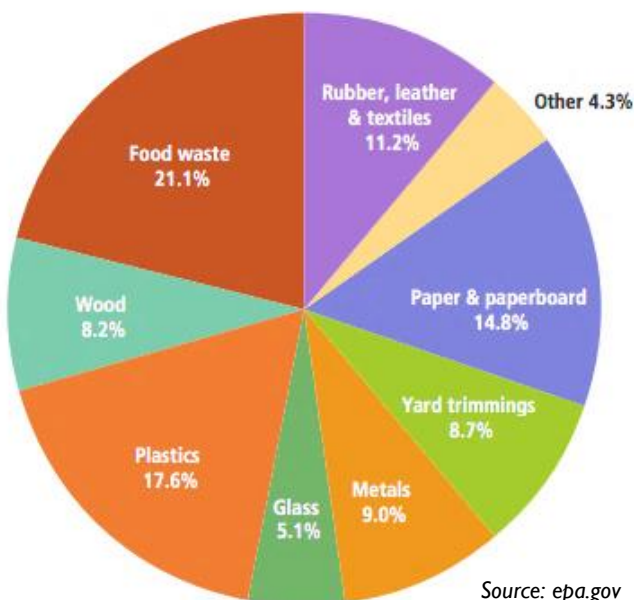
WHY THE CURTIS BAY INCINERATOR?

According to the Torah, we are told to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18). A few verses before, the Torah forbids us from placing "a stumbling block before a blind person" (Lev 19:14). From these two verses, we learn that the love for our neighbor must be more than a feeling. It should be a driving force to cause us to protect the health and well-being of the people who live among us.

The country's largest trash burning incinerator is being planned in Curtis Bay, a low-income neighborhood in the highly industrialized waterfront area on the southern side of the Baltimore harbor. This neighborhood is already one of the most polluted in the United States, with some of the highest levels of toxic air emissions from industrial facilities. As a result of this pollution, its residents suffer from elevated rates of heart disease, respiratory disease, and lung cancer. The incinerator would further pollute this already heavily polluted neighborhood by releasing 240 pounds of mercury and 1,000 pounds of lead every year, as well as many other toxic substances, such as nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, dioxins, and particulate matter.

They put [incinerators] in poor communities and don't educate the people and their voices are not heard.
- Ms. Matthews, Curtis Bay Resident

Figure 7. Total MSW Discards (by material), 2012
164 Million Tons (after recycling and composting)



In 2004, Maryland passed the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS), which said that by 2022, 20% of the state's energy must come from renewable energy sources. The majority of this energy was to come from so-called "Tier 1" renewables, such as solar, wind, and geothermal energy, with only a small fraction coming from "Tier 2" resources such as hydroelectric and trash burning. However, in 2011, the Maryland state legislature passed a revision to the RPS, which reclassified trash incineration as a Tier 1 renewable energy source, even though trash is not a renewable resource. This change has incentivized the creation of new trash incinerators in the state, and in doing so has diverted money and attention from harnessing the power of wind, solar, and geothermal, which are actually renewable sources.

In 2010, the site in Curtis Bay was approved for the development of a large incinerator by a company called Energy Answers. This approval was granted despite a law prohibiting trash incinerators from being built within a mile of a school (the planned site is within a mile of two schools). If built, this incinerator would be the largest in the country, able to burn up to 4,000 tons of trash daily coming from a wide variety of sources. With this large incinerator, Maryland will be

incentivized to increase its trash output instead of decreasing it through recycling and composting programs. Also, the project calls for trash to be trucked in from out of state.

Currently, construction of the incinerator has been delayed because of the strong leadership and organizing carried out by the students of Free Your Voice. Energy Answers is struggling to secure financing and to purchase its required pollution offsets. This is a critical time to act. Recently, the Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee voted to recommend termination of the energy contracts between Energy Answers and 22 public entities across the region. These entities include the Baltimore City Public Schools, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Walters Art Museum and many other key public entities that many of us are connected to. Later this evening, we will write letters calling upon leadership within these entities to withdraw support from the incinerator and to engage with student and community leaders on the positive alternatives for both waste and energy.

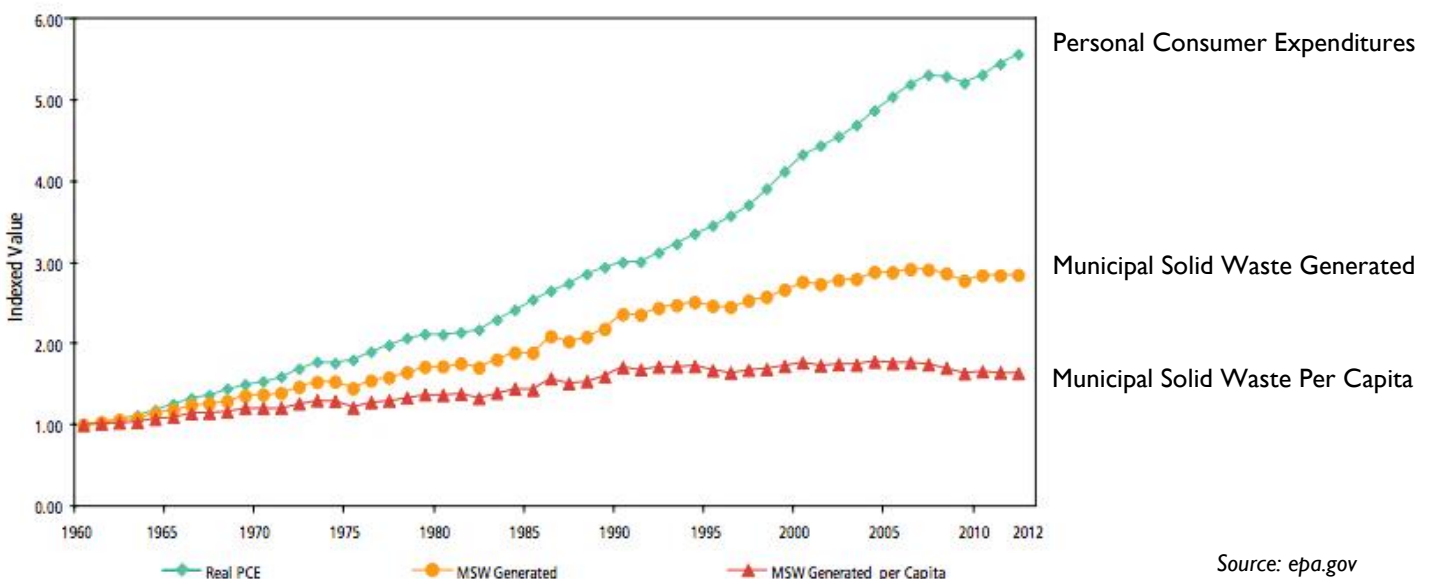
In this Seder, we aim to raise awareness of the Curtis Bay incinerator, and to encourage Baltimore residents to take action to block this damaging project. However, we would also like to use this opportunity to think more broadly about the waste we create, how we manage it, and how we can reduce our environmental impact.

In this discussion, we can use our Jewish tradition as a launching point. In the Torah, there is a seemingly strange prohibition against cutting down fruit trees in wartime: “When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees...” (Deuteronomy 20:19). From this prohibition, the Sages extracted the general principle of *bal tashchit* (lit. “do not destroy”), that we not be wasteful of our resources. If the Torah demands that we protect natural resources and the environment during wartime, how much more should we do so in times of peace.

I really would not want the incinerator plant put here because of the noise, the smoke, the pollution and the traffic of heavy trucks. It's bad enough now.
- Jeffrey Freeman, Brooklyn Resident

This is not the norm today. Our society relies heavily on the convenience of disposable goods. In 2012 alone we as a nation discarded 164 million tons of consumer goods, including papers, plastics, food waste, and other materials that could easily be recycled or composted. Our excessive waste production leads us to create landfills and incinerators with which to dispose of our consumables. These facilities are normally built in impoverished communities, decreasingly the quality of life for residents. Environmental justice is social justice. As we consider how to honor the principle of *bal tashchit* (“do not destroy”), we also remember that we were each created in God’s image, deserving equal respect and fair treatment regardless of socioeconomic status or which community we call home. The Talmud teaches that those of us with the ability to protest injustice are responsible for doing so (Shabbat 54b). Tonight, we raise our voices and pens to bring justice to the neighborhood of Curtis Bay.

Figure 9. Indexed MSW Generated and Real PCE over Time (1960-2012)



WELCOME TO BETH AM



SOCIAL JUSTICE SEDER 2015

CANDLE LIGHTING

Leader:

Like many ancient religions, Judaism utilizes the symbol of fire in many of its rituals. Every Sabbath and holiday is greeted by the lighting of candles. The two candles traditionally lit to welcome the Sabbath are said to be in honor of the words “shamor (guard)” and “zachor (remember),” the two verbs used in the Ten Commandments to describe our observance of the Sabbath. Today we also light two candles, in honor of the words “shamor” and “zachor.” With the light of our candles we promise to zachor (remember) that God created all equally in God’s image, and to shamor (guard) against unfair development which endangers our Baltimore brothers and sisters.

(A representative from each table lights the table’s two candles.)

All:

May it be Your will, our God and God of our ancestors, that You bless us with light and joy, goodness and peace, fairness and justice.

B'CHOL DOR VA'DOR

Leader:

In every generation the Haggadah tells us that each person is required to see themselves as if they personally experienced the exodus from Egypt. In every generation we must feel the pain of our ancestors’ slavery and the overwhelming joy of their eventual freedom.

All:

In every generation Jews have fought for justice. From the battles of Hanukkah for religious freedom to Ernestine Rose’s pioneering work for abolition and women’s suffrage, we have worked together for the fulfillment of the psalmist’s vision “justice shall flourish like the palm tree and thrive like a cedar in Lebanon.”

Leader:

In every generation our people have struggled for justice and fairness. Today we are still fighting. Our struggle for fair development in Curtis Bay will help to create a healthier and more equitable Baltimore for us all.

Sing together:

Avadim hayinu l'pharoh b'Mitzraim
עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים

SHEHECHEYANU

Leader:

The Shehecheyanu prayer is recited on Jewish holidays and at special moments, as a way of thanking God for helping us to reach this time.

All:

Baruch ata adonai, eloheinu melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiyemanu v'higiyanu lazeman hazeh.

ברוך אתה י-י אלוקינו מלך הולם שהחינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the universe, Who has kept us in life and sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the universe, Who has given us this opportunity to join together in acknowledging the pain of our ancestors' slavery, the joy of their freedom, and the injustice still present in our communities today.

TEXT STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Please introduce yourself to your tablemates, and share what brought you to today's seder. Then break into pairs and take some time to read and discuss the following:

There are 2 different stories of creation in the Torah; we call them Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Each describes in different detail the creation of the earth and each gives humans a unique purpose in the world. In Genesis 1, we are told to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and master it" (Genesis 1:28). In Genesis 2, we are raised up in the Garden of Eden, and then told to "work the earth and to protect it" (Genesis 2:15).

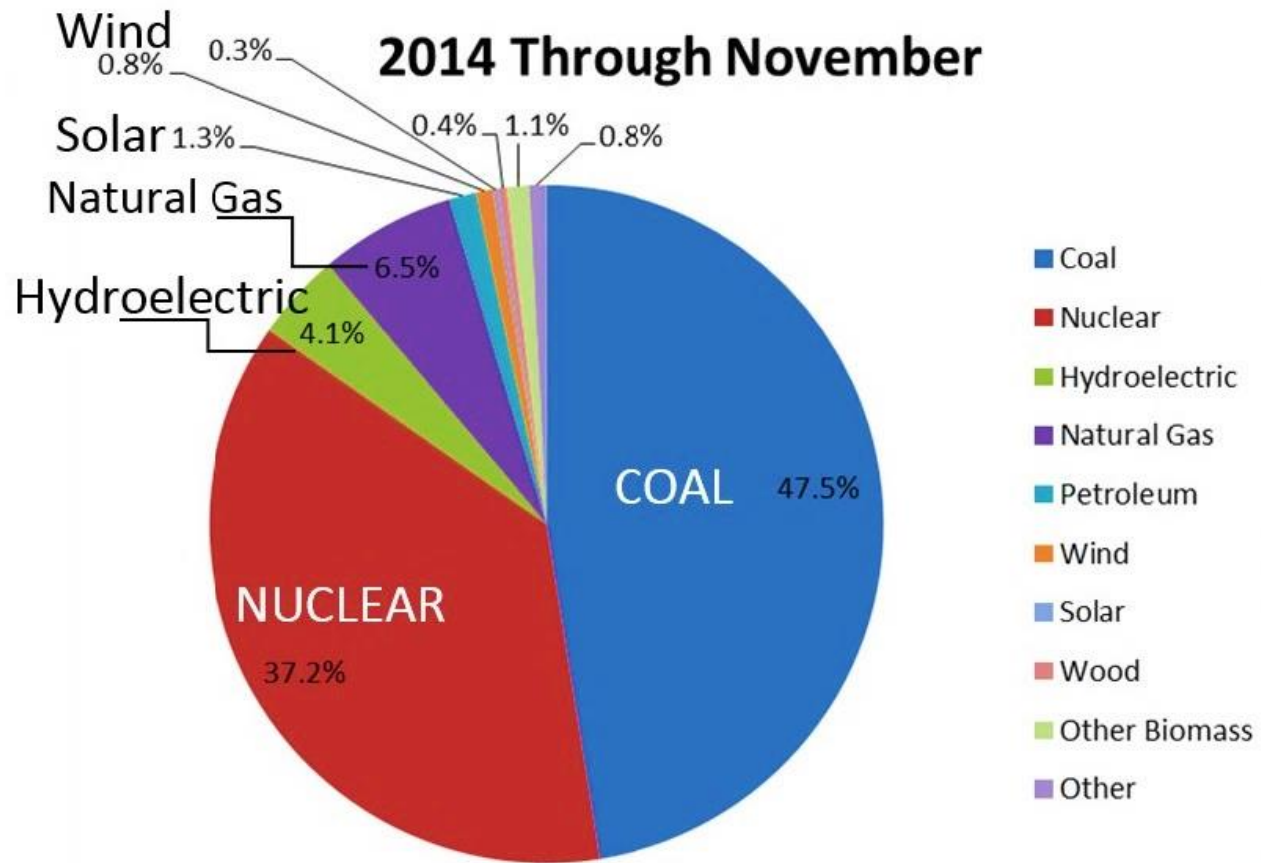
Why do the stories differ in the commandment that people are meant to fulfill? Which are we supposed to do? Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin suggests that we are in fact meant to do both; to master the earth and to protect it. For the vast majority of years that we have been on this planet, to subdue the ground and produce basic necessities was devastatingly hard work for survival. That was our time to master the earth. But not so anymore. We have been fruitful. We have multiplied. The earth has become ours. And so we have now fulfilled our first call in Creation. What next? We "turn the page to Genesis 2" she instructs, where the Torah asks us to work with the land and to protect it.

I've lived in Curtis Bay my whole life...Curtis Bay has the highest cancer rate just about anywhere in the state of Maryland. We don't need something else pumping garbage into our air. **We've got children, grandchildren...we don't need it...we'll stop it.**
- Curtis Bay Resident

Within this section we find an even deeper connection between ourselves and our planet. The Hebrew word for earth is "adamah," and the word for human being is "adam." Adam, the first human, was literally made from the earth in the second story. And we know scientifically today that this story is not just metaphor. We are made of the soil our food came from, the bottom of the streams our water touched, and the gasses in the air we breathe. Through the awe-inspiring engineering of our bodies and fantastic chemical processes we do every day called digesting and breathing, the elements literally become US. We do not go to nature; nature's not some abstract thing in the woods somewhere else: We ARE nature. In working and protecting "it" we are not protecting some *other* - we are protecting ourselves. Thus our way of being with the earth can only be a reflection of the way we are with each other; there can be no human dignity that does not begin with an understanding of our resources not just as things to be used, but as elements of

creation that are as sacred as we ourselves are. Looking at how we treat our stuff as a society ultimately points to how we treat each other, either with dignity and justice or through inconsiderate and thoughtless actions. In the Biblical story when God is satisfied with creation God declared that it was "very good." So may we the moral creatures, created both *of the earth* (Genesis 2) and created *in God's image* (Genesis 1) also guide the inseparable physical and social worlds in which we live to be "very good."

WHERE MARYLAND'S ENERGY COMES FROM



Questions:

- In what ways do you act as a 'master' with dominion over the Earth? In what ways do you act as its guardian or protector?
- Do you think there is a connection between how one acts toward natural resources and consumer goods, and how one acts towards other people?
- Do you know where your trash goes? Why or why not?
- Do you know where your energy comes from? Look at the pie chart above to learn more!
- What brought you to this afternoon's program?

MIRIAM'S CUP

Leader:

Miriam's cup, a twentieth century addition to some Passover seders, recognizes the often silent and unnoticed role of women in the Passover story. Miriam's cup is filled with water in remembrance of the well of water that followed the Israelites through the desert as a reward for Miriam's courage and dedication.



Vernice Miller-Travis is a modern-day Miriam. While living in Harlem in the 1980s she researched one of the earliest reports on environmental racism and organized her community to force New York City to install pollution controls on local garbage plants that released noxious emissions. Miller-Travis's work brought attention and money to the environmental justice movement, and she now lives in Maryland where she serves as vice-chair of Maryland's Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities. Despite the frustration of working against big businesses and the government, Miller-Travis reminds us that "if we're not at that table, then these communities--nobody will talk about them. Nobody will know about them, and [government regulators] will not think twice about making decisions that will adversely impact people's lives." Like Miriam, Miller-Travis inspires us all to speak out and take action to make positive change.¹

(Each participant pours a small amount of water from their cup into Miriam's cup)

THE FOUR CUPS OF WINE

Leader:

The Passover seder is broken up by the drinking of four cups of wine. While wine is often a symbol of joy, on Passover it is also a reminder of Pharaoh's four evil decrees against the Israelites. Similarly, tonight we will use each of our four cups of wine to reflect on a different injustice that the Curtis Bay incinerator represents.

1. Disposable Stuff
2. Disposable People
3. Disposable Communities
4. Trashy Politics

FIRST CUP OF WINE: **DISPOSABLE STUFF**

Leader:

We live in a wasteful society. In 2012, America generated 164 million tons of trash. Our national recycling and composting rate was only 34.5%.² We rarely stop to think about where our trash is going, and the long-term effects of being a society that so systematically throws things away. This is something we can change as a city. The better education there is around recycling, composting, and other waste-reduction measures, the more we can change our attitudes towards trash. While Baltimore City's most recent recycling rate was 27%, Los Angeles managed to recycle 76% of its municipal waste.³ Changing attitudes is hard work, and it would be even harder if creating more trash, rather than less, was encouraged by Baltimore City. But that's exactly what the Curtis Bay Incinerator would do. In order to run effectively and safely the incinerator will need 4,000 tons of trash a day, incentivizing the city and its surrounding area to create more trash. In a society that is already so wasteful, at a time when we should be encouraging sustainable solutions like composting and recycling, do we really want our city to put its energy towards incentivizing the creation of more trash?

¹ Brentin Mock, "Fight the Funk: This Woman's Fight Against Garbage Fumes Became a National Crusade," *Grist*, February 26, 2014, available at <http://grist.org/cities/fight-the-funk-this-womans-fight-against-garbage-fumes-became-a-national-crusade/>.

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2012" available at http://www.epa.gov/solidwaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/2012_msw_fs.pdf.

³ Maryland Department of the Environment, "Facts About...Recycling" available at http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/EducationandOutreach/Documents/www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/recycling/Baltimore_City.pdf.

LA Sanitation, "Solid Resources: Recycling" available at http://lacitysan.org/solid_resources/recycling/.

(Fill the first cup of wine or juice.)

All:

Baruch ata adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
ברוך אתה יי אלוקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

(Drink the first cup.)

FIRST SPEAKER: **JOELLE NOVEY**



YACHATZ: BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH

Leader:

The Bible calls matzah the “bread of poverty” (Deuteronomy 16:3). As we break the middle matzah in two we hold it up and invite our entire community to join us in the celebration of, and continual fight for, justice and freedom. The broken matzah reminds us of our broken connection to the land and its raw materials, leading to the creation of landfills and incinerators and directly impacting local communities that suffer due to our love of disposable goods.

(One person breaks the middle matzah in two. The larger piece is set aside, and the smaller piece is placed back between the two whole matzot. The plate of matzah is lifted.)

All:

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let them come and eat; whoever is in need, let them come and join us for the Passover seder. This year we are facing a system riddled with waste and inequality; next year may we celebrate a society that values environmental justice. This year we stand with those who are still enslaved; next year may we all be free.

FOUR QUESTIONS

Sing together:

Mah nishtanah halaylah hazeh mi'kol ha'leilot
מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות

All:

1. Why do we believe in the equal sanctity of life, but value some lives more than others?
2. Why do we push for local job creation, but invest in trash incineration, which creates fewer jobs than alternative recycling and composting programs?
3. Why do we define a renewable resource as one that is naturally replenished, but then classify trash as a Tier 1 renewable?
4. Why pass a law prohibiting incinerators near schools, but then plan the Curtis Bay incinerator project within a mile of two schools?

SEDER PLATE: PASSOVER SYMBOLS

The traditional symbols of Passover serve as tools to help us to remember and recreate different aspects of the Passover story. This year, each symbol takes on new meaning as we also use them to tell the story of the Curtis Bay Incinerator.

(Designate a volunteer at each table to hold up or point to each symbol as it is explained)

Matzah: The matzah is the central symbol of Passover. It is the bread of contradictions; representing both the pitiful lifestyle of our slavery and the excitement and rush of our journey to freedom. Tonight, our matzah also represents contradictions: the anticipation of the potential new jobs that the incinerator promises to bring, balanced against the potential harm of the toxins emitted by the incinerator. No one should have to sacrifice their health to feed their families.



Maror: The maror, or bitter herb, symbolizes the bitterness of an Egyptian slavery that was physically grueling and morally demeaning. Tonight, the maror still represents bitterness: the bitterness of environmental injustice when poorer neighborhoods are targeted for potentially hazardous public works projects.

Karpas: The karpas, or green vegetable, symbolizes the gifts of spring. Unlike incinerators, green vegetables harness truly renewable energy—that of the sun. Tonight the karpas reminds us to keep working towards healthy, renewable energy alternatives.



Haroset: Haroset is a sweet mixture of fruit and nuts that represents the mortar made by the Israelite slaves during their service in Egypt. Tonight we see in the haroset mixture the mix of waste that our society produces, leading to the creation of incinerators and landfills.

Zeroah: The zeroah symbolizes the Passover sacrifice, and is often represented by a roasted shank bone or beet. Tonight the zeroah reminds us of the sacrifices being asked of the Curtis Bay community, a community whose zip code is already ranked number one by the EPA for toxic point source air emissions, due to its 200 acre coal pier, fertilizer plant, medical waste incinerator, chemical plants, and more.⁴



Beitzah: The beitzah, or roasted egg, represents the cycle of life. It is one of the few items on the seder plate not eaten as part of the ceremonies, and despite being edible, it is often thrown out at the end of the meal. Tonight the beitzah represents the huge amounts of needless waste that we as a society create, prompting the construction of landfills and incinerators.

Orange: The orange is a modern addition to the seder plate. Scholar Susannah Heschel introduced it in the 1980s to symbolize the fruitfulness of communities that give full roles to women, queer Jews, and others who were marginalized in Jewish communities in the past. The orange reminds us that our Passover traditions are not only about remembering the past; they can and should also speak to today's struggles.



⁴ Williams, Timothy. "Garbage Incinerators Make Comeback, Kindling Both Garbage and Debate," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2015, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/us/garbage-incinerators-make-comeback-kindling-both-garbage-and-debate.html>.

SECOND CUP OF WINE: **DISPOSABLE PEOPLE**

Leader:

The Curtis Bay community already has the highest level of toxic air pollution in Maryland, and one of the highest in the country. The proposed incinerator would release 240 pounds of brain-damaging mercury into the air every year. It would also release 1,000 pounds of harmful lead per year into the air we breathe, along with other dangerous airborne particulates. These particles can be lethal, causing cancer, heart attacks, strokes, asthma, and more. Besides the numerous residents of Curtis Bay, there are two schools and around 900 students within a mile of the proposed incinerator.⁵ As we strive to create a more just and equal America, we also fight against policies that ensure that some people have a lower life expectancy and a poorer standard of health just because of where they were born.

I think [the incinerator] sucks. We don't need this.
This is our community and I don't think that we need to pollute it.
There's thousands of people that live here.
- Brooklyn Resident

(Fill the second cup of wine or juice.)

All:

Baruch ata adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei piri hagafen.
ברוך אתה יי אלוקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

(Drink the second cup. Refill immediately.)

SECOND SPEAKER: **DESTINY WATFORD**

Fighting this incinerator had me, personally, thinking into what are the basic human rights. I realized that with my experience with asthma and growing up close to Curtis Bay, that the people living there don't deserve an incinerator. There's already a lot of pollution and Curtis Bay has been treated like a dumping ground for far too long. **Breathing clean air is a basic human right.** [The BRCPC divesting from the incinerator] shows that public entities are acknowledging that this incinerator isn't a good idea and that there are humans whose lives could be affected if it were to be built. The residents of Curtis Bay are human just like the people running these big polluting businesses.

- Joshua Acevedo (*Free Your Voice, Freshman at Stevenson*)

⁵ Baltimore City Public Schools, "Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle 2013 School Profile" available at <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/domain/8783/schoolprofiles/207-CurtisBay-Profile.pdf>.
Baltimore City Public Schools, "Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove 2013 School Profile" available at <http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/domain/8783/schoolprofiles/239-BenjaminFranklin-Profile.pdf>.

FOUR CHILDREN

Leader:

The Passover seder recognizes that our community is made up of many diverse individuals who approach the world through different lenses. It offers four prototypes of questioning children: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who does not know how to ask. While acknowledging the diversity of opinions, this section also recognizes that we must each push ourselves to rise to a higher level and truly question our society as concerned, involved citizens.

In tonight's seder, the four questioning children represent four attitudes toward waste management. According to the EPA, in 2012 Americans generated about 2.9 pounds per day per person of trash, with about 135 million tons going to landfills. The amount of waste produced correlates directly with how much money Americans spend on consumer goods.⁶ Until we take a serious look at our culture of consumption and disposal, waste management will continue to be an issue and communities like Curtis Bay will be targeted to suffer the consequences.

The Wise Child, according to the Haggadah, asks deep, probing questions that seek to understand the heart of the matter. The **Wise Disposer** recognizes that our country's production of trash is unsustainable, and considers how to limit the trash being produced through reduction of materials, recycling, and composting. The Wise Disposer asks serious questions about where their trash is deposited, and uses that knowledge to further motivate waste reduction in private and public spaces.

The Wicked Child asks questions that create a separation from the community. The **Wicked Disposer** does not identify with the larger society, and does not care about the consequences of their waste disposal decisions. The Wicked Disposer is happy to push their trash into another community, as long as it is taken care of for them.

The Simple Child plainly asks "what is this?" The **Simple Disposer** does not understand the consequences of their waste-disposal decisions and blindly trusts the government to manage the problem for them. The Simple Disposer desperately needs specific legislation to provide guidance on recycling, composting, and environmentally just waste disposal options.

The fourth child does not know how to ask. The **Disposer Who Does Not Know How To Ask** does not even realize that this is an issue facing our society. For this Disposer we must initiate the conversation and act as advocates for our community. Our knowledge of the situation does not allow us to remain silent and lays upon us the responsibility of educating our community about the dangers of extreme waste production and opportunities to reduce the waste we create.

To Burn or Not To Burn (*excerpt*)

To burn, or not to burn, that is the question---

Whether tis better for Baltimore to breathe
The foul and toxic air surrounding us
Or to stand up against incinerators,
And by opposing stop them? To trash, to burn -
Waste no more; and by burning, to say we end
The mercury and the thousand pounds of lead

That Trash has within? No - an incinerator
Gravely to be opposed. To trash, to burn,
To Burn, perchance to Poison; Aye, there's the rub,
For in that trash we burn, what poisons may come...

By Charles Graham

⁶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2012" available at http://www.epa.gov/solidwaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/2012_msw_fs.pdf.

THE TEN PLAGUES

Leader:

God brought ten plagues upon the Egyptian people as part of the Israelites' journey to freedom. Tonight we read thirteen modern plagues--the toxic pollutants that the proposed incinerator will emit, causing severe health concerns for residents of both the Curtis Bay neighborhood and, due to the far-reaching nature of some of these toxins, the larger Baltimore and Maryland communities.⁷ Unlike the Egyptian plagues, which were brought as retribution for years of slavery and abuse, the recipients of our modern plagues have committed no wrong to deserve the negative health impacts that the incinerator will cause.

As we read each plague we remove a drop of wine from our glasses to symbolize our anguish at the suffering these plagues have the power to inflict.

All:

- **Particulate Matter**, causing increased respiratory symptoms, decreased lung function, aggravated asthma, development of chronic bronchitis, irregular heartbeat, nonfatal heart attacks, and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.
- **Carbon Monoxide**, causing chest pain, cardiovascular effects, vision problems, reduced ability to work or learn, reduced manual dexterity, difficulty performing complex tasks, and respiratory problems.
- **Nitrogen Dioxide**, causing irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs, nausea, shortness of breath, respiratory problems, reduced oxygenation of body tissues and a buildup of fluid in the lungs.
- **HCl**, causing throat irritation, rapid breathing, blue coloring of the skin, accumulation of fluid in the lungs, swelling of the throat, reactive airways dysfunction syndrome, skin burns, respiratory problems, eye and skin irritation, and discoloration of the teeth.
- **Cadmium**, causing severe lung damage, kidney disease, stomach irritation, increased bone fragility, and increased risk of lung cancer.
- **Lead**, causing adverse effects on the nervous system, kidney function, immune system, reproductive and developmental systems, and cardiovascular system, and neurological effects (especially in children).
- **Mercury**, causing brain, kidney, and developing fetus damage, lung damage, nausea, vomiting, increased blood pressure, and ocular and dermal irritation.
- **Chromium**, causing irritation of respiratory lining, runny nose, breathing problems (cough, shortness of breath, wheezing), skin rashes, reproductive damage, increased lung cancer, and increased stomach tumors.

⁷ Environmental Integrity Project, "Waste-To-Energy: Dirtying Maryland's Air by Seeking a Quick Fix on Renewable Energy?" available at <http://www.environmentalintegrity.org/documents/FINALWTEINCINERATORREPORT-101111.pdf>.

- **Arsenic**, causing sore throat, irritated lungs, nausea, vomiting, decreased production of red and white blood cells, abnormal heart rhythm, damage to blood vessels, darkening of skin, skin irritation, and increased risk of skin, liver, bladder, and lung cancer.
- **Beryllium**, causing lung damage, acute beryllium disease, chronic beryllium disease, and increased risk of lung cancer.
- **Dioxins** and **Furans**, causing chloracne, increased risk of cancer, increased risk of heart disease, and increased risk of diabetes.
- **PCBs** (Polychlorinated Biphenyls), causing increased risk of cancer, specifically rare liver cancers and malignant melanoma, immune system damage, reproductive system damage, nervous system damage, endocrine system damage, dermal and ocular effects, and elevated blood pressure, serum triglyceride, and serum cholesterol.
- **PAHs** (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons), causing increased risk of cancer.

CURTIS BAY CHAD GADYA

The traditional Passover seder song “Chad Gadya” is often sung as a lighthearted tune about a small goat. However, when read literally it speaks to the cycles on which our daily living is based. Tonight we raise our voices to discuss and protest a cycle that the writers of Chad Gadya probably never considered: the cycle of waste disposal that is becoming increasingly controversial as the amount of waste that we produce as a country continues to increase.



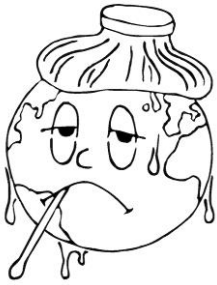
♪ SING TOGETHER ♪

One piece of trash, one piece of trash.
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.

Then come the bags that hold the trash,
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.

Then come bins that collect the bags,
That hold the trash inside of them,
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.

Then come trucks that haul the bins
That collect the bags,
That hold the trash,
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.



Then comes the incinerator that burns the trash,
That gets brought by trucks,
That haul the bins,
That collect the bags,
That hold the trash,
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.

Then comes the smoke that's full of ick,
That blows from the place that burns the trash,
That gets brought by trucks,
That haul the bins,
That collect the bags,
That hold the trash,
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.



Then come the people who get together,
To get rid of the smoke that's full of ick,
That blows from the place that burns the trash,
That gets brought by trucks,
That haul the bins,
That collect the bags,
That hold the trash,
That all adds up to a whole big mess,
One piece of trash, one piece of trash.

TAKING ACTION!

On February 10th 2015 the Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee (BRCPC), representing 22 public entities in Maryland, voted to end its support for the Energy Answers trash-burning incinerator project. First, this gives each member of BRCPC the choice to help protect and ensure the health of Baltimore's young people and the environment they will inherit by affirming withdrawal of support from the incinerator project. We call on each of the 22 public entities to follow the larger Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee in officially ending its support for the Energy Answers trash-burning incinerator project.



Second, it offers us the opportunity to embark on a path towards Fair Development - development that recognizes, prioritizes and springs forth from the interdependent human connections between public institutions, communities, and our shared rights and responsibilities to support healthy and sustainable energy and waste projects. We call on these public entities to meet with students and community members from Free Your Voice, a youth led group based in Curtis Bay, to create the potential for real alternative energy and waste projects that further the goals of healthy and sustainable community development.

Take a look at the list of entities on your table and identify one that you have a connection to or you feel compelled to reach out to about this issue. Use the paper, pens, envelopes, and sample letters on your table to write a letter to the leader of that entity.

THIRD CUP OF WINE: **DISPOSABLE COMMUNITIES**

Leader:

There is a history of communities being “disposed of” around Curtis Bay. Fairfield and Wagner’s Point, the communities that used to be adjacent to Curtis Bay on the neighboring Fairfield Peninsula, were gradually forced out in the 1990s after the city invited chemical manufacturers and oil tank farms to expand around the neighborhoods. As the petrochemical industries grew, cancer rates rose and air quality diminished. By 1999 the neighborhoods were condemned and the residents forced out, making way for the Patapsco Waste Water Treatment plant to expand. Residents felt deeply betrayed by Baltimore, and very few elected to stay in the city, resulting in the splitting up of families.⁸ Just like the residents of the Fairfield Peninsula several decades early, the residents of Curtis Bay have been given no opportunity to protest the building of an incinerator that would further poison their neighborhood. Instead, Baltimore City has seemingly chosen Curtis Bay to be the next disposable community.

All:

Baruch ata adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
ברוך אתה יי אלוקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

(Drink the third cup. Refill immediately.)

⁸ Matthews, Joe, “Goodbye Wagner’s Point,” *The Baltimore Sun*, April 1, 1999, available at http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1999-04-01/news/9904010319_1_wagner-residents-tiny-neighborhood.

ELIJAH'S CUP

Leader:

At this point in the seder we open the door for Elijah, the prophet who tradition holds visits every Passover seder and will one day usher in the messianic time of peace and coexistence. One tradition suggests that each person is responsible for helping to bring this idyllic vision to fruition. As we focus tonight on environmental justice and fair development, let us each pour some of our wine into the cup of Elijah on our table as a pledge to each do our part in building a healthier and more equitable Baltimore.

(Each participant pours a small amount of wine from their cup into Elijah's Cup)

Sing together:

*Eliyahu ha'navi, Eliyahu ha'tishbi, Eliyahu ha'gil'adi -
Bim'heirah ve'yameinu yavo eileinu, im Mashiach ben David.*
אליהו הנביא, אליהו התשבי, אליהו הגלעדי
במהרה בימינו, יבוא אלנו, עם משיח בן דוד

Just stopping the incinerator isn't enough.

We understand that the population of Baltimore needs electricity; we understand that the incinerator was to create jobs and stimulate the local economy. However, we believe there are other alternatives to the proposed incinerator, alternatives that will not involve poisoning the already-toxic environment within and around the Curtis Bay community. One of those alternatives gaining popular community support is a solar facility, a solar farm, on the tract of land currently owned by FMC Corporation.

-Amanda Mamimski, Curtis Bay Resident

FOURTH CUP OF WINE: TRASHY POLITICS

Leader:

The Curtis Bay Incinerator project has only gotten as far as it has due to some suspicious political decisions. Despite widespread community opposition and its threat to public health, Governor Martin O'Malley, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and other political leaders have actively worked to advance the construction of the incinerator. In 2010 the incinerator received an exemption from a state law prohibiting the construction of a municipal solid waste incinerator within one mile of any elementary or secondary school. As a result, the incinerator is now allowed to emit toxic levels of air pollution within one mile of two schools, Curtis Bay Elementary School and Benjamin Franklin High School.⁹ In 2011, Governor O'Malley decided to reclassify the incinerator as a Tier I renewable-power source, despite its clear reliance on disposable materials (trash). This puts it in competition with true renewable energy sources, such as wind and hydroelectric.¹⁰ On the day that Governor O'Malley signed this legislation, the company building the incinerator sent a check for \$100,000 to the O'Malley-led Democratic Governors Association.¹¹

I have a child with cystic fibrosis...the incinerator would affect his quality of life for years to come...he's only 8 years old. I want to put a stop to the incinerator.
- Elizabeth Ellis

All:

Baruch ata adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
ברוך אתה יי אלוקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

(Drink the fourth cup.)



THIRD SPEAKER: DELEGATE MARY WASHINGTON

This is a really big step for us.

I'm stoked that the entities got out of their agreements, it shows that they too do not buy into what the incinerator claimed to be--a great development for everyone. It isn't. The project would be harming everyone. If not their health, then certainly their wallets. **This decision gives us the opportunity to work alongside these entities for a truly green energy project in Baltimore that respects our basic human rights.**

- Destiny Watford

⁹ Shen, Fern, "Battle over South Baltimore Trash Incinerator Re-Igniting," *Baltimore Brew*, August 30, 2012, available at <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2012/08/30/battle-over-proposed-south-baltimore-trash-incinerator-re-igniting/>.

¹⁰ Smith, Van, "Trash Talk," *City Paper*, July 22, 2014, available at <http://www.citypaper.com/news/features/bcp-trash-talk-20140722,0,7088402,full.story>.

¹¹ Annie Linskey, "Firms with interests in Md. pour cash into DGA: O'Malley attracts money from wind, waste-to-energy companies," *The Baltimore Sun*, Nov 27, 2011, available at http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2011-11-27/news/bs-md-dga-fundraising-figures-20111127_1_dga-offshore-wind-donations.

HALLEL

Leader:

Toward the end of a traditional seder we include selections from Hallel, a collection of psalms that celebrate the joy of the occasion. Although there is much work to be done to address environmental injustice in Baltimore, there is also room for rejoicing. Tonight, we recognize and celebrate the following victories:

- Construction of the Curtis Bay incinerator has been stalled for the past four years.

[All: **Halleluyah**]

- Community members in Frederick County demonstrated the power of citizens over incinerator developers by successfully halting an incinerator planned for their community.

[All: **Halleluyah**]

- Last year the Maryland State Senate passed The Cumulative Impact Assessments Act, which would have required an assessment of the public health and environmental risks of incinerators, landfills, other hazardous facilities before receiving state permits (it did not become law because it didn't pass the House).¹²

[All: **Halleluyah**]

- The students of Benjamin Franklin High School and Free Your Voice have brought needed attention to the issues of environmental justice and the right to breathe clean air.

[All: **Halleluyah**]

- In February the Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee, representing local governments, school systems, and museums, recommended that their members cancel their contracts to purchase energy from the Curtis Bay incinerator.

[All: **Halleluyah**]

Our community shouldn't have had to worry about an Incinerator being built here in the first place because we're people just like everyone else and our community is already overpolluted. I am glad they (BRCP) came to their senses and changed their minds. **Start making the right choices with us in the community and we'll make a big change for our city.** Until then we'll keep freeing our voices.

- Brandon Champagne, Free Your Voice, Curtis Bay resident

¹² "MD SB706 | 2014 | Regular Session," Legiscan, available at <https://legiscan.com/MD/bill/SB706/2014>.

Leader:

The Passover seder ends with a statement of hope: “*l’shanah haba’ah birushalayim* (next year in Jerusalem)!” This ancient phrase expresses our longing for a better world, epitomized by the messianic ideals of peace, health, and justice. Tonight these words take on new meaning as we long for a world where environmental justice is a reality. A world where politicians work with constituents to reduce waste and create truly renewable energy opportunities. A world where the neighborhood you grow up in does not determine your long-term health, and where communities have the power to decide what is best for themselves and their children. Let us join together to make that dream a reality.

Sing Together:

L’shanah haba’ah birushalayim
לשנה הבאה בירושלים

Free Your Voice Anthem (excerpt)

Written and performed by Double Impact; Audrey and Leah Rozier

18 year old girl living in a world where no one cares about the safety of this girl
Money money money that seems to be the anthem
Destroying the world and always taking it for granted
No more green, only buildings and all that I can see is landfills and
I'm disgusted, I can't believe we trusted the world but it's not too late to be adjusted
We have our rights according to the amendments
But why do we feel like we've been so resented
Ignored, shoved to the side where opinions don't matter where opinions only die
It's time to stand up, let our voices be heard
Incinerator move cause you're not preferred
It's about that time, to make the choice
Imma stand up and free my voice

I am ecstatic!

BRCPC's termination of their contract with Energy Answers is an answer to prayers. This news and moment is a true example of what team work and collaboration can do. The Free Your Voice group has been able to educate and raise awareness by bringing stakeholders and community members together. Being a community resident and worker this step towards an end to the incinerator and towards positive alternatives for energy is reassuring. This community has been dumped on for years, it's time for a positive change. The time has come for our community to take a stand for what we want and deserve. **We deserve clean air, we deserve a say in what happens in our community and this decision has given us a step towards that right.** It took this group, the leaders, the stakeholders, the community and the innovators to get us to this momentous point in time and we are most grateful. I am eager to see the proposal for safe alternatives for energy production and clean air be brought to fruition.

-Meleny Thomas



As we conclude our seder, we reflect upon the journey of how we came to this moment, and through it, how we will approach the year to come. Normally at the end of our seder we exclaim (with a muffled dusty mouthful of afikomen matzah) “next year in Jerusalem!” But for this year, for this seder, we instead call for action. We individually and collectively ask, how can we bring the knowledge gained tonight home? How can we incorporate this learning into our own seders and how can we animate our personal seders to also be vehicles for change?

Though the Curtis Bay Incinerator is a particularly Baltimore issue, our haggadah also speaks to larger issues beyond this city. It raises questions about fair development, environmental justice, and consumerism, questions that are relevant and timely no matter where your travels might take you.

You might consider:

- **Ten Plagues** - As a discussion during the seder, share the health plagues that the incinerator will create in the Curtis Bay community. Just as we are each asked by the haggadah to see ourselves as if we were slaves, ask your fellow participants how it might feel to be a “disposable person” living in a “disposable community.” How might that change the perception of a fair and equal America?
- During the **maggid section of the seder, when we recall the story of the Exodus**, we retell Pharaoh’s inhuman decree to drown all the Jewish baby boys. At this point in the seder share how we as a society, through the mindless act of disposing of trash, condemn communities like Curtis Bay to numerous health problems, many of which are particularly harmful to young children. Invite participants to discuss measures they can take to reduce trash production on a personal and societal level.
- **Maror** - The maror is a symbol of our slavery. Before tasting the maror, share some of what you have learned about environmental injustices in Curtis Bay, and their relevance to the larger American community. Encourage participants to focus on this injustice when tasting the maror, or invite them to meditate on other examples of environmental injustice.
- Have a waste-free or waste-reduced seder by using reusable plate-ware, composting cooking scraps, and recycling wherever possible. **Before the seder begins or as the meal is being served** discuss the protocol for disposing of uneaten food and draw attention to your waste-reducing measures. Take the opportunity to initiate a discussion about how appropriate it is while celebrating our survival as a people to reduce trash-producing practices that endanger neighboring communities and subject them to numerous health plagues.

GLOSSARY:

BRPC: Abbreviation for Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee, the BRPC is a standing committee of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. Consisting of 22 local governments and institutions including the government of Baltimore City, the Walter's Art Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, various community colleges, and the Baltimore County Libraries, the BRPC acts as a regional purchasing cooperative that contracted as a group to purchase electricity from the proposed Curtis Bay Incinerator.

Dioxins: A class of chemical contaminants that are formed during combustion processes such as waste incineration and backyard trash burning. Dioxins often build up in the soil and sediment and are passed on to people through food contaminated by these chemicals. Dioxins accumulate in the fatty tissues and can result in various long-term health issues.

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 Egypt.

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 God passed over the homes of the Israelites when slaying the first-born sons in Egypt during the 10th plague). *Pesach* is also the term for the sacrificial offering of a lamb that was made in the Temple on this holiday.

Seder: A Hebrew word meaning “order,” this is what we call the ritual festive meal celebrated 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.

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

Toxic Emissions/Toxicants: Also known as hazardous air pollutants, these emissions are known or suspected by the EPA to cause cancer or other serious health effects.

Incinerator: An apparatus for burning waste material, especially industrial waste, at high temperatures until it is reduced to ash.

Environmental Justice: The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies...it will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.¹³

This decision creates the opportunity for BRPC to consider health impacts and community concerns when they make their next purchasing decision.

We know that South Baltimore is already overburdened by unhealthy air quality **and it is exciting to see an example of students in Curtis Bay / Brooklyn raising their voices to educate decision makers on how energy purchasing affects their health and community well being.**

- Rebecca Ruggles, Director of the Maryland Environmental Health Network

¹³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “What is Environmental Justice?” available at <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

Beth Am Synagogue, for providing the venue for our second annual Baltimore Social Justice Seder. We are also grateful to the staff of Beth Am for their help in preparing for this event. Special thanks to Rabbi Daniel Burg, Henry Feller, and Warren McFarlane. **Free Your Voice** and **United Workers** for acting towards positive change in our community, inspiring us with their fervor, and educating us about the Curtis Bay Incinerator.

Rabbi Daniel Burg and **Rabbi Etan Mintz** for leading parts of tonight's seder.

The partners that brought you this event: **BAYITT, Beth Am Synagogue, BIYA, B'nai Israel Congregation, Interfaith Power and Light, Jews United for Justice, Moishe House, Pearlstone Center, and Repair the World: Baltimore.**

Individual sponsors **Erica Breslau, Francois Furstenberg, Annie Kaufman, Brian Ross, and Jacob Silverman.**

Organizational sponsors **The Clean Water Coalition** and **UNITE HERE Local 7**

Jews United for Justice (especially Rebecca Ennen, Carla Hashley, and Alli Wessells) for providing the logistical support that made tonight's program happen.

Tikkun Leil Shabbat for lending their plates, cutlery, and napkins.

Our Social Justice Team: **Eli Allen, Erica Allen, Molly Amster, Eugene Libster, Vanessa Lubiner, Laura Menyuk, Brian Ross, Steven Saltz, and Kate Thomas.**

Mira Menyuk for the beautiful artwork on the postcard and haggadah cover.

Everyone who attended this program and
believes in our power to create a better, more just Baltimore.
We are honored to be working alongside you!

TOWARD A NON-DISPOSABLE SEDER Not “just” green, green because it’s just.

Today's seder examines the cultural and spiritual mindsets of distance from the origins and end-life of our “stuff” and our energy which make it possible. Below we bring to the front some simple shifts that moved us toward a non-disposable seder. In this way this night does not need to be different from all other nights!

“The Food we eat largely determines how we use the land” Wendell Berry

We have served light vegetarian, non-dairy wraps which consume between 1/5 and 1/10 of the energy, water, and land as industrial meat and cheese, on broad average. To diversify we chose to also include egg salad.

We are created “Btezelem Elohim,” in God’s image Genesis, Chapter 1

Nature moves waste through cycles, and so can we.

Composting of food and paper goods by the Pearlstone Center’s farm

Recycling of glass and plastic cups by Beth Am

Trash: of the little created by this event, will be picked up by Baltimore City Public Works and either burned at the Wheelabrator Incinerator (1801 Annapolis Road, Baltimore, MD 21230) or buried at the Quarantine Road Sanitary Landfill (6100 Quarantine Road, Baltimore, MD 21264).

“Is it possible for a human being to add glory to their creator?” Midrash Mechilta, Shirata, chapter 3

Jewish traditions tells many stories of people of modest means who nonetheless buy the most beautiful etrog to enhance the holiday of Sukkot. Tonight we have chosen to pay less in disposable purchases, do more dishwashing, and less trash incineration or even energy gone to recycling while beautifying the mitzvah of this seder through the choice of our place settings, borrowed from DC’s Tikkun Leil Shabbat.

Composting is the last line of defense against wasted food. There are lots of ways to do it yourself. Or you can get our friends at Compost Cab to help you! Compost Cab (www.compostcab.com/baltimore) helps you support urban agriculture in Baltimore by picking up your food scraps each week and taking them to Real Food Farms for composting.

Contact Miriam Glaser, mglaser@pearlstonecenter.org, Baltimore’s Jewish Director of Community Sustainability to learn how you can justly ‘green’ your event, school, or institution.