

MAZON | A Jewish Response To Hunger

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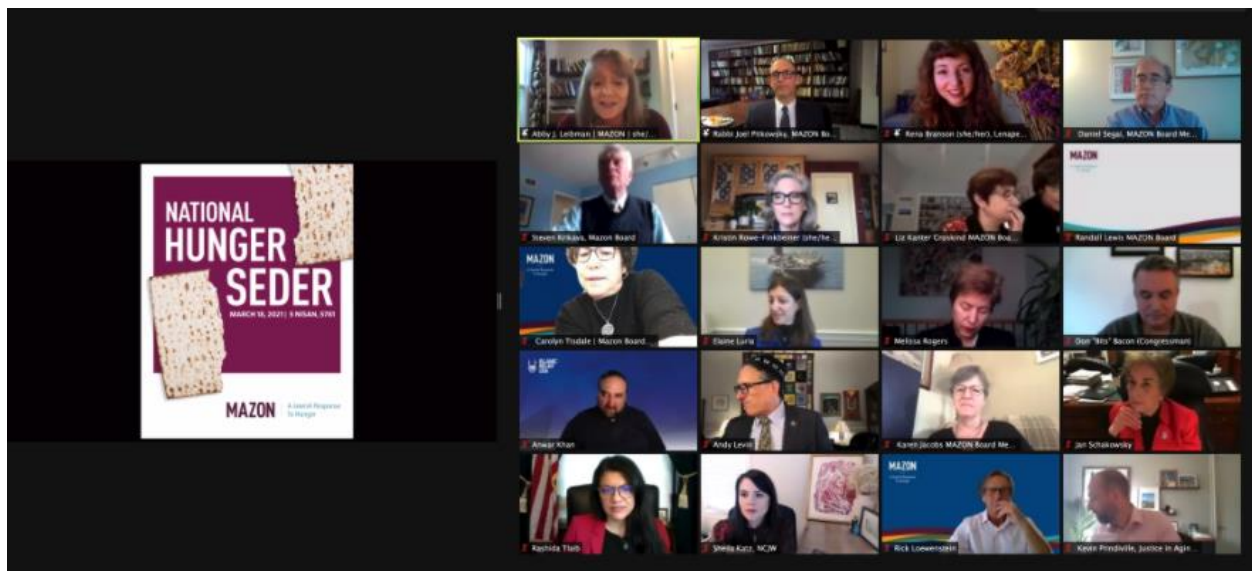
March 19, 2020

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BIPARTISAN GROUP OF 30+ MEMBERS OF CONGRESS JOIN MAZON'S 12TH ANNUAL NATIONAL HUNGER SEDER

MAZON's Fifth Question Asks: "How Do We Retell the Story of the Past Year — All It Has Wrought and All We Have Learned"

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress and anti-hunger advocates broke matzah yesterday at the 12th annual National Hunger Seder hosted by [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#). This year's Seder, the most widely attended in MAZON's history, focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its exacerbation of America's hunger crisis. Seder participants read from MAZON's unique [Hunger Seder Haggadah](#), which orients each of the Passover rituals around issues related to hunger.

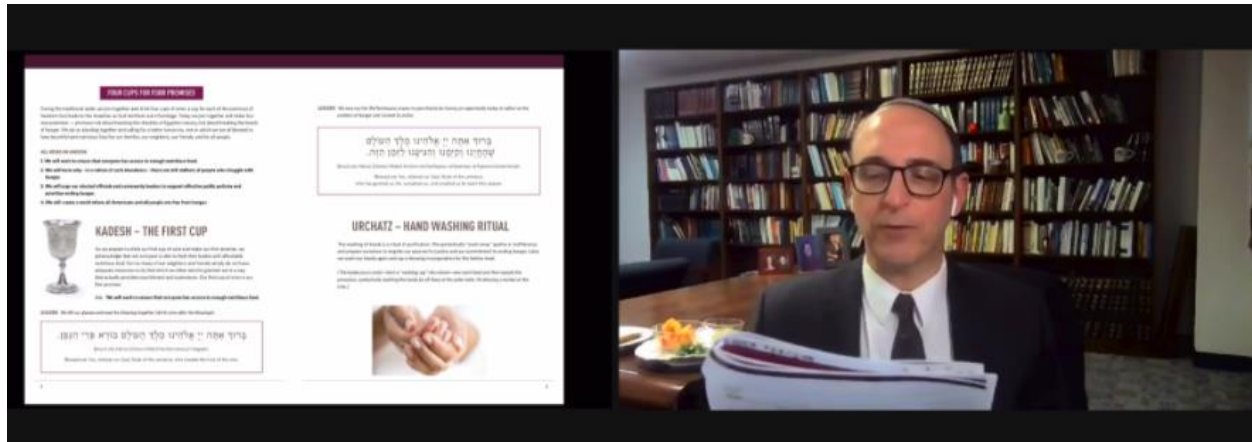


Photos from the Seder can be found [here](#), and additional Passover resources — including [video reflections](#) from MAZON's clergy partners — are available at mazon.org/passover.

"Hunger in America takes many forms and has many faces, and as we celebrate Passover as a story of liberation, we cannot forget that too many people in this country experience the oppression of poverty and scarcity," said **MAZON President and CEO Abby J. Leibman**. "This has been a truly heartbreaking year. Too many people have lost loved ones, struggled with illness, and faced hunger and hardship. When we retell

the story of the past year, we must remember the inequities that the pandemic exposed and our commitment to center the most vulnerable communities in our recovery.”

“We break the middle matzah to remind us of the brokenness of our world, and that the power to repair the world rests in our hands,” said **Rabbi Joel Pitkowsky of Congregation Beth Sholom** in Teaneck, New Jersey, who serves as MAZON’s Board Treasurer and co-led the Seder. “We are grateful to our partners in Congress and from around the country for joining us, and we look forward to continuing our work together to build a world where no one goes hungry in a land of plenty.”



Janie Simms Hipp, CEO of the Native American Agriculture Fund who was [nominated](#) earlier this week by President Biden to serve as General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, remarked that “food is the center of our communities, our families, our health and well-being, our spiritual practice. It is our medicine and the ways in which we heal ourselves and one another. As the Seder meal carries such spiritual significance of liberation and freedom, so too do Indigenous peoples hold sacred the importance of food to our communities. Liberating us from hunger is the freedom we all are hoping to realize in our lives.”

“Thank you to MAZON for sponsoring this wonderful event,” said **Melissa Rogers, Executive Director of President Biden’s White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships**. “Ending hunger is not only a question of the good work of people around the world — it’s also a question of policy, and what we prioritize, and the commitments we make as a nation to those who are most vulnerable.”

Members of Congress — 33 Democrats and Republicans from both the U.S. House and Senate — reflected on the significance of Passover, including through [16 video messages](#), and remarks during MAZON’s Seder:

“As we read from the Haggadah, we celebrate the proud history of our Jewish brothers and sisters,” said **Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (IL)**. “Passover is a celebration of freedom — the arrival of a new season. This year, spring is arriving in the shadow of one of the longest winters in recent memory. But even with the arrival of a new season,

we cannot ignore that many of our fellow citizens still suffer. Families are struggling to put food on the table. As Senate Majority Whip, I promise to work hand in hand with MAZON and similar organizations to end the crisis of hunger in America.”

“We know that the pandemic has devastated families and communities all across the country, and it has also laid bare many injustices in our society and exacerbated the challenges that millions of people in our country face — particularly related to food insecurity and hunger,” said **Senator Maggie Hassan (NH)**. “As we reflect and celebrate this Passover, I’m grateful for the work of MAZON to bring attention to the issue of hunger in America, to break down barriers, and to get vulnerable people the assistance they need, especially during this pandemic. I’ll keep working to support your efforts in Congress.”

“I am proud to serve as the third Jewish woman in the Senate and the first former synagogue president in Congress,” said **Senator Jacky Rosen (NV)**. “By coming together, we can ensure that those who are struggling don’t go hungry. We can strengthen policies that provide nutrition assistance. We can shine a light on the challenges that many are facing. And we can take action to help find solutions. I hope you will join me in supporting MAZON’s fight to end hunger.”

“The traditions of Passover underscore the magnitude of hunger and human need, and that need has been amplified as a result of COVID-19,” said **Senator Thom Tillis (NC), Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee’s Personnel Subcommittee**. “It’s during these periods of reflection that we must recommit ourselves to caring for one another. As MAZON’s National Hunger Seder reminds us, all who are hungry deserve to eat.”

“I’m grateful for all that MAZON does to fight against hunger, particularly for those who are often overlooked like military families, veterans, Native Americans, single moms, LGBTQ seniors, and Americans in Puerto Rico,” said **Congresswoman Alma Adams (NC-12), Vice Chair of the House Agriculture Committee**. “This pandemic has devastated our nation, and we’ve seen the inequities laid bare before our eyes. This is why addressing hunger is more important than ever. Like each of you, I believe that one of the best ways to do that is by strengthening and improving SNAP. That is why, next week, I will once again be introducing the Closing the Meal Gap Act in Congress.”

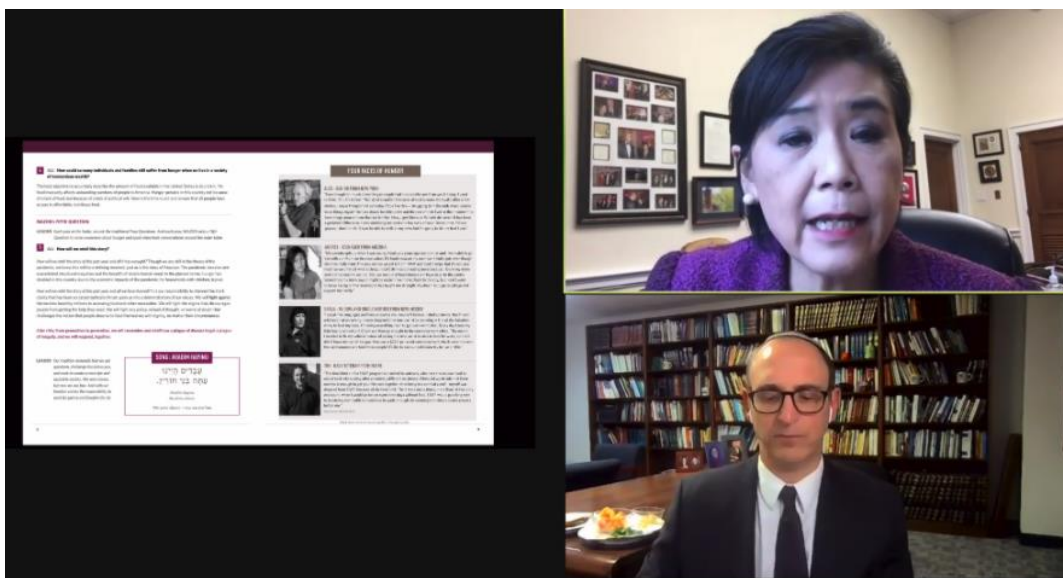
“No American should go hungry, including our children, senior citizens, and veterans,” said **Congressman Don Bacon (NE-02), Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations**. “As we come together this Passover, we are reminded that through struggle and sacrifice comes redemption. Until we end food insecurity in this country, we need to ensure domestic food assistance programs and food banks are accessible and reliable for those who need it most. I commend MAZON’s mission, and I look forward to combatting this injustice through much needed legislation.”

“Food insecurity was a tragedy pre-pandemic and it is even more widespread today,” said **Congresswoman Nanette Barragán (CA-44)**. “Now, the number of households with food insecure children has doubled. The American Rescue Plan is a great step towards cutting child poverty and we must recommit to taking urgent policy action to ensure that no one, and especially no child, goes hungry in America.”

“MAZON’s Passover Seder provides an important opportunity for us to reflect on the blessings we have and our obligation to help others,” said **Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01), Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee’s Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services**. “Our country has long been plagued by hunger, and now more families and individuals are experiencing food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. I’m pleased to join MAZON to raise awareness about this serious challenge and to work toward a world where everyone has access to healthy, nutritious meals.”

“As we work to defeat COVID-19, it is crucial that we provide nutritional relief to Americans that are struggling to keep food on the table,” said **Congressman David Cicilline (RI-01), Chair of the LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus**. “I’m proud to support legislation like the American Rescue Plan, which will make serious investments in SNAP, WIC, and the Pandemic EBT program.”

“Thanks to the Coronavirus pandemic, more and more families know the pain of food insecurity. Across the country, foodbank lines that stretch for miles are a sign of the increased need to keep families from starving,” said **Congresswoman Judy Chu (CA-27), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus**. “That is why I am proud to work with MAZON to promote programs like SNAP that are proven at keeping families fed during times of crisis. And I’m grateful for MAZON’s ongoing leadership through the Hunger Seder to make sure that not only do more families understand that hunger is a form of oppression, but that it is one we are all called upon to end. Together, I know we can stop food insecurity.”



“Hunger sadly continues to challenge us,” said **Congressman Lou Correa (CA-46)**. “And you, our Jewish community, are responding by feeding our brothers and sisters — by making sure that all that have been created in God’s image have the opportunity to eat on a daily basis. May God give you the strength to continue to do your work, to continue to bless us, and to continue to help those who have less.”

Congresswoman Angie Craig (MN-02) said, “I share MAZON’s commitment that, especially during these tough times, we do everything we can to ensure that no one in this country goes to bed hungry. As my family and I share a Passover meal, we will rededicate ourselves to looking out for those in our community who need a helping hand. I hope you will join me in doing so.”

“We will tell the story of this time through the lens of how those in power responded to this crisis,” said **Congresswoman Suzan DelBene (WA-01), Chair of the New Democrats Caucus**. “We know the burden of this pandemic has been put disproportionately on low-income families. The bill we recently passed in Congress targets relief to those who need it most, including support for nutrition programs. I know this time has been difficult for many, but we can now see a light at the end of the tunnel.”

“Abby and Joel’s leadership, and all of MAZON’s work, reflects the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam* — repairing the world,” said **Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-03), Chair of the House Appropriations Committee**. “This is the second Passover that so many families will be celebrating virtually, and we have reached a solemn milestone of the pandemic. Millions of people, and millions of children are facing hunger today — that is unconscionable in the United States. I am pleased that we were able to pass the American Rescue Plan, which will be a new lifeline for the middle class, and I am so grateful to work alongside MAZON to end hunger.”



“How will we describe the past year to our children, to our grandchildren, and to future generations?” said **Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (MI-12)**. “It’s been a story of loneliness, isolation, fear, hunger, and desperation for too many. But it’s also been a story of community — people helping each other. People learning new ways to support each other. This is a time that spring arrives that we think of renewal.”

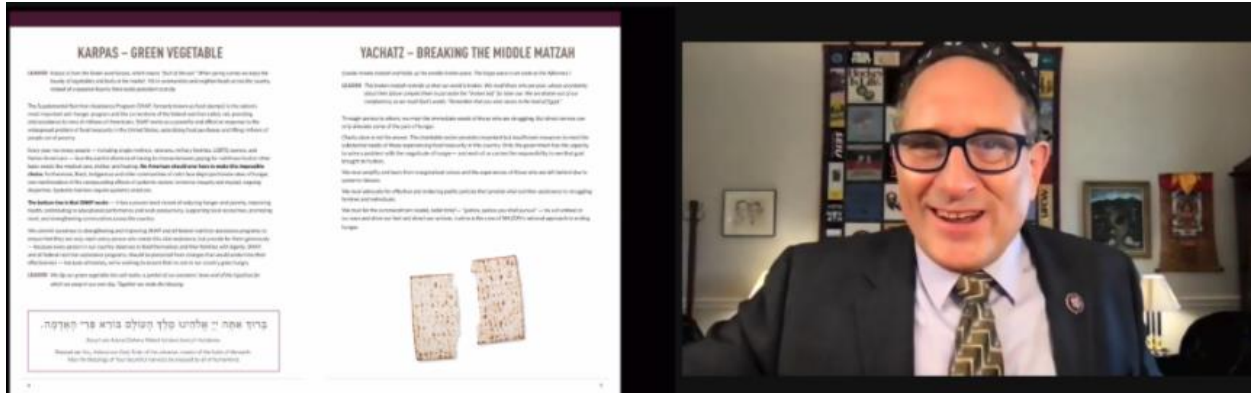
Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan (PA-06) said, “I believe it is incumbent on all of us to use our powers and our platform to simultaneously raise awareness and advocate for policies that will help curb the global hunger crisis. I wish you a peaceful and reflective Passover — one in which we not only reflect on the significance of the holiday but allow ourselves also to be galvanized in our common pursuit of ending hunger across the world. This pandemic has opened our eyes to so much inequity and so much inequality. May we keep them open as we forge the path ahead. When we retell this story, it is my profound hope that we will share a story of recognition and of action — a recognition of the disparity and action to address it.”

“Too many Americans face food insecurity and hunger, a problem that has only increased in the last year,” said **Congresswoman Sara Jacobs, (CA-53)**. “MAZON understands that hunger is a universal issue, impacting every community, and that we need big, bold solutions to make sure everyone has food on the table. I appreciate the opportunity to join the National Hunger Seder this year and I look forward to working with them to combat hunger.”

Congressman Andy Kim (NJ-03) said, “This virus was a threat that cut to the core of humanity. It didn’t matter what nationality we were from, what color our skin was, what faith we practiced, what political party, or any other aspect of our lives — this virus didn’t care. It cut to the core of our humanity and attacked there. That is where we need to reinforce and recognize that we share so much in common. That is something that I hope we take out from this experience as we move forward. ”

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-08) remarked that, “the story of Passover is one of hope, courage, and faith — all things that we need during these difficult times. MAZON is exactly what its title means, a Jewish response to hunger, because you operate based on *tikkun olam*, and aim to repair the world and help others. As someone whose family actually received government assistance with food stamps, I know the fear that food insecurity can bring, and I know the importance of programs like SNAP. That’s why I recently voted for the American Rescue Plan Act, which among other things increases SNAP benefits by 15%. We’ve learned a lot this year, and we’re stronger from the adversity that we faced.”

“Food insecurity is a major issue across these United States, and there isn’t one community that is not impacted,” said **Congressman Andy Levin (MI-09)**. “Like so many crises this country faces, food insecurity is centered around populations whose challenges have been long overlooked like military families, Native Americans, single mothers, veterans, LGBTQ seniors, and Americans in Puerto Rico. Programs like SNAP, WIC, and CSFP are more important than ever as so many American families struggle to put food on the table during this catastrophic health and economic crisis. I’ve made ending food insecurity one of my top priorities during my time in Congress, and I’m so excited to work with partners like MAZON to get it done.”



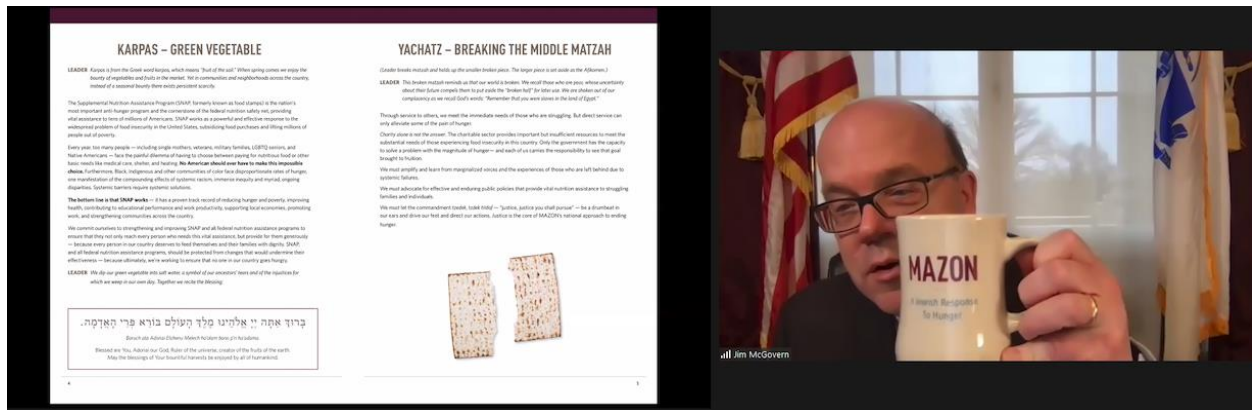
“I want to thank everyone at MAZON for all of your good work, for everything that you do to try to combat hunger in the U.S.,” said **Congressman Mike Levin (CA-49), Chair of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity**. “Particularly during this time of COVID-19, and particularly as we are celebrating the holiday of Passover, I’m thinking of the expression ‘Let all who are hungry come and eat.’ I think of the millions of Americans who are suffering as a result of the COVID pandemic who don’t have enough to eat right now, and the good work that MAZON and so many in the community are doing. We’ve got to come together, eradicate this pandemic, bring the economy back to full employment, and better days will be ahead for the United States.”

“The global pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity for families across Coastal Virginia and our nation,” said **Congresswoman Elaine Luria (VA-02), Vice Chair of the House Armed Services Committee**. “As we gather around Seder tables and continue to pass down our faith from one generation to the next, let us remember our commitment to one another and the work still needed to recover from COVID-19. I am honored to join MAZON to make sure this Passover is one of healing, recovery, and a renewed commitment to our community.”

“Passover is my favorite holiday because I love to sit around the Seder table with my family and friends and retell the story of the Jews living in Egypt and remember their suffering and their redemption,” said **Congresswoman Kathy Manning (NC-06)**. “This year, we will add another story of suffering to our Seder, because this year we’ve witnessed a modern-day plague that has struck down more than half a million of our friends, family members, neighbors, and fellow Americans, as well as millions around the globe. I hope you will think about this modern-day tale of suffering that so many are experiencing and do your part to help relieve the hunger of all those around us who are in need.”

“Like you, I believe we have a moral imperative to make sure no one goes hungry in America,” said **Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) Co-Chair Emeritus of the bipartisan Native American Caucus**. “MAZON’s advocacy work to end hunger is amazing, and it is something to be celebrated. Thank you for the work that you do, each and every one of you, every day, to create a brighter future where someone is free from hunger.”

“Hunger was already a crisis impacting every community in the United States, but COVID-19 has turned it into a full-blown catastrophe,” said **Congressman Jim McGovern (MA-02), Chair of the House Rules Committee and Chair of the bipartisan Hunger Caucus.** “We’ve all seen the awful pictures of empty refrigerators and food pantry lines that stretch for blocks. This pandemic has magnified many of the inequities and injustices we face on issues of food access, and the need to act is more urgent than ever. We can’t just go back to normal once this is over — we have to do better than normal. I’m proud of MAZON for their advocacy and action to bring about change, and I’m grateful to have them as a partner in the fight to end hunger once and for all.”



“No person in the United States of America, one of the most prosperous nations in the world, should go hungry,” said **Rep. Dean Phillips (MN-03), Vice Chair of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.** “During our Passover Seder, the Haggadah instructs us to declare ‘All who are hungry, come and eat.’ During this Passover especially, let us all pledge to open our doors and our hearts to those who are hungry and in need.”

“This last year has brought so much pain. Millions of Americans have lost their jobs and millions more have struggled to put food on the table,” said **Congresswoman Katie Porter (CA-45) Deputy Chair of the Progressive Caucus.** “The problem of food insecurity falls particularly hard on families with children. Even before COVID-19, households headed by single moms were more likely to experience food insecurity than other families. And that gap has only widened during the pandemic. As a single mom of three school-aged children, I know what it’s like to face these tough decisions. We have to do more to support our single moms. It’s essential for gender equity and our economic recovery. We must do better for our communities, our families, and our children.”

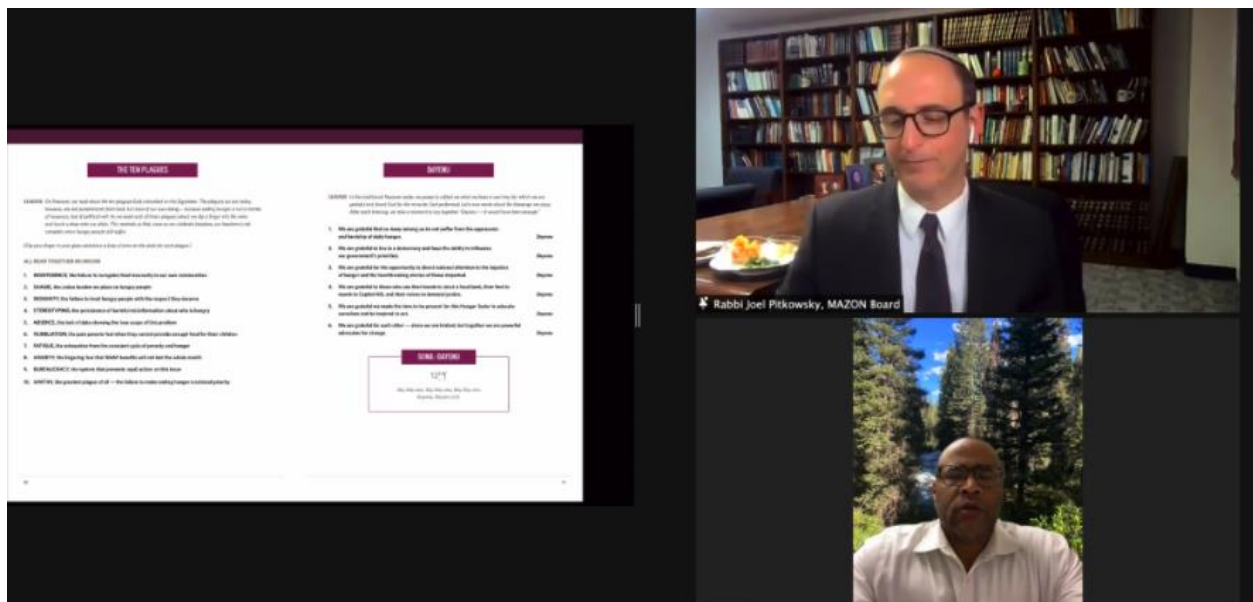
“We are coming out of a time of cruelty as we rebuild from the last four years, but every day I feel better about our country’s tremendous resiliency, and the passion for justice and solidarity in our communities,” said **Congressman Jamie Raskin (MD-08).** “Passover is my favorite holiday because it instructs us to identify with the most downtrodden people. But that’s not a permanent condition — there’s exodus from it

through solidarity, through vision, and through acts of courage and spiritual commitment, if not divine intervention. I'm grateful that hunger is very much on the public agenda, and MAZON is very much a part of that, so we are going to keep marching forward together."

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-09) said, "During this pandemic, one in four families has experienced hunger. This, in the richest nation in the world, is unacceptable. We have the means to end hunger, but often lack the will. In the American Rescue Plan, we have taken an important first step in that battle. American children, seniors, and veterans are going hungry, and the pandemic has revealed just how many people were vulnerable to missing a meal. We must do all we can to end that. I am proud to join MAZON for their National Hunger Seder to bring attention to these critical issues, and to continue our fight to end hunger in America."

"This Passover season, while we may not be able to get together in person, let's nevertheless take some time to reflect on this past challenging year and how the pandemic revealed new experiences in our lives, new inequities to tackle, and the spirit of charity," said **Congressman Mark Takano (CA-41), Chair of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**. "During this virtual Seder we are celebrating, but we are also committing ourselves to addressing the hunger epidemic. I commend you for being called to this mission. We still have more desert to walk through before we truly get to the land of milk and honey."

"I am so grateful to be with all of you to recognize that our liberation is bound together," said **Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (MI-13)**. "We must continue to fight for liberation for all and freedom from hunger. I want to share this Angela Davis quote: 'The idea of freedom is inspiring, but what does it mean? If you are free in a political sense but have no food, what's that? The freedom to starve?' Thank you for your incredible leadership and for all that you do to address hunger."



Congressman Marc Veasey (TX-33) recalled images of cars lined up on the Texas interstate highway earlier this year: “I thought it was a picture of jam-packed traffic, but it wasn’t — it was a parking lot of people waiting to get food. The hunger that people are suffering right now is real, and many of my fellow Texans experienced hunger recently during the four days when we didn’t have power. And so many people were struggling before that. As a Black American, I particularly appreciate that MAZON is addressing the persistence of harmful stereotypes and misinformation about who is hungry in this country.”

“Food insecurity is an issue that has disproportionately impacted marginalized groups in this country for far too long and has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-23)**. “In my home state of Florida, one in five children and one in eight adults struggle with hunger. In the 21st century, no one should ever have to go hungry. Our Jewish tradition urges us to fight the injustice of hunger, champion access to healthy food, and respect the land where it is grown.”

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About MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger:

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel. For more information on MAZON, please visit mazon.org.