

A Water Aware Passover

*Miriam's Cup

Midrash, rabbinic commentary, tells us how, as long as Miriam was alive and traveling through the desert with the Israelites, a well continuously quenched the people's thirst. When Miriam died, the well dried up. In her honor, people place an overflowing cup of water on the *seder* table.

- ❖ Miriam's Cup can be a symbol of water as a life-giving substance. Ask people to place themselves on that journey, wandering through the desert. Discuss possible meanings of the well.
- ❖ Now imagine if a corporation came in and started draining water from the well to bottle up and sell for profit, and suddenly you had to dig deep to pull up the waters from the once overflowing source. This is what is taking place in poor communities in India, where thousands of protesters have marched on foot 150 miles from one corporate plant to another, finally getting one of the plants to shut down, but still struggling with the other.

**Dam*, the first of the ten plagues; the river turns to blood.

Agricultural and industrial pollution that seeps into the rivers and over extraction have killed river life and poisoned the waters for human use as well.

- ❖ What would it mean for modern day rivers to turn into blood?
- ❖ As water scarcity increases, demand for water will increase. If water is on the market like any other commodity, it will be given to the highest bidder, and billions of people will be left without access. Some corporations will profit at the expense of people's thirst. What happens to people who can't pay? Will the next great wars be fought over water? This discussion can happen before the reading of the ten plagues.

**Karpas*, we dip the parsley into salt water.

97% of the world's water is salt water, leaving only 3% as freshwater. Of that three percent, two-thirds is locked up in glaciers (and now due to global warming it is melting into the sea...). So less than 1% of all water on Earth is available to us as a source of drinking water. Of that, a quarter is in the Great Lakes. Though few Americans know, the Great Lakes have been tapped and are draining out millions of gallons of fresh water every year from the source waters.

- ❖ Some corporations have control over the last remaining water resources on the planet. Can they be good stewards? What is our responsibility?