

WE WERE STRANGERS



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Our Passover seder reminds us of our heritage, and while we take pride in our stories, we also learn from reflective exploration of our past. We remember that we are not the descendants of kings and aristocrats. We are the descendants of slaves. We were strangers. By the divine grace of an outstretched hand and a mighty arm did we escape a life of everlasting suffering. By the brave actions of leaders and visionaries, Moses and Miriam, Aaron and our ancestors, we moved out mitzrayim, out of the narrow place of Egypt and into a wider and more hopeful future in a new land. We remember, too, that Egypt was not the only narrow place. It was not the only land where we were strangers. We were strangers to the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Romans, the Germans...

WE ARE STRANGERS.

We are strangers still today. In the South and throughout North America, Jewish communities exist in a non-Jewish world. But the world has changed. No longer do we conduct our seders in darkened rooms, alone and afraid. Today we welcome them to our tables. From Seminole to Statesville and from Paducah to Pensacola, we celebrate our tradition and we share it with our neighbors. But in some sense, strangers we remain.

WE ARE NOT THE ONLY STRANGERS.

Our seder reminds us that we are not the only strangers. Our world is full of strangers; strangers who, like us, live with their neighbors in peace. There are also strangers who, like us, live with the fear and pain of our ancestors. May our celebration tonight celebrate our story, and remind us that the search for freedom, justice, and redemption continues in every generation. May we be kind to our neighbors, and treat the strangers among us as we would be treated as ourselves. When all of us are equals, and all treat each other with love, and share our stories, and eradicate our fears—perhaps one day we will all be true friends and brethren: Unique but united, and strangers no more. Amen.