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**Diplomats Seder Remarks**  
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The Diplomats Seder is a tradition of great meaning to the AJC—not least because we gather together to salute the New England diplomatic corps, a group we call our colleagues, and our friends.

Diplomats are at the heart of how we at AJC advance our cause in defense of democratic freedoms and Jewish values. And so I'd like to ask the diplomats here tonight to stand so we can give you our thanks for enriching our city.

We celebrate Exodus as the story of the Jewish people—but offer its message to all mankind: the belief, as John F. Kennedy said, that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but the hand of God.

In Judaism, the command to remember is at the core of our faith — remember the Sabbath, remember the dead, and as we said in tonight's Seder, remember that you yourselves were slaves and strangers in Egypt.

Because we remember, we cannot forget that Exodus is the source from Scripture cited at the turning points in our nation's history—Plymouth Rock, Independence Hall, Gettysburg, and Selma, Alabama.

Because we remember, we cannot forget Emma Lazarus' words on the Statue of Liberty: Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

This evening you heard testimony from a Polish Holocaust survivor, a Mandaean from Iraq and a South Sudanese refugee. Their worlds are different, but their stories are at one with our Seder—the story of struggle, and the dream of deliverance to a Promised Land.

Their story is the AJC story. At our founding in 1906, the AJC was a civil rights organization seeking to secure the rights of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe—a mission that soon expanded to fighting to end Jim Crow and the stain of segregation in our nation's public square.

Today the AJC's reach is global. With 32 bureaus around the world—Paris, Brussels, Delhi, Berlin, Warsaw, and Jerusalem—and across the United States, from Boston to Los Angeles—we have the architecture and relationships to stand up *wherever* democratic and Jewish values are under attack.

The AJC's reach is global because the threat to democratic values is global. A century ago, after the horrors of the First World War and in the midst of a global depression, the democracies were said to be exhausted, and many thought that communism and fascism, by contrast, were to be the future that works.

Now our problems, though severe, don't match those of the 1930's. But who can ignore the fist of authoritarian rule in Hungary, Poland, Russia, the Philippines, and Turkey, and the rise of ultra-nationalist movements in France, Italy, Germany, the UK, and now even in the United States?

The problems we face today, like those in the 1930's, are international—and thus demand a global response. And that's why the AJC, with its global reach, is *the* indispensable voice in advancing democratic and Jewish values throughout the world.

In recent days, for example:

- An AJC delegation visited London and Paris, where they met with government officials and Jewish leaders about ways to fight anti-Semitism and ensure the safety of Jews.
- AJC just concluded a mission to Eastern Europe, discussing regional security and bilateral ties with the US and Israel with the heads of state or foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus.
- AJC continues one of its top priorities—the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council—along with our work with Christians, Latinos, Hindus and others—because we stand best when we stand together.

AJC New England is part of this global network of advocacy—and a recent campaign, begun in Boston, has made an impact. Last year, we launched a campaign against the pernicious practice of BDS—that's Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions—and in particular, the boycotts against Israeli academics on our college campuses.

We launched a campaign with 100 world-class scientists from Boston—from medical school deans, to a Nobel Prize winner—to make a powerful statement: that the first duty of intellectuals—and universities—is to protect freedom of thought, and that any attempt to curtail the exchange of ideas from Israel or anywhere else violates the core principles of democracy.

Several of the leaders in that effort are here tonight. Ron Kleinman, Merit Cudkowicz, Howard Weinstein, and AJC board member Matt Meyerson—all distinguished life scientists at the Harvard Medical School—would you please rise to accept our thanks for all you did to support academic freedom?

Our Seder is a sign of hope because it celebrates the fact of one people's liberation from Pharaoh's Egypt. But to an age under the tyranny of amnesia and the spell of trivia, the fact of our redemption in Egypt is a sign of hope to mankind. But most important of all, it is also a call to action—now!—this day!—to this community, Jew and Gentile alike.

The AJC needs your help. If you are moved by what you heard today, if you think our mission is worthy of your support, come talk to us. Give us your time, give us your support, and make it your duty to stand with the AJC. Each of you received a pledge card in your Haggadah. Will you join me in helping AJC to defend our values and define our world?

Our religion may be ancient, our Exodus from antiquity, yet our memories are fresh. The memory of our liberation remains strong—and with your help, we can keep the hope for redemption alive for all peoples, in our own day, by work that is worthy of us all.

Rabbi Perlman will now conclude the 2018 Seder. Rabbi Perlman.