

The Columbia Commune Churchill

Free Haggadah

The Passover seder

קדש - ורחץ - כרפס - יחץ - מגיד - רחצה - מוציא - מצה
מרור - כורך - שולחן עורך - צפון - ברך - הלל - נירצה

KADESH - URḤATZ - KARPAS - YAḤATZ - MAGID - RAḤTZA - MOTZI - MATZAH
MAROR - KOREIḤ - SHULḤAN OREIḤ - TZAFUN - BAREIḤ - HALLEL - NIRTZAH

We are gathered tonight to retell the story of the exodus from Egypt. “Seder” means “order”, and “haggadah” means “the telling”. This meal is at once an opportunity to recall our history, a ritual substitute for the Passover sacrifice that was offered in the Temple days, and a celebration of the freedom we now enjoy.

Breakfast on kosher macaroons and Diet Pepsi
in the car on the way to Price Chopper for lamb.

Peel five pounds of onions and let the Cuisinart
shred them while you push them down and weep.

Call your mother because you know she’s preparing
too, because you want to ask again whether she cooks

matzah balls in salted water or broth, because you can.
Crumble boullion cubes like clumps of wet sand.

Remember the precise mixing order, beating
then stirring then folding, so that for one moment

you can become your grandfather.
Remember the year he taught you this trick,

not the year his wife died scant weeks before seder
and he was already befuddled when you came home.

Realize that no matter how many you buy
there are never quite enough eggs at Pesach

especially if you need twelve for the kugel
and eighteen for the kneidlach and another dozen

to hardboil and dip in bowls of stylized tears.
Know you are free! What loss. What rejoicing.

—*R. Rachel Barenblat, “Order”*

Kadesh: Sanctification

Pour the first cup of wine, and read:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Baruch ata Adonai, eloheinu meleh ha'olam,
borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the first cup.

קדש

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel: I am God, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,

—*Exodus 6:6*^[1]

There are four expressions of redemption [in Exodus 6:6]: *I will bring you out, I will deliver you, I will redeem you and I will take you*. These correspond to the four decrees which Pharaoh issued regarding [the Jews]. The sages accordingly ordained four cups to be drunk on the eve of Passover to correspond with these four expressions, in order to fulfil the verse: *I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord*.

—*Shemot Rabbah*¹

We rededicate ourselves to liberation from tyranny: from the tyranny of poverty, the tyranny of war, the tyranny of ignorance and the tyranny of hate. And we light candles to shine as a beacon of liberation for our people and for all people. May the light of the candles we kindle tonight bring radiance to all those who live in darkness still; may this season, marking our deliverance of our people from servitude to Pharaoh, rouse us against anyone who keeps others in servitude; may we strive to bring about our own liberation and the liberation of all people everyone.

Blessed is the spirit of freedom in whose honor we kindle the lights of this holiday, Passover, the season of freedom. Blessed is the force of life that brings us to this year's spring, and to this renewal of our quest for freedom.^[S]

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret fastness of the heart.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

—*Hannah Szenes, "Blessed is the Match"*

¹Tr. Soncino

Urḥatz: Washing the hands

Wash your hands (without reciting a blessing).

ורחץ

We wash our hands to prepare ourselves for the Passover rituals.

Isn't it always the heart that wants to wash
the elephant, begging the body to do it
with soap and water, a ladder, hands,
in tree shade big enough for the vast savannas
of your sadness, the strangler fig of your guilt,
the cratered full moon's light fuelling
the windy spooling memory of elephant?

What if Father Quinn had said, "Of course you'll recognize
your parents in Heaven," instead of
"Being one with God will make your mother and father
pointless." That was back when I was young enough
to love them absolutely though still fear for their place
in Heaven, imagining their souls like sponges full
of something resembling street water after rain.

[. . .]

—Barbara Ras, "Washing the Elephant"

Karpas: The green vegetable

Distribute pieces of parsely, and dip them in saltwater.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה.

*Baruch ata Adonai, eloheinu meleḥ ha'olam,
borei p'ri ha'adamah.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the earth.

Eat the parsely.

כרפס

The green vegetable represents spring, and rebirth, renewal and growth. The salt water represents the tears we shed when we were slaves in Egypt.

The passover seder as we know it, however, actually originated in late antiquity, in Roman Palestine in the first centuries of the Common Era. That historical context is very important because both the very structure and format of the haggadah text reflects not only those conventions but also the inevitable cultural changes that occurred when Jews moved from Roman Palestine to other cultures in the Diaspora [. . .]

Let me give one brief example: The passage that we know as the Four Questions originally consisted of three, not four questions, and each question directly addressed one of the three symbolic foods eaten at the seder—the maror (which are the bitter herbs customarily eaten with ḥaroset) the matzah, and the Passover sacrifice. As it happens, each of these three foods also related to the three courses that were customarily eaten at a Greco-Roman banquet.

—Joseph Tabory, *The JPS Commentary on the Haggadah*

Blessed are you, underpaid migrant farmworkers, who create the fruit of the earth.^[S]

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come, and the voice
of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give
forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

—*The Song of Songs 2:11-13*^[1]

Yahatz: Breaking the matzah

Break the middle matzah, and set aside the larger piece as the afikoman.
Hold the remaining matzah up, and read:

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא
בארעא דמצרים.
כל דכפין ייתי ויכול,
כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח.
השתא קא, לשנה הבאה בארעא דישׂראל.
השתא עבדי, לשנה הבאה בְּנֵי חֹרִין.

*Halahma anya di aḥalu avhatana
b'ara d'mitzrayim.*

*Kol diḥfin yeitei v'yehol
kol ditzriḥ yeitei v'yifsaḥ.
Hashata baḥa, l'shanah haba'ah b'ara d'yisrael.
Hashata avdei, l'shanah haba'ah b'nei ḥorin.*

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate
in the land of Egypt.

All who are hungry, come and eat;
all who are needy, come and celebrate the Passover.
Now we are here; next year may we be in Israel;
now we are slaves; next year may we be free.

Pour (but not drink!) the second cup of wine.

According to one tradition, we recite this portion in Aramaic rather than Hebrew so that the angels (who can't understand Aramaic) don't take us up on our offer and crash the party.

Various reasons are given for breaking the middle matzah: to remind us that the task of liberation, like the matzah, is incomplete; or in commemoration of the time when we were poor and hungry. Another commentary tells us that the Hebrew slaves, making their way to freedom, couldn't know when their next meal would come, so they ate only a small amount of matzah and hid the rest for later.

It is written [Deut. xvi. 3]: "Bread of affliction" (lehem oni), and as "oni" can also stand for "proclaiming," the bread may be called "bread of proclamation," i.e., "bread over which proclamations should be made," and thus we have also learned [from the Oral Law]. Or "Oni" may still be called "poor," and for the reason that the benediction pertaining to the eating of the unleavened bread should be made over a broken piece after the manner of the poor.

—*Tractate Pesachim*²

While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free!

—*Eugene V. Debs*

This invitation appears to be presented at the wrong time, for Kiddush has already been recited, in the wrong place, for it is issued in the privacy of our own homes, and in a language, Aramaic, which most people no longer understand. [...] What purpose do these invitations serve?

The Pesach Seder is a celebration of our redemption and we are all guests of honor. To prevent the guests from feeling beholden to [host,] which would inhibit their involvement and participation in the evening, we begin the Seder by allowing the guests to invite others. The Talmud states "a guest is not permitted to invite other guests". However, a guest of honor has the right to invite whomever he chooses. The message we are relaying to all the participants is they are not merely guests beholden to the homeowner. Rather, they are all guests of honor, celebrating their own redemption. [...] The purpose of the invitation is for the guests already assembled, not for those who are absent.

—*R. Yochanan Zwieg, "Ha Lachma Anya"*

²Tr. Robinson

Magid: The Passover story

The four questions

The youngest person present recites:

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?
שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה, הלילה הזה כולו מצה.
שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות, הלילה הזה מרור.
שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת, הלילה הזה שתי פעמים.
שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין ובין מסבין, הלילה הזה כלנו מסבין.

Ma nishtanah halailah hazeh mikol haleilot?

Shebehol haleilot, anu ohlin hametz umatzah, halailah hazeh kulo matzah.

Shebehol haleilot, anu ohlin sh'ar y'rakot, halailah hazeh maror.

Shebehol haleilot, ein anu matbilin afilu p'am ehad, halailah hazeh sh'tei famin.

Shebehol haleilot, anu ohlin bein yoshevin uvein m'subin, halailah hazeh kulanu m'subin.

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On other nights, we eat leavened bread and matzah; tonight only matzah.

On other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs; tonight bitter herbs.

On other nights, we do not dip our food; tonight we dip twice.

On other nights, we eat upright or reclining; tonight we all recline.

Uncover the matzah, and read:

We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and our God brought us out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Now, if God had not brought our ancestors out from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children might still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, even if we were all wise, all understanding, all learned in the ways of Torah, we would still be obligated to tell the story of the Exodus. And indeed, everyone who dwells upon the features of the Exodus is praiseworthy.

מגיד

It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarphon were reclining [at a seder] in B'nei Berak. They were discussing the exodus from Egypt all that night, until their students came and told them: "Masters! The time has come for reciting the morning Sh'ma!"

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah said: I have lived to be a man of threescore years and ten, yet I did not understand why the story of the Exodus should be told at night until Ben Zoma explained it to me. He said: It is said, "That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life." (Deuteronomy 16:3) "The days of your life" would have meant the days only, but "all the days of your life" includes the nights also. The Sages of Israel explain it further: "The days of your life" refers to this world, while "All the days of your life" includes the time of the Messiah. ^[L]

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1. Why do we eat the bread of our neighbors, instead of inviting them over to break matzo with us and figuring out a way to give each other a place at the table in a free Middle East?
 2. Why do we swallow the bitter herbs of ethnocentrism, ultranationalism, and pharaonic fundamentalism [?]
 3. Why do we recline, most nights of the year, when our freedom remains incomplete, so long as the "giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism" are still at large in these lands?
 4. Why do we dip into the fountain of forgetting more than we dip into the charoset and the salt water of memory, which are meant to remind us not to do unto others as has been done unto us?

—Michael Gould-Wartofsky, "Liner Notes for a Freedom Seder"

The Seder is thus a giant yet intimate classroom, with the Haggada serving as the subject matter, and the father as the main educator entrusted with the role of engaging pupils in a discussion based on a question and answer format [...] in the hope of involving everyone present. Listening is passive and stagnant; far better to inquire, probe and analyze our oldest Jewish festival.

—Joe Bobker, "The Exodus Story and its Message"

Magid: The Passover story

The four children

The Torah speaks of four kinds of children: The wise child, the wicked child, the simple child, and the child who does not know how to ask.

The wise child asks: “What is the meaning of the testimonies, laws and judgments which God has commanded you?”

To that one, you explain all the laws of Passover, down to the very last detail about the Afikoman.

The wicked child asks: “What does all of this mean to you?” (Exodus 12:26)

By saying “you,” and not “we” or “me,” he excludes himself from the group, and denies God. Answer that child plainly: “This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:8) “For me, not for you: if you had been there in Egypt, you would not have been redeemed.”

The simple child asks: “What is this?”

Answer that one: “By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Exodus 13:14)

To the child who does not know how to ask, speak first, it is written: “And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:8) ^[L]

מגיד

Wise, wicked, simple, does not know how to ask. This order conforms neither to the order in which the children are mentioned in the Torah (Wicked, Simple, Does Not Know How to Ask, Wise), nor to the order of their moral standing, in which the wicked child should be last.

Rather, they are listed in order of their intellectual capacities: The wise child; the wicked child, who is also wise but whose insolence leads him to act wickedly; the simple child, who has at least enough intelligence to ask; and finally the one who does not know how to ask

—*Chabad*

When the wicked child says “What is this service to you?” we assume he is excluding himself. But doesn’t the wise child also refer to “the testimonies...that God our God has commanded to you”?

The wicked child makes no mention of God; the wise child refers to “God our God,” clearly including himself. He uses “you” in the sense of “you who came out of Egypt and received God’s commandments,” as opposed to himself who was not yet born when the commandment was given.

—*Mahzor Vitri* ^[1]

While the Four Sons differ from one another in their reaction to the Seder, they have one thing in common: they are all present at the Seder. [...] Unfortunately, in our time of confusion and spiritual bankruptcy, there is another kind of a Jewish child—a “fifth son”, who is conspicuous by his absence from the Seder; the one who has no interest whatsoever in Torah and commandments, laws and customs; who is not even aware of the Passover Seder, of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent Revelation at Sinai. [...]

Finding themselves a small minority, and encountering social and economic difficulties, some parents had the mistaken notion, which they transmitted to their children, that the way to overcome these difficulties is to become quickly assimilated into the new environment by discarding the heritage of their forefathers and abandoning the Jewish way of life. Finding that this process leads to the discomfort of inner spiritual conflict, some parents resolved to spare their children this conflict altogether. [...]

By this attitude, these parents hoped to assure their children’s existence and survival in the new environment. But what kind of existence is it, if everything spiritual and holy is traded for the material? What kind of survival is it, if it means the sacrifice of the soul for the amenities of the body?

—*R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson*

Magid: The Passover story

Exile, Bondage and Deliverance

If many people present don't know the full Passover story, consider reading the facing page instead.

Go and hear what Laban the Aramaean wanted to do to our father Jacob. Pharaoh had issued a decree against the male children only, but Laban wanted to uproot everyone. As it is said: "A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number; and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers, and he heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression. And God brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders.

"and he went down into Egypt" forced by divine decree.

"and sojourned there" not to settle, but only to live there temporarily, as it is said: "They said to Pharaoh, We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks because the hunger is severe in the land of Canaan; and now, please, let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." [. . .]

"great, mighty," as it is said: "And the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied and became very, very mighty, and the land became filled with them."

"and populous" as it is said: "I passed over you and saw you wallowing in your bloods, and I said to you 'By your blood you shall live,' and I said to you 'By your blood you shall live!' I caused you to thrive like the plants of the field, and you increased and grew and became very beautiful, your bosom fashioned and your hair grown long, but you were naked and bare."^[L]

I will sing unto God, for he has triumphed greatly.	Horse
and rider he has cast into the sea.	God is my strength and song, and he shall be
my deliverance.	This is my God, and I will glorify him; the God
of my father, and I will exalt him.	God is a man of war; God
is his name.	He has thrown Pharaoh's chariots and host into the sea, and sunk
his favorite captains in the Sea of Reeds.	

—Deuteronomy 15:1-4

מגיד

There was a famine in Canaan. So Jacob, his wives and his concubines, his sons, their wives, their children and their servants went down to Egypt. Jacob's people were shepherds, so the Pharaoh gave them land in Goshen for grazing, and they flourished there.

They had many children. Jacob died, then the Pharaoh, then all of Jacob's children, but by that time the Israelites were so numerous the new Pharaoh began to fear them. So he took away their fields and their flocks, and made them slaves. He set taskmasters over them, and forced them to build the granary-cities of Pitom and Ramses.

Still they multiplied, and still the Pharaoh was afraid. Finally he decided to destroy them entirely: He decreed that all the male children of the Israelites would be drowned in the Nile.

There was a woman, a Levite, who had a son and hid him for three months. When she could no longer conceal him, she placed him in a basket of bulrushes, and floated him on the Nile. The Pharaoh's daughter, bathing in the river, found him. She said, "This is an Israelite child, but I will raise him as my son." She drew him out of the river, and called him Moses, which means "who is drawn out".

Once, when Moses was older, he came across an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave. He was so enraged he struck the Egyptian, who fell down dead. Fearing punishment, Moses fled to the hills and lived there for years with a neighboring tribe.

One day, walking, he saw smoke. The smoke came from a bush, which burned but did not burn up in the fire. God spoke to Moses from the bush, and commanded him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. "Lord," said Moses, "I am slow of speech. Take someone else." God said "Then let your brother Aaron speak for you. You will put the words in his mouth, and I will put them in yours. You will lead the Israelites out of Egypt."

So Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh, and said "Let my people go." And Aaron threw his staff on the ground, where it became a snake. The Egyptian magicians also threw their staffs on the ground, and turned them into snakes, but Aaron's snake ate the others. Then the Pharaoh was afraid. But God hardened the Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

Then God sent plagues down on the Egyptians: he turned the Nile to blood, made it crawl with frogs and lice and gnats, afflicted the Egyptians with pestilence and boils, with hail and locusts, and he covered Egypt in darkness. After each plague Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh and said "Let my people go," and each time God hardened the Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

Finally God said to Moses: "Now you will go free. Let each Israelite family ask the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold: they will give it to you. Then let each Israelite family slaughter a lamb, and paint the door-posts of their house with lamb's blood." They did. That night, God sent the Angel of Death to Egypt, and the Angel went into each Egyptian house and killed each family's first-born son while he slept. But the Angel passed over the houses that were marked with blood.

In the night the the Pharaoh awoke and saw that his son was dead. He said to Moses and Aaron, "Rise up and go, leave as you have promised, and bless me." So the Israelites left in haste, carrying Egyptian gold and bread that had not yet risen. But soon the the Pharaoh changed his mind, and he chased after them with horses and chariots.

The Israelites came to the shore of the Sea of Reeds, and could not cross. God said to Moses "Lift up your staff, and stretch your hand out over the sea." Moses lifted up his staff, and stretched out his hand, and the sea parted. The Israelites crossed on dry land. They ran, chased by Egyptian chariots. But when the last of the Israelites stepped onto the far shore, the sea closed again. The Egyptians drowned, and we were free.

Magid: The Passover story

The plagues

Dip a finger in the cup, and spill a drop of wine on the plate as you read each plague. Don't lick your finger!

<i>Dam</i>	Blood	דָּם
<i>Tzfardea</i>	Frogs	צְפַרְדֵּעַ
<i>Kinim</i>	Lice	כִּנִּים
<i>Arov</i>	Beasts	עֲרוֹב
<i>Dever</i>	Pestilence	דֶּבֶר
<i>Sh'hin</i>	Boils	שָׁחִין
<i>Barad</i>	Hail	בָּרָד
<i>Arbeh</i>	Locusts	אַרְבֶּה
<i>Hosheh</i>	Darkness	חֹשֶׁךְ
<i>Ma'hat b'horot</i>	Death of the firstborn	מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

Then read or sing:

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים [. . .] דִּינוּ!
אלו נתן לנו את השבת [. . .] דִּינוּ!
אלו נתן לנו את התורה [. . .] דִּינוּ!

Ilu hotzianu mimitzrayim [. . .] dayenu!
Ilu natan lanu et hashabbat [. . .] dayenu!
Ilu natan lanu et hatorah [. . .] dayenu!

Had he only brought us out of Egypt, and not judged them, dayenu
(it would have been enough)!

Had he only judged them, and not their idols, dayenu!

Had he only destroyed their idols, and not their first-born, dayenu!

Had he only destroyed their first-born, and not given us their wealth, dayenu!

[. . .]

Had he only given us the sabbath, and not brought us to Mount Sinai, dayenu!

Had he only brought us to Mount Sinai, and not given us the Torah, dayenu!

Had he only given us the Torah, and not brought us into Israel, dayenu!

Had he only given us the Torah, and not built the temple for us, dayenu!

מגיד

We spill our wine so that our pleasure during the holiday is tempered in remembrance of the suffering of the Egyptians.

In that hour the ministering angels wished to sing before the Holy One, blessed be he. But he rebuked them, saying: "The work of my hands is drowning in the sea, and you would sing hymns?"

—*Sanhedrin 39b*

We still have a long, long way to go before we reach the promised land of freedom. Yes, we have left the dusty soils of Egypt, and we have crossed a Red Sea that had for years been hardened by a long and piercing winter of massive resistance, but before we reach the majestic shores of the promised land, there will still be gigantic mountains of opposition ahead and prodigious hilltops of injustice...let us go out with a divine dissatisfaction. [. . .]

Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Rabbi Yosi the Gallilean said: How do you know that the Egyptians were stricken by ten plagues in Egypt, and then were struck by fifty plagues at the sea?

In Egypt it says of them, "The magicians said to Pharaoh 'This is the finger of God.' At the sea it says, "Israel saw the great hand that the Lord laid against Egypt; and the people feared the L-rd, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses."

Now, how often were they smitten by 'the finger'? Ten plagues!

Thus you must conclude that in Egypt they were smitten by ten plagues, at the sea they were smitten by fifty plagues! ^[L]

Magid: The Passover story

The seder plate & second cup

Rabban Gamliel used to say: Whoever does not discuss the following three things on Passover has not fulfilled his duty: the passover-sacrifice, the matzah, and the maror.

Hold the shankbone, and ask:

This passover lamb that our ancestors ate in the days of the temple: why did they eat it?

Because the Lord passed over our ancestors' houses in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians with a plague.

Hold the broken matzah, and ask:

This matzah: why do we eat it?

Because our ancestors' dough did not have time to rise before the Lord revealed himself to them, and redeemed them.

Hold the bitter herb, and ask:

This maror: why do we eat it?

Because the Egyptians made our ancestors' lives bitter with hard labor, and with bricks and mortar.

Then read:

In every generation, let each one say that he himself came out of Egypt.

As it is said: "You shall tell your child on that day, 'it is because of what God did for me when I left Egypt.'"

Finally, hold up the wine, and read:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheinu meleh ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the second cup.

מגיד

and I will deliver you from their bondage,

—Exodus 6:6 (JPS)

Hold up the ḥaroset, and ask:

This ḥaroset, why do we eat it?

It has two symbolic meanings in the Seder: it reminds us of the hard Jewish labor performed with bricks and mortar; and it is sweet to counteract the bitterness of the maror, symbolizing the sweetness of freedom that followed the bitterness of slavery.

Hold up the egg, and ask:

This egg, why do we eat it?

The egg is traditionally a symbol of mourning – to remind us of the destruction of the Temple– but it is also a symbol of rebirth and new life that comes with the spring. We dip it in salt water, like the parsley, to remind ourselves of the rebirth of the Jewish people as a free people came from our tears in slavery.

Blessed are the chickens whose eggs we steal and eat. ^[S]

It's often reported that the tradition of placing an orange on the seder plate began after an angry theologian declared that there would be an orange on every seder plate before women became rabbis. In fact, the orange began as an expression of solidarity with lesbians, gay men and other marginalized members of the Jewish community, and was itself adapted from a feminist seder at Oberlin which put a piece of bread on the seder plate for the same reason.

According to Exodus 12:37-38, the Israelites numbered “about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children,” plus many non-Israelites and livestock. Numbers 1:46 gives a more precise total of 603,550. The 600,000, plus wives, children, the elderly, and the “mixed multitude” of non-Israelites would have numbered some 2 million people, compared with an entire Egyptian population in 1250 BCE of around 3 to 3.5 million. Marching ten abreast, and without accounting for livestock, they would have formed a line 150 miles long.

No evidence has been found that indicates Egypt ever suffered such a demographic and economic catastrophe or that the Sinai desert ever hosted (or could have hosted) these millions of people and their herds.

—Wikipedia

Raḥtza: Washing the hands again

Wash your hands, and individually recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

*Barukh ata Adonai, elohainu meleḥ ha'olam,
asher kidsḥanu b'mitzvotav,
v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who sanctifies us with your commandments,
and commands us to wash our hands.

רחצה

It is customary to refrain from conversation from now until the blessing over the Matzah, so that they can be spoken as a single blessing.

The earth is HaShem's, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.
For he hath founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the floods.
Who shall ascend into the mountain of HaShem?
and who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart

—*Psalm XXIV:1-5* ^[1]

[...]

It is our sorrow. Shall it melt? Ah, water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these valleys,
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands.

—*W. H. Auden, [Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys]*

My soul melteth away for heaviness; sustain me according unto Thy word.

—*Psalm CIX:28* ^[S]

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin. [...]
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness;
that the bones which Thou hast crushed may rejoice.

—*Psalm LI:4,9-10* ^[S]

Motzi: Blessing the bread

Matzah: Blessing the matzah

Hold all three pieces of matzah, and recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Barukh ata Adonai, elohainu melekh ha'olam,
hamotzi lehem min ha'aretz.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

Break the top and middle matzah into pieces, and distribute them around the table. Continuing to hold only those pieces, read:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

*Barukh ata Adonai, elohainu melekh ha'olam,
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav,
v'tzivanu al ahilat matzah.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who sanctifies us with your commandments,
and commands us to eat matzah.

מוציא מצה

It is said that Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev discovered that the young girls who kneaded the dough for matzah worked from early in the morning until late at night. Every 17 minutes, the workers had to scrub their hands, to be sure that no particle of yeast remained on their fingers that might leaven the next batch of dough; by the end of a shift, their hands were chapped and bloody. The Rabbi pronounced the matzah treyf because it was produced through oshek (the oppression of workers), and said: “They accuse us of making our matzah with the blood of Christians, but in truth we make it from the blood of our own people.” [S]

It is a mitzvah that the Passover matzot be made specifically for the purpose of fulfilling the obligation to eat matzot on Passover, as the verse (Exodus, 12:17) states: You shall guard the matzot. The matzah must be guarded to ensure that it does not become chametz; matzah which was not guarded may not be used on Passover.

How do we “guard” the matzah used on Passover?

From the time that the wheat is taken to the mill to be ground into flour, it is kept under careful supervision to make sure that it does not come into contact with water or other moisture. We check it to ensure that the wheat is clean and whole.

The grinding, packing, and transporting of the wheat from the mill to the bakery is done under close supervision, to ensure that the ground wheat does not come into contact with water, and all of the utensils used for processing the wheat must be clean and dry.

The wheat is not baked on the same day on which it was ground, for it is still warm from the processing and would therefore ferment and become chametz more rapidly. It is watched while it is being kneaded to ensure that this is not done near an oven or open window which is exposed to the sun, lest the dough become hot and ferment quickly. [...]

—Chabad

It is a Torah mitzvah to eat matzah on Seder night. Jewish law defines an act of “eating” as swallowing a kezayit within two to four minutes (kiday achilat pras). If this is difficult, you may sip some water while eating. At the very least, the matzah must be consumed within nine minutes. The time begins not with the first bite, but with the first swallow. Therefore, you can gain some extra time by chewing up some matzah before taking the first swallow. A kezayit is approximately 45-50 cc, which is roughly two thirds of a square matzah, or one half of the hand-made round matzah.

—Aish HaTorah

Maror: Blessing the bitter herb Koreih: Hillel's sandwich

Take a spoonful of maror. Dip it in the ḥaroseṭ, then shake the ḥaroseṭ off.
Now recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

*Barukh ata Adonai, elohainu meleḥ ha'olam,
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav,
v'tzivanu al ahilat matzah.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who sanctifies us with your commandments,
and commands us to eat maror.

Distribute the third matzah. Take a spoonful of maror and a spoonful of ḥaroseṭ, and place them between two pieces of matzah in a sandwich. Say:

Thus did Hillel, in the days of the Temple, combine the Passover lamb, the matzah and the maror and eat them together, as it is said: "They shall eat it with matzah and bitter herbs."

מרור כורך

Using mortar and bricks, the Jewish slaves, who were foreigners, the children of refugees from famine in Canaan, built the pyramids. The charoset reminds us of the mortar, a symbol of unrewarded toil. Tonight we eat charoset to remember all exploitation of immigrant labor. Just as many Jews in this country once worked in sweatshops, immigrants continue to work long hours for poverty wages. We remember how our ancestors' work enriched the lives of the Egyptians, and challenge ourselves to think about the ways that many of us currently benefit from exploited labor. Immigrants plant, pick, and process our food; sew our clothes; take care of our children; and clean our homes and offices. For Jews, the descendants of slave laborers who built the pyramids, such profit should never be sweet. Instead, we take the sweetness of charoset as a symbol of resistance and the possibility of liberation for all.

—*Jews for Racial & Economic Justice*

The bitter maror stimulates our sense; let us use it as a stimulus to action, to remind us that struggle is better than complicit acceptance of injustice. We taste the bitter herbs and recognize the bitter consequences of exploitation, the loss of lives and the waste of the powerful potential of all people. In memory not only of the Temple built by the Jews in Jerusalem that was destroyed first by the Babylonians and then by the Romans, but also in memory of all cultural artifacts destroyed cruelly in wars, we do as Rabbi Hillel did in the times of the Temple.

Blessed are you, who grated this bitter herb and put it in a jar so that we didn't cry bitterly grating it ourselves. ^[S]

We must understand these two forces, that of servitude and that of freedom, not as separate forces which operate independently, each with its own role, but as two joined, complementary forces...

The overall goal will be realized only with the knowledge and recognition that these two forces are not contradictory, but are joined in creating the world's ultimate Freedom, the honor and the powerful desirability of which is not revealed unless it is crowned by exalted Servitude, servitude before the King of Glory, which is also the ultimate freedom.

Therefore, the perfect form of Freedom comes when it is bound together with Servitude, such that a person will find within himself the total control which is suitable for a truly free person, who reigns as well upon the greatest of forces, which is the force of freedom itself.

—*R. Yitzchak Kook, "Haggadah shel Pesach"*

Shulḥan Oreih: Eating

The meal

שולחן עורך

is served.

Tzafun: The hidden

If the afikoman has been hidden, find it.

If the afikoman has been ransomed, pay for it.

Once you have the afikoman back, share it among all the members of the group. This should be the last thing you eat tonight.

צפון

In most families, it is customary to hide the matzah during yaḥatz. At this point in the evening the children search for the matzah, and a prize is awarded to the one who finds it.

Traditionally, it's even less straightforward. The seder cannot proceed until the afikoman has been eaten, and so the child who holds it finds herself with an excellent bargaining token. Rather than simply being given a prize, she uses the matzah to extort a gift of her choosing from the adults.

As mentioned before, the structure of the Passover seder appears to be modeled, at least in part, after a Greek symposium. At this point in the evening, the Greeks would begin the *epikomion*—after-dinner entertainment featuring drunken revelry, flute music and group sex.

“If some of them fell asleep, they may eat [the afikoman when they awake]; if all of them fell asleep, they must not eat.”

In the latter case they have ceased to think about the Paschal lamb; when they awake it is as though they would eat in two different places, sleep breaking the continuity of action and place, and thus it is forbidden.

—*Tractate Pesahim*³

The Afikomen is hidden away during Yachatz (division ceremony) at the beginning of the Seder. Many families have the custom to allow the children to steal the Afikomen. If we are trying to teach our children about Torah, how can we teach them to steal?! The Afikomen represents the future redemption which is hidden from us. Matzah, which must be eaten only after eating an appetizer to make us hungry, represents a passion for truth. Eliyahu HaNavi, whom we symbolically welcome with a fifth cup of wine on Seder-night, “will return the heart of the parents to the children and the children to the parents.” The “gap” that prevents one generation from relating to a previous one is our biggest problem. When a generation takes the potential they have been given, and misappropriates it by not applying it to Torah which is the one thing that can help us bridge the gap between all past generations, they are stealing our future hope. We want our children to steal the Afikomen instead; they should crave the “quest” for Torah, represented by the matzah of the Afikomen, so that our final hidden redemption can be revealed.

—*R. Uziel Milevsky*

³Tr. Soncino

Bareih: Blessing after the meal

The Grace After Meals

Pour the third cup of wine.

(If including the Song of Ascents, pick a translation from the facing page.)

Read:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
הזן את העולם בלוי בטובו בחן בחסד וברחמים
הוא נותן לחם לכל בשר פי לעולם חסדו.
ובטובו הגדול תמיד לא חסר לנו,
ואל יחסר לנו מזון לעולם ועד.
בעבור שמו הגדול, כי הוא אל זן ומפרנס לכל
ומטיב לכל, ומכין מזון לכל בריותיו אשר ברא.
ברוך אתה יי הזן את הכל.

*Baruh ata Adonai, elohenu meleh ha'olam
hazan et ha'olam kulo b'tuvo b'chein b'hesed u'vrahimim.
Hu notein lehem l'hol basar ki l'olam hasdo.
U'vtuvo hagadol tamid lo hasar lanu,
v'al yehsar lanu mazon l'olam va'ed.
Ba'avur shemo hagadol, ki hu elzan um'farnes lakol
umetiv lakol, umehin mazon, l'hol b'riotav asher bara.
Baruh ata Adonai, hazan et hakol.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe
who feeds the world with goodness, kindness and mercy.
He gives food to all the world, for his kindness is everlasting.
Through his great goodness we have not lacked food;
and may we never lack it until the end of time,
for his name's sake. For he sustains all,
does good to all, and provides food to all the creatures he created.
Blessed are you, Lord our God, who feeds all.

A song of ascents:
 When God returned the exiles to Zion,
 we were like dreamers.
 Then our mouths were filled with
 laughter
 and our tongues with song;
 then it was said among the nations:
 “God has done great things for
 them.”
 God has done great things for us,
 and we rejoiced.
 Return us, God, from our exile,
 like streams in the desert.
 The ones who sow in tears
 will reap in joy;
 the ones who go out weeping,
 carrying sacks of seeds,
 will return in joy,
 bearing sheaves of wheat.

—*Psalm CXXVI*

A song of ascents:
 When we returned from far away
 Our home looked as it looks in dreams:
 The sun shines, gates swing
 Open of themselves, and someone
 Sings a song we had forgotten
 As we now remember laughter.
 Then strangers said, Great things
 Were done for them.
 The Lord
 Did great things for us then. A good.
 But you must do great things again,
 Because we live with heaviness
 And twist and scatter like a river
 Delta bogged in marsh and reeds.
 We started sadly so we'd end up
 Smiling, for anyone begins, sows
 Seed with tears to reap his own,
 The happy harvest, no?

—*Psalm CXXVI*¹

This is the part where we say thank you. Traditionally, we say thank you to God; here we will instead thank those who resisted oppression. They have sustained us, both spiritually and materially, so that we too can come to resist and fight back against the forces oppress us.

It was at Passover time in 1943 that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising took place. On that day, April 19th, began the revolt against the Nazis who had come into the Ghetto of Warsaw to complete the deportation of the remaining Jews. 40,000 civilians were led by the Jewish Fighting Organization, several hundred young women and men armed with ancient guns and home-made Molotov cocktails. Confined in a small area of the Ghetto, they were unable to maneuver beyond a few city blocks. The leadership perished in the bunker at 18 Mila Street on May 8th; no one surrendered. For weeks thereafter, small groups of resistance fighters emerged to battle the Nazis from behind rubble and wreckage. Resistance continued until the Nazis burned the entire Ghetto to the ground in September 1943—six months after the uprising began. ^[S]

¹Tr. Wieder

Bareiḥ: Blessing after the meal

The third cup and Elijah's cup

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruḥ ata Adonai, elobeinu meleḥ ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

**Drink the third cup, and pour the fourth. Fill a cup for Elijah as well.
Then open the door, and read:**

Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee,
And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.
For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his dwelling-place.

—*Psalm 79:6-7*

Pour out thine indignation upon them,
And let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

—*Psalm 69:24*

Persecute and destroy them in anger
From under the heavens of the Lord.

—*Lamentations 3:66*⁴

Now sing:

אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי, אֱלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי
בְּמַהֲרָה יָבוֹא אֵלֵינוּ עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד.

*Eliyahu hanavi, Eliyahu hatishbi, Eliyahu hagiladi.
Bimheira v'yameinu, yavo eileinu, im mashiach ben David.*

Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah of Gilead.
Quickly, in our day, come to us with David's son the messiah.

⁴Tr. Webster

and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.

—*Exodus 6:6 (JPS)*

In the diaspora, this craving for revenge was both understandable and ineffective. But the founding of the state of Israel has changed the situation completely. In Israel, Jews are far from being defenseless. We don't have to rely on God to take revenge for the evils done unto us, past or present, real or imagined. We can pour out our wrath ourselves, on our neighbours, the Palestinians and other Arabs, on our minorities, on our victims.

That is the real danger of the Haggadah, as I see it. It was written by and for helpless Jews living in perpetual danger. It raised their spirits once a year, when they felt safe for a moment, protected by their God, surrounded by their families

[...] So, on this Seder evening, let our feelings be guided by the noble, inspiring part of the Haggadah, the part about the slaves who rose up against tyranny and took their fate in their own hands—and not the part about pouring out our wrath.

—*Uri Avnery*

Three thousand years ago, a farmer arose in the Middle East who challenged the ruling elite. In his passionate advocacy for common people, Elijah sparked a movement and created a legend which would inspire generations to come.

Elijah declared that he would return once each generation in the guise of someone poor or oppressed, coming to people's doors to see how he would be treated. Thus would he know whether or not humanity had become ready to participate in the dawn of the Messianic age. He is said to visit every seder, and sip there from his cup of wine.

—*R. Rachel Barenblat, "The Velveteen Rabbi's Haggadah"*

Today we know that there is no Messiah coming; we must be our own Messiahs, bringing our own redemption and liberation, just as the Jews brought themselves out of Egypt and into freedom. So while we continue to open the door for any who care to come in, Elijah's cup is to be drunk by all who wish to at the Seder tonight; for we must sustain ourselves in our ongoing struggles.^[S]

Hallel: Songs of praise

Read from the facing page. Then recite:

יִשְׁתַּבַּח שְׁמֶךָ לְעַד מְלָכֵנוּ,
הָאֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ,
כִּי לָךְ נָאֵה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
שִׁיר וּשְׁבָחָה, הַלֵּל וְזִמְרָה, עֹז וּמִשְׁלָה, נִצָּח,
גְּדֻלָּה וּגְבוּרָה, תְּהִלָּה וְתַפָּאֲרִית, קִדְשָׁה וּמַלְכוּת,
בְּרָכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת מִעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל בְּתַשְׁבָּחוֹת,
אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת, אֲדוֹן הַנִּפְלְאוֹת, הַבוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירֵי זִמְרָה,
מֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי הָעוֹלָמִים.

*Yishtabach shimcha l'ad malkeinuu
ha'el hamelech hagadol v'hakadosh bashamayim u'v'aretz
ki l'cha na'eh, Adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu
shir u'sh'vaha, hallel u'v'zimrah, oz u'memshalah, netzah,
g'dulah u'g'vurah, t'hilah v'tiferet, k'dushah umalhut,
brahot v'hoda'ot me'atah v'ad olam.
Baruch ata Adonai, El melech gadol batishbachot.
El haboda'ot, Adon hanifla'ot, Haboher bshirei zimrah
Melech el chai haolamim.*

Let your name be praised forever
God, great King, holy in heaven and earth,
For yours, Lord our God and God of our ancestors,
is song and praise, celebration and psalm, power and dominion, and victory,
greatness and strength, worship and glory, holiness and splendor,
blessing and thanks, now and forever.
Blessed are you, God, god and great King,
God of thanksgiving, Master of wonders, creator of souls, delighter in song,
Lord and life of worlds.

One more time:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the fourth cup.

Were it our mouths were filled
 with a singing like the sea,
 Our tongues awash with song,
 as waves-countless,
 And our lips to lauding,
 as the skies are wide,
 And our eyes illumined
 like the sun and the moon,
 And our hands spread-out
 like the eagles of heaven,
 And our feet as fleet as fawns,
 Still, we would not suffice
 in thanking You, Lord
 God-of-us [...]

—*Nishmat Kol Hai*¹

and I will take you to Me
 for a people, and I will be
 to you a God.

—*Exodus 6:6* ^[1]

For once when I cried out somebody listened:
 The Lord took my complaint for a song
 Belted at the top of my lungs
 In a shower of troubles, good
 Even if off key. Surrounded by death
 Loving liars, by fires banked inside
 My nature, I stumbled over simple things:
 A shoe untied, the pillow never smooth,
 A night cough, hum of strangers' tires.

The gift has been given. So, low but alive,
 I said what I believed: that greed succeeds
 Where grace can not, that one idea can kill
 A world of simple pleasures, cup and spoon.
 Stir them. Don't speak quickly, savor
 The hot cider, candied ginger on the tongue,
 Heavy cloud shrugged off my shoulders.
 I promise to be more than one of those
 (What, still alive? He lived? He died?) who
 never

Show their heart or read the lips of mumblers
 In the public record: I call upon the Lord,
 Am called upon, to praise in easy words:
 A truth should come out plain and make good
 sense,
 So truth will find a friendly audience.

—*Laurance Wieder*

Glory be to God for dappled things—
 For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
 And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
 Praise him.

—*Gerard Manley Hopkins*

¹Tr. Englander

Nirtzah: Conclusion

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם!

L'shanah haba'ah b'yerushalayim!

Next year in Jerusalem!

Sing!

Who knows one oh?

Ehad mi yodea?

I'll sing you one, oh:

One is God in heaven and earth
and evermore shall be so.

[...]

Thirteen are the attributes of God

Twelve are the tribes of Israel

Eleven are the stars in Joseph's dream

Ten are the ten commandments

Nine are the months of pregnancy

Eight are the days of the *b'rit milah*

Seven are the days of creation

Six are the books of the Mishnah

Five are the books of the Torah

Four are the Matriarchs

Three are the Patriarchs

Two are the tables of the covenant

One is God in heaven and earth
and evermore shall be so.

Had gadya, had gadya.

(An only kid, an only kid)

[...]

Then came the Holy One, blessed be
he,

and destroyed the angel of death,

who slew the butcher,

that slaughtered the ox,

that drank the water,

that quenched the fire,

that burned the stick,

that beat the dog,

that bit the cat,

that ate the kid

my father bought for two *zuzim*.

Had gadya, had gadya.

נִירְצָה

This is the year that squatters evict
landlords,
gazing like admirals from the rail
of the roofdeck
or levitating hands in praise
of steam in the shower;
this is the year
that shawled refugees deport judges
who stare at the floor
and their swollen feet
as files are stamped
with their destination;
this is the year that police revolvers,
stove-hot, blister the fingers
of raging cops,
and nightsticks splinter
in their palms;
this is the year
that darkskinned men
lynched a century ago
return to sip coffee quietly
with the apologizing descendants
of their executioners.

This is the year that those
who swim the border's undertow
and shiver in boxcars
are greeted with trumpets and drums
at the first railroad crossing
on the other side;
this is the year that the hands
pulling tomatoes from the vine
uproot the deed to the earth that sprouts
the vine,
the hands canning tomatoes
are named in the will
that owns the bedlam of the cannery;
this is the year that the eyes

stinging from the poison that purifies
toilets
awaken at last to the sight
of a rooster-loud hillside,
pilgrimage of immigrant birth;
this is the year that cockroaches
become extinct, that no doctor
finds a roach embedded
in the ear of an infant;
this is the year that the food stamps
of adolescent mothers
are auctioned like gold doubloons,
and no coin is given to buy machetes
for the next bouquet of severed heads
in coffee plantation country.

If the abolition of slave-manacles
began as a vision of hands without
manacles,
then this is the year;
if the shutdown of extermination camps
began as imagination of a land
without barbed wire or the
crematorium,
then this is the year;
if every rebellion begins with the idea
that conquerors on horseback
are not many-legged gods, that they too
drown
if plunged in the river,
then this is the year.

So may every humiliated mouth,
teeth like desecrated headstones,
fill with the angels of bread.

—*Martín Espada*

May we see the day when war and bloodshed cease—when a great peace will embrace the whole world. Then nation shall not threaten nation, and humankind will not again know war. [. . .] Fulfill the promise conveyed in Torah: “I will bring peace to the land, and you shall lie down and no one shall terrify you. I will rid the land of vicious beasts, and it shall not be ravaged by war.” Let love and justice flow like a mighty stream. Let peace fill the earth as the waters fill the sea. And let us say: Amen.

—*R. Nachman of Breslov*

A brief history of this haggadah

During my undergraduate years, the annual cobbling-together of a haggadah from assorted prayer books, Maxwell House freebies and miscellaneous online snippets grew into a March ritual of its own. The haggadah, once constructed and wine-baptized, was invariably lost—and, in an echo of the pagan springtime ceremony from which Passover likely derives, refashioned anew each year. This document is an attempt to stabilize the process.

Every haggadah is a palimpsest, but this one more than most. Its immediate progenitor, which I refer to here as the “Commune Haggadah”, was used in 2011 and 2012 (and possibly earlier) by an eponymous collective of Columbia students who identified—some ironically and some with deadly seriousness—with various worldwide socialist movements. The Commune Haggadah appears to have itself been substantially plagiarized from an earlier “Socialist Haggadah” (with the full cooperation of the latter’s author), about which I have been able to determine only that it was prepared by a friend-of-a-friend, one Eve Goodman, from an intimidating list of scholarly sources between the years 2003 and 2010.

This is not a Marxist holiday, nor a Marxist haggadah. Nevertheless the basic story of Passover is the liberation of the oppressed by overwhelming historical forces, and the basic impulse of the Commune Haggadah was good. It, and its predecessors, still constitute the spiritual (if no longer the textual) core of the present document. I can only hope that, transplanted with its keeper, the Haggadah you now hold will flourish as we have in Cambridge’s strange soil.

Sources

All text prepared new for this version is hereby released into the public domain. The following sources have been instrumental in assembling the remainder of this document:

- Hebrew text is traditional; my reference has been the Chabad Haggadah.⁵
- Translations of biblical text are from the (public-domain) 1917 JPS Version,⁶ and marked ^[1].
- Some translations of traditional commentary are from the Chabad Haggadah, and marked ^[L].
- Alternative commentaries from the Socialist Haggadah are marked ^[S].

Other borrowings (the bulk of this haggadah) are noted in-place. All texts not in the public domain are subject to the copyright of their respective owners, and included here for educational purposes.

⁵http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1735/jewish/The-Haggadah.htm

⁶[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_\(Jewish_Publication_Society_1917\)](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(Jewish_Publication_Society_1917))