

# FORWARD HAGGADAH

Eli, Eli

אלי, אלי  
שלא יגמר לעולם

Shelo yigamer le'olam:

Hachol vehayam  
Rishrush shel hamayim  
Berak hashamayim

החול והים  
רשרוש של המים  
ברק השמים

Tefilat ha'adam.

תפילת האדם

Oh Lord, my God  
I pray that these things never end:

The sand and the sea  
The rush of the waters  
The crash of the heavens

The prayer of the heart.



## SHALOM, CHAVERIM — WELCOME FRIENDS

Welcome to the Passover seder, a tradition begun to honor the Mitzvah instructed in the Book of Exodus: “You shall keep the feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of Egypt. You shall observe this day throughout the generations as a practice for all times.”

We began tonight by singing Eli Eli, a poem by paratrooper Hannah Senesh, who died on a mission to save Hungarian Jews destined for Auschwitz. It is altogether fitting and proper that we

should remember our Exodus from Egypt with this poem, as it was written in a time of war, by a woman who sacrificed her own life to fight for freedom and peace.

The story of Passover is one of bravery and humility, of hope and despair. As we retell that story tonight let us remember all of the Seneshes of the world who have fought or are fighting for the freedom of their people, for the freedom of all people to be who they are and to live in peace.

## WHAT IS A HAGGADAH?

*Seder* is Hebrew for “order”; *Haggadah*, for “the telling”. But the seder’s order is more than a service, and the Haggadah is more than its tale. In that spirit, Rabbi Gamiel, one of the great classical commentators, taught that it is our duty to rewrite the Haggadah: “All who go beyond telling about the departure from Mitzrayim — all these are worthy of praise.” Our Haggadah tonight has retained the order, but the content is adapted for this home. And each of you is invited to add whatever thoughts or comments you feel may be appropriate, or worthy, or provocative (best of all!) at any time. Like the Israelites going into the wilderness, tonight at least we’ll follow our beliefs into our uncertainties and perhaps beyond to some sense of certitude.

Pacifist author and activist Grace Paley has said: “Haggadah makers are storytellers who love history and tradition enough to live in it and therefore by definition to be part of its change.”

Medieval French Rabbi Rashi has argued that the beginning of the Torah – *b’reyshit b’rah elohim eyt ha’shamayim v’eyt ha’aretz* — can be translated as “For the sake of the Torah, God created the heavens and the Earth.” It is the story of our people that has kept us alive throughout the ages; it is the re-telling of this story that reminds us how to honor that story.

Let us move beyond the rudimentary order of the seder and explore how we live in this history and tradition.

## FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY

For it is said: every person, in every generation, must regard his or her self as having been personally freed from bondage in Mitzrayim. And where is Mitzrayim? In the Torah, it is the land of Egypt, but the name stems from the Hebrew word for narrow, constrained, or inhibited. It is thus the narrow place, the

place that squeezes the life out of the human soul and body. No one place is always Mitzrayim but any place—even our own—can be turned into one. So tonight, let us dedicate ourselves to break out of our own narrow straits. And tonight, let us honor all people who have struggled and are struggling for their freedom.

### Who can say we've actually left?

“Wherever you live, it is probably Egypt,” Michael Walzer wrote.

Do you live in a place where some people work two and three jobs to feed their children, and others don't even have a single, poorly paid job? Do you live in a community in which the rich are fabulously rich, and the poor humiliated and desperate? Do you live among people who worship the golden calves of obsessive acquisitiveness among people whose children are blessed by material abundance and cursed by spiritual impoverishment? Do you live in a place in which some people are more equal than others? In America, the unemployment rate for African-Americans is nearly twice as high as it is for whites. Black people are five times as likely to be incarcerated as whites. America is absolutely a golden land, and for Jews it has been an ark of refuge.

But it has not yet fulfilled its promise.

The same is true for that other Promised Land.

Jewish citizens of Israel have median household incomes almost double that of Arab citizens and an infant mortality rate less than half that of Arabs. Israel represents the greatest miracle in Jewish life in two thousand years—and its achievements are stupendous (and not merely in comparison to its dysfunctional neighbors)—and yet its promise is also unfulfilled. The seder marks the flight from the humiliation of slavery to the grandeur of freedom, but not everyone has come on this journey. It is impossible to love the stranger as much as we love our own kin, but aren't we still commanded to bring everyone out of Egypt?

At this time we would like each member of our seder to describe their own Mitzrayim. What constrains you? Or if that is too personal, what about your

friends, or community, or country...?  
What can the rest of us do to help you fight for meaningful freedom?

## LIGHTING CANDLES



We are taught from that great leader of a struggled people, MLK Jr: Only light can drive out darkness, only love can drive out hate. Let us take a moment to imbue these candles with the darkneses we have just mentioned. And throughout the night, let us take the melting candles as a symbol for the power of a flame to melt away even our greatest struggles.

Blessed are you, adonai, our God, protector of the universe, who makes us holy by your commandments and commands us to light these lights for your holy day.

Light the candles as we say together:

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech  
ha'olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvotav,  
l'hadlik neir shel yom tov.

ברוך אתה ה' א-לוהינו, מלך העולם, אשר  
קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של יום  
טוב

## THE FIRST CUP

On Passover, we are commanded to drink four cups of wine to commemorate the four promises God made to the Israelites to reference their freedom from Egypt:

- 1) "I shall *take you out*..."
- 2) "I shall *rescue* you..."
- 3) "I shall *redeem* you..."
- 4) "I shall *bring* you..."

There is a fifth promise of freedom that God has given us: a time of world peace led by the mashiach. In every generation, a person is born with the potential to be this mashiach, but he or she will not be revealed until we are worthy of their leadership. Elijah the prophet is said to be the harbinger of this mashiach, so let us welcome him with a glass of wine.

Pour a cup for Elijah and set outside, then raise the first cup of wine as we say together:

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech  
ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafon

ברוך אתה ה' א-לוהינו, מלך העולם,  
בורא פרי הגפן

## K'ARAH — SEDER PLATE

The first item on the seder plate is traditionally Z'roah, or a lamb shank bone. For our seder we have used a beet root instead. As we will note later, we should never take violence lightly, and so we have chosen not to spill blood unnecessarily for our seder.

Another rare item on our seder plate is the tapooz, or orange. The origin of the orange is recalled by Professor Susannah Heschel, thus:

In the early 1980s, the Hillel Foundation invited me to speak at Oberlin College, where I discovered a tradition among students, where they placed a crust of bread on the Seder plate as a sign of solidarity with Jewish lesbians who were unaccepted in the Jewish community (just as bread would be unacceptable on a seder plate). However, bread on the Seder plate brings an end to Pesach - it

renders everything chametz. And its symbolism suggests that being lesbian is being transgressive, violating Judaism. So at the next Passover, I instead placed an orange on our family's Seder plate. I felt that an orange was suggestive of something else: the fruitfulness for all Jews when lesbians and gay men are contributing and active members of Jewish life. In addition, each orange segment had a few seeds that had to be spit out - a gesture of spitting out, repudiating the homophobia that poisons too many Jews.

The other, traditional, items on the seder plate are the beitzoh (hard-boiled egg), the maror (bitter herb), charoset (fruit and nut mixture), and karpas (green vegetable). On another plate we have the final symbol: matzo (unleavened bread). We'll discuss each symbol during the course of the seder.

## UR'CHATZ — WASHING THE HANDS

Before we wash our hands, we remember a time when this tradition brought with it that great irony of being Jewish: better hygiene saved us from the black death in 14th century Europe, only to bring massacres of Jews when we were accused of causing the plague

because of our relative health. We should take this as one more reminder that it is not enough to work toward health and safety in our own communities; we shall only have peace ourselves when all others have peace as well.

Go to the sink, and pour water three times over each hand as you say:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al netilat yadayim.

ברוך אתה ה' א-לוהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על נטילת ידים.

## KARPAS

The Karpas, or dipping of parsley, has many symbolic meanings as part of the Passover Seder, here are four well-known examples:

**1** to symbolize the act that originally led the Israelites into Egypt. The only place in the entire Torah that mentions the word “karpas” is in reference to Joseph’s (amazing technicolor dream) coat that brought the envy of his brothers — in Hebrew “karpas” means fine linen. Joseph’s brothers dipped this coat in blood to convince Jacob that Joseph had died (when they had in fact sold him into slavery). We dip our karpas in salt water to remember this act.

**2** to reflect on the duality of slavery and freedom. The Hebrew כרפס (“karpas”) is related to the Greek word καρπός (“karpos”), which gives us the meaning of a green vegetable - a symbol of life and health. While the Hebrew כרפס (“karpas”) backwards gives us ס (samech), which can stand for 600,000

(the number enslaved), and פרכ (“perech”) which stands for spirit-breaking labor. With this, we honor the lives of our ancestors and recall the tears they shed while enslaved.

**3** to symbolize the springtime. Historically, Passover has been an agricultural feast and so any celebration of freedom would naturally include the first green vegetables of the season. By starting the seder with this symbol of a renewed season of life, it also reminds us that despite all the talk of despair—slavery, plagues, wicked children...—passover is a celebration of life.

**4** to inspire wonder. The act of dipping parsley twice into salt water is meant to bait members of the seder into asking questions. Indeed, one of the four questions that we will ask later stems from this act.

Does the dipping of karpas into salt water mean anything different to anyone here?

Dip your parsley in salt water twice, then eat it

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha'olam, boray p'ri ha adamah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאָדָמָה

## BEITZOH

Eggs are also a symbol of springtime, fertility, and life-giving. We are reminded of the Pharaoh’s threat to kill new-born Jewish babies and of the courageous mid-wives who refused to carry out his

orders. The hard-boiled egg also tells us that “the longer things are in hot water, the tougher they become.” We eat the eggs with salt water to taste the tears which accompany birth and death.

## LO YISA GOY

Let us sing this song together of hope and renewal:

Lo yisa goy el goy cherev, lo yil-m'du od mil-chamah      בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא  
פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה

*And everyone 'neath her vine and fig tree shall live in peace and unafraid,  
and into ploughshares beat their swords, nations shall learn war no more.*

## YAHATZ, A BOND FORMED BY SHARING

LEADER: Now I break the middle matzo and conceal one half as the afikomen. Later we will share it. Among people everywhere, sharing of bread forms a bond of fellowship. For the sake of our redemption, we say together these ancient words in Aramaic, which join us with all who are in need.

We recite together in Aramaic and then in English:

Ha lachma anya di achalu avahatana b'ara d'Mitzrayim. Kal dichfin yeitei v'yeichul. Kal ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach. Hashata hacha, l'shanah haba'ah b'ara d'Yisrael. Hashata avdei. L'shana haba'ah b'nei chorin.      הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיא דִּי אַכְלוּ אַבְהַתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא  
דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכַפִּין יִיתִי וַיְכַל. כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ  
יִיתִי וַיִּפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָּא הַכָּא. לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה  
בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָּא עַבְדֵּי. לְשָׁנָה  
הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין

*This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in need come and celebrate Passover. Now we are here. Next year in the land of Israel. Now we are slaves. Next year we will be free.*

## The seder is an exercise in moral optimism.

Look around at all the symbols arranged on the table. They either remind us of suffering—of tears and of bitterness, and of a God too distant who allows the groans to go on too long—or they speak of a hopeful future—of spring and of fertility, and of a next year that will see us safe in a Jerusalem of peace. The afikomen is the symbol that bridges the gap between the tear-stained past and the happier future. It embodies the faith that there is always a way, concealed though it might be, to make the transition from the suffering that we know to the future that we dream. The belief in moral progress is of the essence of the seder's optimism. It is of the essence of a people's faith. And so we have the ritual of deliberate concealment, of taking the very thing needed to conclude the seder and hiding it, just in order to reveal it at the last possible moment. The philosopher Wittgenstein famously wrote, "Of what we cannot speak we must remain silent." All religious rituals, perhaps like all art, are attempts to gesture toward what cannot be spoken, to invoke it and make it palpable, a sense of the world too immense to be summed up in words.

## FOUR QUESTIONS

Fill the second cup of wine (but don't drink it!). Join the youngest person, who chants:

Mah nishtanah, ha-laylah ha-zeh,  
mi-kol ha-leylot?

מה נשתנה, הלילה הזה  
מכל הלילות

**1** She-b'khol ha-leylot 'anu 'okhlin  
chameytz u-matzah,  
ha-laylah ha-zeh, kulo matzah?

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין  
חמץ ומצה  
הלילה הזה, כלו מצה

**2** She-b'khol ha-leylot 'anu 'okhlin  
sh'ar y'raqot,  
ha-laylah ha-zeh, kulo maror?

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין  
שאר ירקות  
הלילה הזה, כלו מרור

**3** She-b'khol ha-leylot 'eyn 'anu  
matbilin 'afilu pa'am 'echat,  
ha-laylah ha-zeh, shtey pe'amim?

שבכל הלילות אין אנו  
מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת  
הלילה הזה, שתי פעמים

**4** She-b'khol ha-leylot 'anu 'okhlin  
beyn yoshvin u-veyn m'subin,  
ha-laylah ha-zeh, kulanu m'subin?

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין  
בין יושבין ובין מסבין  
הלילה הזה, כלנו מסבין

*Why is this night different from all other nights? That on all other nights we may eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night only unleavened bread? That on all other nights we may eat any species of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs? That on all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night twice? That on all other nights we eat and drink either sitting or leaning, but on this night we all lean?*

## THE FOUR CHILDREN

The sages speak of four kinds of children who view the Seder in four different ways and so ask different questions:

**1** The wise child asks: What does this all mean? This child should be taught about the details of the Seder. Talk with this child about the nature of

freedom and justice and about the need to act to transform the world.

**2** The isolated child asks: What does this mean to all of you? And in so doing, isolates him or herself from the community of the Seder. This child should be answered by saying: Join us tonight. Be fully *here*. Listen closely. Sing



and read and dance and drink. Be with us, become a part of us. Then you will know what the Seder means to us.

**3** The simple child asks: What is this? This child should be told: We are remembering a long time ago in another land when we were forced to work for other people as slaves. We became a free people and we are celebrating our freedom.

**4** Then there is the child who is too young to ask. We will say: Sweetheart, this wondrous evening happens in the spring of every year, so that we may remember how out of death and sorrow and slavery came life and joy and freedom. To remember the sorrow we eat bitter herbs; to remember the joy we drink sweet wine. And we sing of life because we love ourselves and each other and you.

**5...?** On this night, we remember a fifth child. This is a child of the Shoah, the Holocaust, who did not survive to ask.

Therefore, we ask for that child — why?

But we are like the simple child. We have no easy answer.

And so we answer the child's question with silence.

In silence, we remember that dark time. In silence, we remember the seder nights spent in the forests, in the ghettos, and in the camps; we remember that seder night when the Warsaw Ghetto rose in revolt.

And then in silence, we remember that that is exactly how the world responded to our cries—with silence.

And in silence, we realize that Jews, despite all, have preserved their image of God only in their resounding outcries for life.

And so, despite all, we struggle to answer the question aloud: so that there will never again be a fifth, or a sixth, or so many unspeakable numbers to and for whom we must be answerable.

And there are so many other questions that we might ask. Any question is a way in. And every question is an act of freedom and of life. So let us begin.

## MAGGID: THE NARRATIVE

The word *Maggid*, the narrative, as well as the word *Haggadah*, the telling, derive from the root word, *gid*, Hebrew for “ligament.” A ligament is the connecting tissue of the body, and in religious usage

refers in particular to the ligament of the inner thigh, connecting the thigh to the groin. It is there that Jacob was struck when he wrestled with the messenger of God and became Israel. And it was that

ligament that was torn and gave him a limp ever after. The *Maggid* thus recreates the impact that changed Jacob into Israel and so the story has served as

the tissue, connecting one generation to the next. It is this story, the continuing impact of which has made Israel Israel.

## AVADIM HAYINU

Let us sing together:

Avadim hayinu, hayinu!  
Ata b'nei chorin, b'nei chorin!  
Avadim, hayinu! Ata, ata, b'nei chorin, b'nei chorin!

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ. הָיִינוּ!  
עֲתָה בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין, בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין!  
עֲבָדִים, הָיִינוּ! עֲתָה, עֲתָה,  
בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין, בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין!

*Because we were slaves to Pharaoh, in Mitzrayim, and adonai our God brought us forth from there with a mighty hand, and an arm outstretched to sow seed; and if the most Holy, blessed be You, had not brought forth our ancestors from Mitzrayim we and our children and our children's children would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Mitzrayim.*

In each and every generation, we Jews retell the story of the exodus, because it is an archetypal tale we have experienced or witnessed time and again throughout our 4000 year history: the sadly universal story of a people's migrations, of their initial commitment to and success in the adoptive lands and cultures; of the rise of nativistic resentments and xenophobic hatreds, of economic exploitation, discrimination, and ultimately violent reactions. We retell this story because it is the key to our continued existence as Jews. We retell it so that we are constantly alert to its repetition, lest it befall us yet again, or lest it befall others and we remain indifferent to their plight—in either of which cases our existence as Jews is threatened. We either recognize and respond to injustice and oppression from

the very depth of our being, or we cease to be Jews.

In that venerable Hebrew text *The Fiddler on the Roof*, Perchik teaches Tevya's young daughters about the story of Jacob and Laban: How Laban tricked Jacob into working for him for seven years under the pretense that Jacob would have permission to marry Laban's daughter Rachel, only to marry him to Leah instead (with whom he had six sons). It is only after another seven years of labor that Jacob is finally given permission to marry Rachel (with whom he had his favorite son, Joseph). This, Perchik says, is why you cannot trust an employer. Despite this seeming trivialization of the circumstances (the most abhorrent of which is the treatment of Laban's daughters as property to be

bought from their father), it is fitting that Perchik finds much to dislike in Laban's treatment of Jacob. Many rabbis have hypothesized that if Jacob had been allowed to marry Rachel in the first place, he may have rightfully given favor to his oldest child, preventing the jealousy of Joseph's brothers and thereby preventing the Jews' descent into Egypt.

In any case, Joseph was *not* the oldest child, and his brothers *were* jealous, and they *did* sell him into slavery. However, Joseph proved too clever for slavery and was able to convince the Pharaoh to make him a trusted adviser. Joseph eventually was appointed to run the equivalent of Egypt's public works program and ingratiated the other migrant Jews to the Egyptians through his work for the Egyptian underclass.

Because Joseph had helped the immigrant Jews become comfortable in Egypt, many of them did not feel the need to make exceptional contributions to the society. Instead of fighting inequities and problems in society as Joseph had done, the Jews who came after him took their place in society for granted. Before long, the Egyptians grew to resent this successful foreign race, leading to their enslavement.

Eventually, Egypt was doing so poorly that a new Pharaoh decided to scapegoat the Jews even further in order to bring a sense of unity to his people.

And so he ordered his chief midwives to slay all males born to Jewish women. Rather than cooperate, however, the midwives – Shifra and Pu'ah — lied to the Pharaoh in order to let the babies live. Once the Pharaoh found out, he ordered his soldiers to kill all newborn Jewish males. And thus newborn Moses' mother Yochevet and sister Miriam placed him in a basket in the river where he was found by the Pharaoh's daughter. And thus Moses was raised to be a prince of Egypt.

The Torah notes that when Moses grew up he began to watch his people slave away for his adoptive father. One day he noticed an Israelite being whipped by an Egyptian; and once no one else was around he killed that Egyptian. However, his actions were not unnoticed and he was forced to flee or face death.

While in hiding, Moses met Jethro, a sheik of a nomadic clan, and he married one of Jethro's daughters. (Much later, Miriam criticized Moses for having married a black, non-Jewish woman and in return, God gave Miriam leprosy.)

After ten years of Moses' working for Jethro, a new Pharaoh had begun to lead Egypt. And yet the situation of the Jews had not improved. And the Jews finally spoke to God and asked him to free them from their slavery. And God heard them and remembered his covenant with Israel.

By saying God remembered, we are implying that God had forgotten. Which is a pretty shocking idea: God chose us, and then forgot us. Only by wailing did we remind him of our existence. But God's problem is our problem as well. We're masters of forgetting: about prejudice and unfairness, wars and genocides, hunger and misery. We're busy; we're overwhelmed; we're callous. So what reminds us of injustice in the world? Wailing. Protest. Complaining. Suffering in silence is not a Jewish virtue. Complaining is a Jewish virtue, because dissatisfaction is a particularly Jewish characteristic. Sometimes we are dissatisfied by trivial matters, by issues of money and status and luxury. But one of the joys of being Jewish is membership in a group that is eternally dissatisfied with the way things are. We are, at our core, a messianic people. We dream of a better time, when the entire world will make the journey from slavery to freedom. And how will that journey begin? By opening our mouths. Wherever people gather to express dissatisfaction with the way things are—on the environment, on taxes, on immigration, on civil rights and social policy and foreign policy—you will find Jews leading the fight. Often, you will find Jews leading both sides of the same dispute. It was remarkable to watch the struggle over the Bush administration's decision to go to war in Iraq: Jewish advisers to Bush were key in making the case, while Jews in Congress and in the media led the charge against intervention. At times, the argument took on the appearance of an intramural dispute. Throughout history, Jews have been agitators for change. Jews are disproportionately active in the politics of dozens of countries; in America, more than 10 percent of the US Senate is Jewish (Jews make up 2 percent of the population), and Jews register to vote, and turn out to vote, in much higher percentages than any other group.

The question arises: Do Jews who agitate so ardently for change do so as Jews, or because they are Jews? Is there something embedded in the Jewish cultural DNA—the memory of Moses' calling, perhaps—that sparks a desire to change the world? Or is it just coincidence?

Back to the story: once God remembered his covenant, he chose Moses to free his people and so he appeared in a burning bush and commanded Moses to return to Egypt.

When Moses returned to Egypt, the new Pharaoh – Moses' step brother – refused to let the Jews go. And so Moses called on God to help convince Pharaoh.

## MAKOT MITZRAYIM: THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

It is said that God had an option when deciding how to free the Israelites from Mitzrayim. He could have armed us. He could have led us on a crusade to get out or die trying. He could even have given us overwhelming force and protection to ensure none of us died in the process. But instead, God's hands are the only ones that are dirty. And in fact, at the moment in which the most innocent of lives are taken — the first born children and animals of Egypt — God tells us explicitly to stay indoors: “And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.”

While many of the Israelites would no doubt have loved to take revenge, or at least have wanted to feel empowered to

fight for their own freedom, they are instead told to stand aside and let God do it for them. Why is this?

One possible explanation is to acknowledge that man's impulses toward vengeance and revenge are too great to trust us with violence. While there may sometimes be no choice but to kill to defend ourselves, we must remember that even when we were enslaved, God did not trust us with the task of murder. Like birth, death is God's work (or perhaps like birth, only women should be trusted with the task), and we must retain a great deal of humility if we choose to kill or support the killing of others — even those as oppressive as the slaveholders of Egypt.

It is in this spirit that we dip a finger into our wine glass and drip a drop onto our plate as we list each of the ten plagues. We do this to remind ourselves that blood was spilled for our freedom, and that we must always be sensitive to the suffering of others. We do not lick our finger when we are done.

1) Blood	Dam	דָּם
2) Frogs	Ts'fardayah	צְפַרְדֵּי
3) Lice	Keeneem	כְּנִים
4) Beasts	Orov	עֲרוֹב
5) Plague	Dehver	דָּבַר
6) Boils	Sh'cheen	שַׁחִין
7) Hail	Bahrad	בָּרָד
8) Locusts	Arbeh	אַרְבֵּה
9) Darkness	Hoshech	חוֹשֶׁךְ
10) Slaying of first born	Mahkat b'chorote	מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

We now raise the beet root (a non-violent alternative to the shank bone) and remember that in Egypt, before there were mezuzot, we marked our allegiance to Adonai and declared ourselves Israelites through the blood of a sacrificial lamb. This marking allowed the angel of death to “pass over” our homes when executing the tenth plague.

Our impulse is to run from this moment, to pretend that our merciful God has not transformed Himself into a God who snuffs out the lives of children. But this story exists for a reason, and perhaps not the one often assumed. The plagues suffered by the Egyptians are meant not merely to serve as expedient metaphors. This is a political story, yes, but one with a harsh and morally problematic lesson about the price of freedom.

There is no such thing as an immaculate liberation. From time to time—in the Velvet Revolution of the former Czechoslovakia, for example—liberation has been achieved without the shedding of blood. But it is naïve to think that the defeat of evil comes without cost. Today, we retreat in disgust at the thought of collective punishment: Justice punishes the guilty and spares the innocent. And yet how else could we describe the plagues? And don't we sometimes behave today as the God of Exodus behaved? Don't we impose sanctions on dictatorships and by so doing cause hardship for the guiltless? Haven't we made heroes of men who have deliberately taken the lives of thousands of innocents? Three of the most revered presidents in American history—Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Harry Truman—inflicted merciless punishment on civilians. The causes they stood for were just, but did the innocent sufferers deserve their fate? Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart against the Jews, even after it seemed Pharaoh was ready to let them go? Did God want to make a point—"Don't even think of challenging me"? Why did America shower death on Nagasaki, when it seemed that the Japanese were readying themselves to surrender? Was the firebombing of German cities so necessary as to neutralize all moral qualms? The Exodus story ends in freedom for Jews; the Civil War ended with freedom for African-Americans; World War II ended with fascism utterly vanquished, and the death camps liberated. Can we say that the ends didn't justify the means?

After the tenth plague, the Pharaoh agreed to let the Israelites leave Egypt. And even though the Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after the Israelites, we escaped because a man named

Nachson decided to step into the Red Sea to his death, rather than return to slavery. Because he showed he was ready for his freedom, God parted the Red Sea and let the Israelites through.

## MI CHAMOCHA

Sing together the ancient song sung by the Israelites when they passed through the Red Sea

Mi chamocha, ba'elim, Adonai?

Mi kamocho, nedar bakodesh, nora tehillot, osei feleh?

מִי כַמֹּכָה בְּאֵלִים יי  
מִי כַמֹּכָה נֹאדָר בְּקֹדֶשׁ, נוֹרָא תְהִילֹת, עֹשֶׂה ,  
פֶּלֶא

## DAYENU: WHEN IS ENOUGH ENOUGH?

Read responsively:

If you had freed us from slavery yet we had not passed through the sea in safety...

DAYENU!

If we had passed through the sea in safety yet not survived in the desert...

DAYENU!

If we had survived our sojourn in the desert yet not had the mitzvah of Shabbat...

DAYENU!

If we had learned to rest on Shabbat, yet never knew the stories and laws of Torah...

DAYENU!

If we had studied the stories and laws of Torah yet never entered the land of Israel...

DAYENU!

If we had settled in the land of Israel and never built a temple there...

DAYENU!

If we had built a temple and had no wise people to share their vision with us...

DAYENU!

If we had wise people who saw truth and spoke it to us and we were not wise enough to take it to heart...

DAYENU!

If we were wise enough to take it to heart and never lifted a hand to make it happen...

DAYENU?

We would probably still be in Egypt!

Why do we say dayenu — “It would have been enough”? Surely no one of these would indeed have been enough for us. Instead, dayenu helps us to celebrate each step toward freedom *as if* it were enough, then to start out on the next step. It means that if we reject each step because it is not the whole liberation, we will never be able to achieve the whole liberation. It means to sing each verse as if it were the whole song—and then sing the next verse!

## DAYENU

Sing together

Illo hotzianu mimitzrayim,

Dayeinu!

Illo natan lanu et hatorah,

Dayeinu!

Illo natan lanu et hashabbat,

Dayeinu!

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים

דינו

אלו נתן לנו את התורה

דינו

אלו נתן לנו את השבת

דינו

## THE SECOND CUP

Our rabbis taught:

“The sword comes into the world because of justice delayed and justice denied.”

“God is urgent about justice, for upon justice the world depends.”

Let us drink the second cup to resistance.

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech  
ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafon

ברוך אתה ה' א-לוהינו, מלך העולם,  
בורא פרי הגפן

## MOTZI

We now recall that when the Israelites were finally granted permission to leave Egypt they raced out as fast as they could, in case (*how prescient!*) the Pharaoh changed his mind. In this rush they didn't leave time for their bread to rise and so they were forced to eat unleavened bread – matzo. It is thus the most fundamental reminder of the character of oppression, but also of the urgency of ending oppression.

Let us therefore recite together the blessing over the matzo with an English version that begins to move our thoughts beyond the symbol and fact of oppression to at least one concrete

aspect of freedom that our society needs to address with urgency. The wealthy nations and the wealthy in those nations have burned fossil fuels without regard for the effects it would have on the livelihood of the poor. We have finally received scientific consensus via the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the dramatic effects of our actions. “Severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts” are at hand they have written; unless we act quickly, “the horrible is something quite likely, and we won't be able to do anything about it.” And yet, they note: “We have a closing window of opportunity. We do have choices. We need to act now.”

Blessed is the Earth, which has brought us this bread.

It is a mitzvah to ensure our descendants can share in this blessing.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu, melech  
ha'olam, hamotzi lechem min ha'arets.

ברוך אתה ה' א-לוהינו, מלך העולם,  
המוציא לחם מן הארץ

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech  
ha'olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvotav, al  
ah-cheelat matzah.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר  
קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת מצה



## MAROR

This is the bitter herb, a reminder of the bitterness of slavery. Tonight when we taste the bitter herb, however, let us consider the bitter consequences of all

forms of oppression – of exploitation and of neglect – whether in the actual or practical loss of lives from the waste of human potential.

Together, we say:

Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu melech  
ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tsivanu al acheelat mahror

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

## CHAROSET

This is charoset, the reminder of the brick with which we were forced to labor in Mitzrayim. Taste it, savor it and ponder why the sweetness? Surely it is yet

another affirmation of that fundamental goodness and sweetness of life that is the ground work on which our beliefs are grounded.

## KORECH: THE HILLEL SANDWICH

The great sage Hillel lived at the time of the Holy Temple, when eating the Passover sacrifice was a part of the Passover obligations. Instead of eating the three foods separately (matzah, bitter herbs, meat from the sacrifice) he would make a sandwich combining the three. To commemorate Hillel's sandwich ("korech"), Jews do the same today, eating the Hillel sandwich (with charoset replacing the meat).

By combining the sweetness and bitterness of our seder symbols, we accept life in all its complexities.

Hillel viewed the bitter parts of his life, particularly the hardships of poverty that God bestowed upon him, positively. So, while his life appeared difficult, he was able to understand that it was God's will and ultimately for a good reason.

Symbolized in the sandwich is Hillel's positive approach to all the hardships in his life.

Let's eat!

Next year in Yerushalayim!

## ASSORTED READINGS

ANNE FRANK

“It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can’t build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too; I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again. In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.”

MLK JR. ON THE EVE OF HIS DEATH

“We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop, I won’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over, and I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land. So I’m happy tonight. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”

RABBI TARFON

“It is not your obligation to complete the task of Tikkun Olam, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

RABBI HILLEL

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

“The teaching of Judaism is the *theology of the common deed*. The Torah insists that God is *concerned with everydayness, with the trivialities of life*. The great challenge does not lie in organizing solemn demonstrations, but in how we manage the commonplace. The prophet’s field of concern is not the mysteries of heaven, the glories of eternity, but the blights of society, the affairs of the market place. He addresses himself to those who trample upon the needy, who increase the price of grain, use dishonest scales, and sell the refuse of corn. The predominant feature of the biblical pattern of life is unassuming, unheroic, inconspicuous piety, the sanctification of trifles, attentiveness to details.”

## ASSORTED SONGS

### LET MY PEOPLE GO

When Israel was in Egypt's Land,  
Let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let  
my people go.  
Go Down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old, Pharaoh,  
Let my people go

"Thus saith the Lord," bold Moses said,  
"Let my people go,  
If not I'll mite you first born dead,  
Let my people go."  
Go Down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old, Pharaoh, Let my people go

No more shall they in bondage toil,  
Let my people go;  
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,  
Let my people go.  
Go Down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old, Pharaoh,  
Let my people go

When people stop this slavery  
Let my people go  
Soon may all the earth be free  
Let my people go  
Go Down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land  
Tell old, Pharaoh, Let my people go

### LECHI LACH

Lechi lach — to a land that I will show you  
Lech lecha — to a place you do not know  
Lechi lach — on your journey, I will bless you  
And you shall be a blessing (3x) lechi lacy

Lechi lach — and I shall make your name  
great  
Lech lecha — and all shall praise your name  
Lechi Lach — to a land that I will show you  
L'simchat chayim (3x) lechi lach

### HATIKVA

Kol od baleivav p'nima  
Nefesh y'hudi homiya  
Ul-fa-atei mizrach kadima  
Ayin l'tziyon tzofiah  
Od lo av'da tikvateinu  
Hatikva sh'not alpayim  
Lih-yot am chofshi b'artzeinu  
Eretz Tziyon Virushalayim

### PHARAOH PHARAOH

*Chorus:*

Pharaoh pharaoh whoa baby let my people  
go

A burning bush told me just the other day  
That I should got to Egypt and say  
It's time to let my people be free  
Listen to God if you won't listen to me.

Well me and my people going to the Red Sea  
With Pharaoh's army coming after me  
Took my staff put it in the sand  
And all of God's people walked on dry land

Well Pharaoh's army was a-coming too  
So what do you think that God did do?  
Had me take my staff and clear my throat  
And all of Pharaoh's army did the dead  
man's float

Well, that's the story of the stubborn goat  
Pharaoh should have known that chariots  
don't float  
The lesson is simple it's easy to find  
When God says "Go!" you had better mind

## EHAD MI YODEA IN LADINO

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo es el uno, qualo es el uno?  
Uno es el Creador, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los dos, qualo son los dos?  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los tres, qualo son los tres?  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los cuatro, qualo son los cuatro?  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los cinco, qualo son los cinco?  
Cinco libros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los sesh, qualo son los sesh?

Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco libros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los siete, qualo son los siete?  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco libros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los ocho, qualo son los ocho?  
Ocho dias de brit mila,  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco libros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los nueve, qualo son los nueve?  
Nueve mezes de la prenyada,  
Ocho dias de brit mila,  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco libros de la lei,

Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los diez, qualo son los diez?  
Diez mandamientos de la lei,  
Mueve mezes de la prenyada,  
Ocho dias de brit mila,  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco livros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los once, qualo son los once?  
Once estrellas de sueno de Yossef,  
Diez mandamientos de la lei,  
Mueve mezes de la prenyada,  
Ocho dias de brit mila,  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco livros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los doce, qualo son los doce?  
Doce trivos de Yisrael,  
Once estrellas de sueno de Yossef,

Diez mandamientos de la lei,  
Mueve mezes de la prenyada,  
Ocho dias de brit mila,  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco livros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo  
criense,  
Qualo son los trece, qualo son los trece?  
Trece anyos de complas minyan,  
Doce trivos de Yisrael,  
Once estrellas de sueno de Yossef,  
Diez mandamientos de la lei,  
Mueve mezes de la prenyada,  
Ocho dias de brit mila,  
Siete dias de la semana,  
Sesh sedres de la Mishna,  
Cinco livros de la lei,  
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah,  
Leah, Rachel,  
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y  
Yacov,  
Dos Moshe y Aaron, uno es el Creador,  
Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo