

# The Telling

A Traditional Passover Haggadah for  
Interfaith Understanding

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## *Rabbi Michael:*

Like many Jews, Passover has always been a special time for me since I was a child. The feelings of the Seder (the ritual meal and prayers celebrating the holiday) created by the prayers, food, and family gathering (and even the annual arguments that would happen) are a foundation stone in my Jewish life experience. I remember as a child how I would wait expectantly with my eyes focused on Elijah's cup, watching to see if I could see him drink the wine; or the fun involved with finding the Afikomen and then ransoming it from my dad. The pride of my family when I could finally chant the Four Questions in the traditional Hebrew and the delicious matzo balls and chicken soup that my grandmother would make are all part of what gave me the love for Judaism that I carry on this day as a Rabbi.

As I grew older and studied more, I became more and more entranced and in love with the deeper meanings of the Passover holiday. The exploration of personal slavery and what freedom really is in modern times; the deeper mystical meanings of each action of the Seder; and the powerful teachings of the holiday became integrated in how I lived throughout the year. When I was asked to write a Haggadah for a Seder for the National Conference of Christians Jews back in the 1990s, it allowed me to explore even deeper meanings of the holiday and see how it affected non-Jews as well.

This became even clearer when I was the Hillel Director and taught in the School of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University; a Jesuit Catholic University in Los Angeles. I would lead Seders each year for between 120 and 180 people, and many of them were not Jewish but came as part of their own spiritual journey. I learned more each year not only about the history and deep intentions of the Seder, but how important this ritual is for people of

all faiths. As a Jew on a Catholic campus, it became a yearly highlight of interfaith dialogue and experience, and was one of the peak moments of the school calendar for the Jewish and greater campus spiritual community. It brought together students in ways I could not have anticipated, and it was always ironic for me that often it was the non-Jewish students who looked forward to it even more than the Jewish students.

In 2012, I was blessed to meet Trish Vanni at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, an annual gathering of Catholics in Anaheim that brings together clergy, lay leadership, and “professionals” who work in a Catholic related industry. Trish was at the time the publisher at a Catholic publishing company, and we were discussing the possibility of my writing a book for her company. As we quickly resonated to each other theologically, and recognized a simpatico with a shared passion for interfaith work that transcends boundaries but honors each faith tradition fully, she shared with me a dream that she had wanted to create for years. She had attended meaningful Jewish Seders, and less meaningful attempts at Seders by different Church communities who had a good intent, but relatively little knowledge about the Seder experience. Trish told me that she wanted to be involved in creating a Haggadah (prayer book for the Passover Seder) that would be totally authentic to Jewish practices and teachings, but would be able to be used by non-Jewish communities so that they could have deeper and more meaningful experiences through the Seder. I shared with her how I also felt this was important, and added that there are a large amount of Jews who are not really familiar with the Seder structure and intent as well. The same text that she was proposing could be used for Jewish and interfaith families in their journey of understanding and appreciating the Seder in deeper ways. And so we began on the project that you are now reading.

For me, this could not have happened without the support and teachings of so many people in my lives. My teachers and Rabbis, especially Rabbi Arthur Gross Schafer, Rabbi Steve Robbins, Rabbi Barclay/Vanni © 2016

Stan Levy, Rabbi Elijah Schochet, and Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum have given me so much knowledge and led me to so many resources over the years that it would be irresponsible not to thank them...this work is built on their shoulders. All of the experiences I had as a young person at Camp Hess Kramer influenced me directly in my understanding of everything Jewish, and Steve Breuer and Chuck Feldman are men who influenced my Jewish-ness (as well as thousands of other young people) through their direction of camp. The amazing students I have had over the years, both as a congregational Rabbi and especially in teaching at LMU have always been sources of inspiration and understanding, and I honestly believe that I have learned more from them than they learned from me; especially with regard to creating a Seder that is effective for both Jews and non-Jews. And without Trish, this entire project would not exist. She is a blessing to me and to the world, and her respect for people of all faiths is delightful to be around, and surpassed only by her integrity and personal commitment to making the world a better place.

Without our collective ancestors of Moses, Aaron, Miriam and the Children of Israel who made that initial exodus from slavery, this Haggadah would obviously not exist. But it is equally important to me that my personal ancestors made sure to honor the commandment to tell the Passover story each year. My father, George Barclay, of blessed memory, was an amazing man. Although not always the most religiously observant Jew, he had a deep faith and Jewish understanding that has been a model for me throughout my life. Yes, as a little child I might have complained that the Seder lasted too long, but as an adult I am able to see the integrity and wisdom that he shared in the Seder experience by teaching his children to respect and love our traditions...especially the Seder. My grandmother of blessed memory, Rose Handler, was the manifestation of the "yiddishe mama"; and I know that without her love and support, not only would I be missing the deep love for Judaism that I have; but I doubt that I would have become a Rabbi like her father and his fathers before him. My brother John and

mother Iris, both again of blessed memory, always supported my journey into exploring the deeper meanings of each Jewish experience; and again, I am grateful beyond words.

I could not have written this book with Trish without the support and love of my wife Allison; who believes in me as a Rabbi, as a teacher, and as a man. As difficult as it is to be married to a Rabbi, she does it with grace and beauty; even when I suddenly invite multiple people to our Seder at the last minute.

Ultimately though, I have written this for my twin sons, Jonathan and Benjamin. They are the lights of my life, and the greatest teachers that I have ever experienced. They constantly teach me of Life, God, and give meaning to every moment. This book is for them, along with my prayer that they may teach their children B'ezrat HaShem (with God's help) even more and with greater skill than I do. Sons, this is my Passover gift to you: that you may always find the Afikomen in your life, and always choose freedom over slavery for yourselves and for the world.

Above all, I am grateful to the Creator, for taking us out of slavery and into freedom, and for giving me the opportunity to share the teachings of our tradition on a daily basis and through this book. May it bring more harmony in the world, and may the evils of slavery of all sorts be banished from the world through our efforts and with God's help; so that we may all see in our time a world filled with respect, love, and peace.

B'shalom u'vracha  
Rabbi Michael Barclay

## *Trish:*

Since I was a child, I have had a love of Judaism. I have two wonderful women to thank. They are my Vatican II-imbued, progressive thinking Roman Catholic mother, Sheila Sullivan, who encouraged me to understand the religions of my friends, and her dear friend Harriett Zeller, an equally open hearted Jewish woman of faith who wanted the same thing for her children. Year after year, our two families shared holidays, particularly Hanukkah and Christmas. Add to the two of them the openhearted Sybil Moses, who fed me hamentaschen alongside her children at Purim and brought me with them to Hebrew school to experience the sukkah at Sukot, and you see why I was a youngster who believed the God of Abraham was truly her God!

When I was thirteen years old, I had a profound religious experience that exponentially deepened my love of the Jewish faith. My father died suddenly. I come from a very big, very loving and very ethnic Irish Catholic family, so everyone, of course, rallied. We held a wake, and a funeral Mass, and buried my father in a sea of love and solidarity. In the early shock of this loss, the beautiful rituals of my community upheld all of us. But after a few weeks went by, I began to get the idea that I was supposed to be getting over this experience. Perhaps that was just the limited perspective of a child. But I couldn't shake the idea that I should somehow be moving on. And I wasn't.

Right around that time, my friend Barbara Rosen asked me if I wanted to go to Temple with her for Yom Kippur. About midway through the service, the Rabbi said to the congregation, "I would like everyone who has experienced the death of a loved one in this past year to stand now as we pray the Kaddish." Barbara leaned over and whispered to me, "Trish, you should stand up now." I was frozen. I whispered back to her, "I don't think I should." After all, I was a Catholic, some sort of interloper in this experience.

Without missing a beat, and with a kind of simultaneousness that I marvel at to this day, Barbara, who was seated at my right, took one elbow and her brother Larry, who was seated at my left, took the other elbow and they stood me up. They stood alongside me in the

Synagogue as I wept and heard the community praise the name of God.

Jewish readers will know that the Kaddish ends with the words: *He who makes peace in his high holy places, may he bring peace upon us*. The congregation said it in Hebrew but even though I didn't speak a word of Hebrew, I knew what it meant. I knew because I was overcome with the healing presence of God, the peace of God, the comfort of God. I knew to the core of my being that God was with me in my sadness and pain, and that God would not abandon me. I will never forget this moment, as it is the bedrock upon which my faith stands.

In the years that followed, I participated in the Seder many times at the home of Aunt Harriett, along with her daughters Lori and Randi, her son Barry, and their families. My children have dipped the bitter herbs and hunted for the Afikomen. I believe that because of this, when they have washed feet on Holy Thursday and have listened to the solemn proclamation of the Exodus at the Easter Vigil, they have been better Christians.

Not every Christian will be gifted by the Jewish community and the God of our Jewish fathers and mothers as directly as have I. I consider myself profoundly blessed. Still, all Christians can know Jesus Christ in a fresh and new way by coming to better understanding of the religious tradition that informed his human life. Although these practices, including those of Passover, have changed across the centuries, experiencing the traditions and celebrations that shaped Jesus while he lived and taught can help Christians become more just, more sensitive, and more supportive. And – I believe – more faithful.

I bring to this project my love of our faith traditions. I also bring my credentials as a pastoral minister and a liturgical theologian.

Finally, I must add that I praise and thank the God of all for the partnership, creativity and prayerfulness of my colleague and friend Rabbi Michael Barclay. Without him, this project, which is so close to my heart, could not have been accomplished. I also count among my greatest blessings my partner and spouse, Peter, and our three

inspiring and energizing children, Hanorah, Justin and Mairead. This labor of love is for my mother's grandchildren and Aunt Harriett's

grandchildren, and hopefully generations to come in our families and yours.

As my Irish ancestors would have said, Go mbeannaí Dia dhuit; May God bless you as you join us on the path to interfaith understanding!

Trish Sullivan Vanni

## Dedication

We offer a special thanks and honor to those teachers who have helped in the creation of this Haggadah. Contributions to it range from teachers around the globe, and span over two thousand years of philosophy. We especially honor Rabbi Elijah Schochet, Rabbi David Baron, Dov ben Khayyim, Rabbi Lawrence Goldmark, Stephen Breuer, Rabbi Alfred Wolf, Rabbi Edgar Magnin, Robert Kahn, Herbert Bronstein, Rabbi Steve Robbins, Rabbi Stan Levy, Rabbi Mel Gottlieb, Rabbi Mordecai Finley, Zev Garber, Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, Rabbi Adin Steinsalz, the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Alter of Gur), Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Rabbi David Silber, Aviva Cantor, Rabbi Arthur Gross-Schafer, Rabbi Barry Cytron, Harriet Zeller, Kevin Seasoltz OSB, Fr. Ed Foley and others too numerous to name who have so brilliantly interpreted, taught, and translated many of the prayers which we will be saying this evening. And above all, we honor and thank *HaShem*, The Lord our God, the Creator, for giving us this opportunity to fulfill the commandment in the book of Exodus 12:17, "You shall observe this day throughout the generations as a practice for all times."

And now we begin...

## Celebrating the Passover Festival Together

Welcome as we celebrate the Pesakh, the Passover Festival. This is a time for joy and relaxation, a time to lie on pillows and drink wine. A time to ponder our history, and a time to integrate that history into our lives and find its relevance today. And it has always been considered a time to renew our courage and hope in order to transform our planet into a planet of peace.

*Pesakh* mean "Passover," and refers to the night when the Angel of Death passed over the Jewish houses of Egypt, while inflicting sorrow and tragedy in the Egyptian homes. This occurred approximately 1200 years before the birth of Jesus, when 600,000 of our people were slaves in Egypt. The Festival was celebrated for the first time on the first anniversary of the Exodus from Egypt, and is the first holiday of the Jewish agricultural calendar---also being known as *Khag ha-Aviv*, the Festival of Spring. We celebrate the Earth's renewal, and mark not only the rebirth of the Earth's vegetation, but also the birth of the Jewish nation.

The Hebrew word for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, comes from the root, *Tzar*, meaning "narrow" or "inhibited" (ancient Egypt followed the narrow Nile. As a result, leaving Egypt has additional meaning for each of us today---that we may break our patterns of narrow-mindedness which keep us clinging to ignorance, hatred, prejudice, and other qualities that are not in harmony with our soul's purpose and heart.

This prayer booklet, called a *Haggadah*, which means "The Telling," is only a starting point, and if you have questions, it is important that you voice them, for the purpose of the telling is for us all to learn, experience, and re-experience again the tales and teachings of our ancestors---and make them applicable to our modern times.

Many of the rituals and customs included in this Haggadah date from the time of the Second Temple, and from years immediately following the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD. Some of the prayers are much older, and a few of the songs are as young as five hundred years old.

The home in which you sit and the meal which you will be eating will hopefully be prepared in the traditional and ritualistic fashion, as it has been done for over 3000 years. The word for this service, *Seder*, means “order,” as there is a specific order for each of the prayers and ceremonial foods that are to be consumed.

Why, you may wonder, would you want to add this Haggadah to your Passover table or bookshelf? And why on earth would a Rabbi and a Catholic scholar think a book like this is a valuable contribution? We’d like to tell you.

#### **“How is this Haggadah different?”**

No doubt if you are Jewish, you have observed Passover and possess a Haggadah – or a few – that you value. Your family copies may be lovingly worn from years of use. If you are a Christian, you may have been blessed to be at the table of friends or neighbors or experienced Seders conducted by your Christian community in the Easter season.

Today, hundreds of thousands of families have members that were raised in different faith traditions. Perhaps you are a Christian who has joined a Jewish family through marriage or another deep affiliation, or vice versa. This Haggadah is written for you. It honors both great faith traditions by providing Limud, or commentary, from both a Jewish and a Christian perspective. We hope that it will help you have a richer experience of this ancient and important Festival.

## **Non-Jews and the Passover**

This Haggadah is also written in response to recent trends among Churches and other spiritual groups. In recent decades, more and more Christian faith communities are gathering during the Easter season to celebrate a Passover meal together. Most do so out of an enormous sense of good will. They want to learn about and experience the Jewish faith and its practices. They recognize that to better understand Jesus, it is both intellectually useful and spiritually rich to understand the tradition into which he was born and which he practiced, as well as the people to whom his ministry primarily focused.

Some want to experience the Seder in an authentic way so that they can better understand the Jewish experience, and try to make up for the ignorance that created horrific anti-Semitism throughout the last two thousand years. Others are part of inter-faith families and want to be better able to relate to the Jewish members of their family.

Whatever the motivation, if your community decides to use a Passover experience as part of your spiritual growth, you need to understand that this practice is fraught with challenges. Many Jewish leaders, both rabbis and laity, have grave concerns and heartfelt objections to the practice of non-Jewish communities hosting Seder meals. Imagine if a group of non-Christians enacted a Eucharist as a means by which to better understanding Christianity. Would that be of concern to you? Very likely your answer is, "Yes." The Seder meal expresses the profound faith of Jews, who celebrate "this night that is different from all other nights." Christians cannot celebrate that core reality in the same way, because the Christian peak moment – the place in which "real memory" is stirred – is not Passover; but rather the life, death and resurrection of Jesus made present in the Eucharist. To somehow stream this profound moment of Passover into the life of Christianity is to risk supercessionism, the subsuming of Judaism into the Christian story, which historically has caused horrific violence.

On many levels, we agree with those who are hesitant about Seders held in non-Jewish communities and without a deeply Jewish context both spiritually and historically. We believe that the best possible way to experience the Seder as a Christian is to do so as a guest of a Jewish family or community. If you are interested in the Passover Seder, start by getting to know your Jewish friends more deeply and asking them about joining their celebration. Many families will consider it a joy to include you in this celebration, especially since one of the primary themes in the Seder is to “invite the stranger” and “let all who are hungry come and eat.” This does not just refer to a physical hunger. It is also about the spiritual yearning inside a soul to grow and learn through the Passover experience. Likewise, if you are a leader in a non-Jewish community, we encourage you to seek out and build a deeper relationship between a local synagogue and your congregation. If you decide to take on the responsibility of hosting a Seder meal, one of the most effective ways to do so is in partnership with your Jewish congregational brothers and sisters. We know of many such partnerships that have lasted for many years with both communities deeply valuing their time of prayer together over the Seder meal.

That said, despite reservations expressed by Rabbis, we find priests, pastors, ministers, scholars, and faith communities of all sorts do hold Seder meals. If you do not have a Jewish community as a partner or if you feel strongly that hosting a Seder would have value for your community, we invite you to hold that gathering in the most respectful and fruitful way possible. There are steps you can take to make the Seder experience reverent and authentic. We offer ideas here. While many come from the perspective of the Roman Catholic tradition, we hope that Christians of other denominations as well as people of any faith tradition will find them of use.

## Understand the experience

There is no better way in life to have a great experience of anything than to bring yourself to the moment fully prepared. This is particularly true in interfaith experiences, where you may be stretched beyond your current understandings or step outside the boundaries within which you are most comfortable. This, in fact, is one of the primary themes in the Passover story. The word for “Hebrews” in the Bible is “Ivrim,” which literally means “those who cross over.” Passover has always been about stepping outside of our comfort zones and boxes, and crossing over supposed boundaries into more full awareness and true freedom.

So spend time as a community – children, youth, and adults – to learn about the Seder, its significance and its history. Spend time with the story of the Exodus, which is found, in the Bible’s Book of Exodus (called “Shemot”, meaning “names” in the Hebrew Scriptures). Christians who share the Common Lectionary, the book of readings for Mass or Sunday worship, receive the Exodus story in bits and pieces over extended periods of time. It is featured throughout Lent in each of the three yearly cycles of the Church’s prayer. This story is so important that a reading from the Book of Exodus is even part of the Easter Vigil

Although you will hear the story of the freeing of Israel from captivity in Egypt during the Seder, take time to fully familiarize yourself with this powerful sacred story of covenant before you gather for the Seder. This means more than just looking at the text of Exodus, but taking time to read the oral traditions (“Midrashim”), stories, and practices throughout history in Jewish communities around the world. Explore this Haggadah thoroughly as an individual before choosing to lead the Seder, and you will be much more prepared for your own Exodus journey, and growth through an authentic Passover experience.

Next, ask yourselves, “What is our hope as a community for this experience?” Would you like to better understand Jesus? Better

understand the connections between the most significant Christian ritual, the Eucharist, and the Passover celebration? Become closer to your Jewish neighbors or family members? Perhaps you want to understand slavery, persecution, and redemption in a different way. So much is possible! This Haggadah offers you many focal points from which you can launch further explorations.

### **Passover in the Time of Jesus**

Many Christian congregations host a Seder in Lent in preparation for the experience of the Last Supper of Jesus, which is commemorated on Holy Thursday of the Easter Triduum. In the Gospel of Mark, we hear that Jesus sends his friends ahead to find a place where “I may eat the Passover with my disciples” (Mark 14:12-14). The Christian Gospels point to different possible moments for the Last Supper, either the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nissan (which would be the evening of the first day of Passover) or in the case of John’s Gospel, the day before Passover began that year. It is accepted by many that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, although it may have been one that differed in some ways from today’s approach.

With the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, the Jewish world needed a way to practice its rituals without a central religious location. The ancient Rabbis developed what is now known as a “portable homeland.” They created and adapted rituals and services based on the services of the Temple itself but that could be done in homes and other places of worship rather than a centralized Temple in Jerusalem.

Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the Passover celebration. The Seder became more structured and meaningful in the home as opposed to going to the Temple. The sacrifices of the Temple were replaced with “sacrifices of the heart”, and each prayer and action was a direct reflection of the more ancient Passover practices in Temple times. As you can see from the commentary in this Haggadah, some of the now-traditional parts of the Seder liturgy are later developments; and this has continued to modern times as

Rabbis have added parts to the Seder that are reflective of the Jewish experience.

Sadly, history has repeated itself over the last two thousand years, and Jews have been persecuted in a multiplicity of ways, culminating in the Holocaust of the twentieth century. And yet, Jews have retained their faith, and have seen the miracle of a modern State of Israel. It would be inappropriate for these experiences to not be included in the Seder, and so it has become the custom for more than a thousand years to add in liturgy that reflects these experiences. If you were to read a Haggadah from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (pre-Holocaust and Nazi Germany), it would be very similar to a modern Haggadah except that the modern ones include the experiences of the Holocaust and the subsequent independent statehood of Israel. .

Each Haggadah and Seder has its own customs as the rituals have been adapted around the world based on the unique experiences of the Jews in each locale. So we find practices in the Sephardic Jewish world of Spain, Morocco, and Portugal that differ from the practices of the Jews of Eastern Europe. Judaism is not monolithic, and neither is its adaptation and growth in ritual.

While there is often a comparison made between the Last Supper, the Passover Seder, and the Eucharist; they cannot be directly equated as some seem to think. The Eucharist and the Seder are different experiences, with different goals and theology. The Eucharist is its own ritual, and while there are threads that it has in common with the Passover Seder, it is not the same thing and certainly cannot be viewed as a “completed” version of the Seder. This is of paramount importance: the Seder must be experienced on its own terms and not as a precursor to something else. As Christians know, some of the practices of Passover – such as eating lamb and bitter herbs – were not incorporated into Christian Eucharistic practices. In the same way that Judaism and Jewish practices are not monolithic, we must not make the mistake of tying together and equating two powerful rituals that may have a historical connection, but are different acts of

prayer within themselves.

While Jesus and his followers may have celebrated Passover without some of the formal prayers that are used today, the roots of contemporary practices can be found in the rituals used to honor Passover well before the time of Jesus. We can presume, for example, that in the time of Jesus, it was a practice to recount the saving power of God in the story of the Exodus (since this practice is commanded in the Torah itself) – this would be the Haggadah, the telling. Jesus and his disciples would have blessed and drank wine as is done in the majority of Jewish celebrations. There are discussions in ancient Jewish texts that pre-date Jesus that describe drinking either four or five cups depending on personal customs; the Gospels directly mention two cups; and today the Seder includes drinking four cups and having a fifth cup for Elijah sitting on the table.

On the night he ate with his disciples, Jesus and his friends would have completed their time together by singing the Hallel Psalms, Psalms 115 through 118. The Mishnah, which put Jewish oral teaching into written form at approximately 200 CE based on dialogues from 500 years earlier, offers descriptions of Haroset and the use of salt water in which the bitter herbs are dipped. So it may have been that Jesus and his followers drank more than the two cups described in the Gospels, and had many other practices such as bitter herbs and salt water in their Seder.

The key is for each community to learn as much as possible about the Seder and Passover, and for the leader to be fully prepared to guide the community into a powerful spiritual experience that stands on its own. If your community is enhanced by the knowledge of how Jesus may have observed Passover, then this is a wonderful place to begin dialogue and deepen the Seder experience. But let the Seder be its own ritual, filled with its own ancient depth and wisdom; and then encourage your community to integrate that experience into the hearts and spirits of each person present.

## **Prepare for the experience**

The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) speak of the “day of preparation.” As it is today, hosting a communal meal like the Passover feast is a great deal of work. For some people, this preparation is their “slavery,” and the Seder meal with all the guests then becomes the “freedom.” Preparation then and now includes removing all leaven from the home; cleansing the ovens and dishes; and preparing the many foods that are part of the Seder.

In the times of the Temple people were to arrange for ritual sacrifices of animals, and a variety of other practices that are mentioned in historical texts but no longer practiced in modern times. We encourage you to take the same time, energy, and intention in preparing this meal authentically as is done around the world and has been done for thousands of years..

Please do not adapt the Seder in anyway. Do not make the mistake of adapting this ancient ritual in an “assumption” that you know the deeper intentions of the ancient Rabbis because you’ve been to a few Seders or have seen a popular movie featuring the Exodus. There are thousands of pages of work written over almost three thousand years that delve into the deeper, more kabbalistic (hidden Jewish mysticism) intentions in each aspect of the Seder.

Please do not substitute for the ritual foods. We know of one Christian community who did not do much preparation or homework for their Seder meal. The community gathered, and rather than preparing the Haroset, they placed grapes on the Seder plate. One of the Catechists (volunteer religion teachers) attending had been raised Jewish and still deeply loved the religion of her birth. She was profoundly offended that the custom had been dismissed in favor of what was most expeditious. For this reason, we have tried to include everything needed to prepare you for a powerful and authentic experience, from explanations to recipes; from liturgy translated into English to traditional folk songs.

Approach this meal with the attention and integrity that you would bring to any form of prayer and you will succeed beautifully.

## A PASSOVER THOUGHT

*"Once Rabbi Levi Yitzhak held a Seder of the first night of Passover so devoutly that every word and every rite glowed at the holy man's table, with all the holiness of its secret significance. In the dawn after the celebration, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak sat in his room, joyful and proud that he had performed so successful a service. But all of a sudden he heard a voice saying, "More please to me than your Seder is that of Hayyim, the water-carrier."*

*The rabbi summoned the people in his house and his disciples and inquired about the man whose name he had heard. Nobody knew him. At the great rabbi's bidding some of his disciples went in search of him. They had to ask around for a long time before---at the outskirts of the city, where only poor people live---they were shown the house of Hayyim the water-carrier. They knocked at the door. A woman came out and asked what they wanted. When they told her she was amazed. "Yes," she said, "Hayyim the water-carrier is my husband. But he cannot go with you because he drank a lot yesterday and is sleeping it off now. If you wake him you will find that he cannot manage to lift his feet."*

*All they said in reply was, "It is the rabbi's orders." They went and shook him from his sleep. He only blinked at them, could not understand what they wanted him for, and attempted to turn over and go on sleeping. But they raised him from his bed, took hold of him, and between them brought him to the rabbi, all but carrying him on his shoulders. The rabbi had him put in a chair near him. When he was seated, silent, and bewildered, Levi Yitzhak leaned toward him and said, "Rabbi Hayyim, dear heart, what mystic intention was in your mind when you fathered what is leavened?"*

*The water-carrier looked at him dully, shook his head, and replied, "Master, I just looked into every corner and gathered it together."*

*The astonished Rabbi Levi continued to question him. "And what consecration did you think upon in the burning of it?"*

*The man pondered, looked distressed, and said hesitatingly,*

*"Master I forgot to burn it. And now I remember---it is all still lying on the shelf."*

*When Rabbi Levi Yitzhak heard this, he grew more and more uncertain, but he continued asking, "And tell me, Rabbi Hayyim, how did you celebrate the Seder?"*

*Then something seemed to quicken in the eyes and limbs of the man, and he replied in humble tones. "Rabbi, I shall tell you the truth. You see, I always heard that it is forbidden to drink vodka the eight days of the festival, so yesterday morning I drank enough to last me eight days. And so I got tired and fell asleep. Then my wife woke me, and it was evening, and she said to me, "Why don't you celebrate the Seder like all other Jews?" Said I, "What do you want with me? I am an ignorant man, and my father was an ignorant man, and I don't know what to do and what not to do. But one thing I know. Our fathers and mothers were in captivity in the land of the Egyptians, and we have a God, and he led them out and into freedom. And see, now we are again in captivity and I know, and I tell you that god will lead us to freedom too." And then I saw before me a table, and the cloth gleamed like the sun, and on it were platters with matzot and eggs and other dishes and bottles of red wine. I ate of the matzot and eggs and drank fo the wine, and gave my wife to eat and to drink. And then I was overcome with joy, and lifted my cup to God, and said, "See God, I drink this cup to you! And do you lean down to us and make us free!" So we sat and drank and rejoiced before God. And then I felt tired, lay down, and fell asleep."*

*Rabbi Levi Yitzhak smiled at the man and said, "May I be blessed to have my place in the hereafter next to yours."*

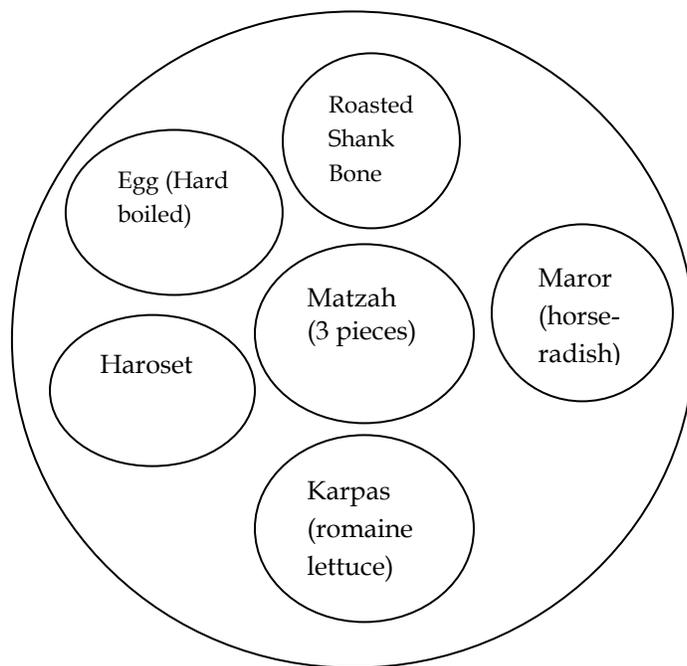
## THE SEDER SECTIONS

The word “*Seder*” means “order” and it called the Seder because there is a specific order to the ceremonial meal. There are 15 ritualized observances to the Seder:

<b><i>Kaddesh</i></b>	Sanctify the holiday with wine.
<b><i>Urechatz</i></b>	Washing the hands prior to eating the vegetable.
<b><i>Karpas</i></b>	Eating a spring vegetable (usually parsley) dipped in salt water.
<b><i>Yachatz</i></b>	Breaking the middle matza and putting away the larger piece for the Afikoman (see Tzafun below).
<b><i>Maggid</i></b>	The narration of the story of the Exodus. There are many aspects to this part, which is the longest part of the ritual and includes poetry and specific practices to teach the lessons more clearly on a meta-historical level. Some of these are the teachings of the Four Children; the recitation of the 10 Plagues, taking a drop of wine from your glass with the verbalization of each plague; and the singing of Dayenu (“It would have been enough”).
<b><i>Rachtzah</i></b>	Washing the hands before eating the meal.
<b><i>Motzi</i></b>	Reciting the blessing of “who brings forth.”
<b><i>Matzah</i></b>	Reciting the blessing over the matzah.
<b><i>Maror</i></b>	Reciting the blessing over the bitter herbs.
<b><i>Korech</i></b>	Eating the sandwich of matzah and bitter herbs.
<b><i>Shulchan Orech</i></b>	The festive meal. This is not the ritual food that has been on the Seder Plate but the joyous full dinner that has been prepared for the community to eat together.
<b><i>Tzafun</i></b>	“The Hidden.” Finding the hidden Afikoman (last piece of matzah that is used as a ceremonial dessert) and sharing it together.
<b><i>Barech</i></b>	Recite the blessings after eating a meal (grace).
<b><i>Hallel</i></b>	Recitation of Psalms of Praise.
<b><i>Nirtzah</i></b>	Praying that God accepts our observance of Passover and redeems the World.

## THE SEDER PLATE

Each participant sits with a cushion to lean on in their chair. Each has a small plate with ceremonial foods placed on it in front of them, and there is one large community Seder plate that the leader of the Seder uses. There are number of different traditions as to exactly what is put on the Seder plate, as well as the exact placement. The most common placement is as follows:



Each of the six items on the plate has symbolic meaning which will be discussed through the Seder:

- Karpas – a spring vegetable, usually parsley
- Matzah – “unleavened bread,” – bread that has not risen and is in a cracker or wafer form
- Egg (hardboiled)
- Shank bone of lamb
- Haroset – a mixture of fruits and nuts, usually apples, walnuts and wine.
- Maror – Bitter herbs, generally pieces of horseradish

Each person has a small version of the same plate, although the shank bone is not on the personal plate. Additionally, it is customary to have parsley as the karpas on the personal plate, and often in addition to the lettuce on the main plate. Each person also has a glass for wine that is to be filled for each of the four cups, and there should be small bowls of salt water within reach of everyone.

Haroset is a sweet paste of fruits and nuts. Some different recipes for Haroset are included at the end of this book.

Some families now include an orange on their Seder plate as a sign of feminist solidarity in response to the comment that a Rabbi once made regarding female clergy. He noted that, “A woman belongs on the pulpit like an orange belongs on the Seder plate.” Placing an orange on the Seder plate confirms the belief of the community that women should be on the pulpit.

If you are a Christian community hosting a Seder, it important that you remember that each of these particular foods are an important part of the Passover meal. You should not substitute other foods for these ritual foods.

## **THE MEAL**

During the Seder, you will have dinner together. Jewish families are found in every culture and place, so the entrees and other parts of the dinner vary. The foods people eat during a Seder meal are often

representative of their ethnic traditions. However, one thing is found in Seders held in all cultures: No leavening or yeast is used in preparing the foods of the meal. This commemorates the unleavened bread that the people took with them as they fled from their captivity in Egypt. As you plan your menu, keep this important tradition in mind and respect it. Traditional foods, including baked goods, can and should be made without leaven.

## BLESSING OVER THE CANDLES

*(Light the Candles, and then say the prayer)*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us through Your commandments, and commanded us to kindle the flame of this Festival.**

### ★ LIMUD

Although the blessing over the holiday candles is not considered part of the 15 steps of the Seder, candles are always lit for Festivals. The two candles are symbolic of many things, including the opening of the gateway into spiritual freedom. They are also a reminder that the light of freedom always exists, but we need to take the necessary steps to light it. Traditionally, the candles have been lit by the eldest woman of the house no later than 18 minutes before sundown. In some Jewish communities, any adult may light the candles.

### ★ DISCUSS

There are many teachings that can be included at this point of the Seder about the power of light and the best ways to combat the evils of darkness. To reject slavery in any fashion is to bring light into the darkness. This is a time to encourage participants to be willing to let the light of Passover and freedom into their lives, and to be willing to release their own personal darkness.

We are reminded of God's in-breaking light by a teaching from the Talmud (Tractate Avodah Zorah page 8b): "The first time that Adam saw the sun go down and an ever-deepening gloom enfold creation, his mind was filled with terror. Then God took pity

on him, and endowed him with the Divine intuition to take two stones---the name of one was Darkness and the name of the other Shadow of Death---and

rub them against each other, and to discover fire. Thereupon Adam exclaimed with grateful joy, "Blessed be the Creator of Light."

This is an ideal time to lead a personal meditative experience with the community wherein each person focuses on a place of darkness in their life, and makes the conscious choice to fill that darkness with the light of God. If the community is intimate enough and familiar with each other, it may be an opportunity for each person who desires to voice the personal darkness in their life, and to vocalize a conscious intention to bring light into it through the experience of the Seder. Often, by just vocalizing what is inside, great healing can begin.

## KADESH (Sanctification)

We drink this first of four cups of wine at this Seder to mark the struggle for freedom, and in celebration that this evening will be sanctified through our intention.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has created the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who has sanctified us by giving us commandments to fulfill, and who helps us to be joyful by giving us holy days to celebrate. Tonight we celebrate a holy event in our history, our liberation from slavery of the mind, body, and spirit.**

### ★ DISCUSS

Wine has special significance, as will be discussed in greater detail throughout the Seder. Here, it is important to remember that it is a symbol of partnership: for although God makes the grapes, God also needs us to make it into wine. Similarly, we need God's grapes and cannot make wine without His gracious gifts.

Stepping into freedom is also a partnership: We must demonstrate that we are taking the steps, and then God will open the pathway for us. As is taught in the High Holiday prayer book regarding the path of return or redemption, we are told that God says, "If you open the door to redemption wide enough for the head of a pin, I will force it open wide enough for chariots." Each glass of wine that we drink in this Seder is an opportunity to be conscious of the partnership that we have with the Divine.

### ★ LIMUD

There is an ancient teaching about wine that is always fun and enlightening to share. Each Hebrew letter also has a numerical value, which helps to give insights into hidden meanings of words. The Hebrew word for wine, "yayn," has the same numerical value as the Hebrew word for "secret" ("sod"). We are taught that this is because there are some secrets that should only be shared over a glass of wine.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.**

✧ **LIMUD**

This prayer, known as the “She-he-chi-yanu” is the prayer that an observant Jew recites upon experiencing something for the first time. In this case, although we observe the Passover every year, we say it as it is the first time this year that we are celebrating the holiday

✝ **COMMENTARY**

Christians will be very familiar with the language of these blessings. The prayers prayed by the priest during Roman Catholic mass at the preparation of the gifts of bread and wine, which are rooted in the prayers of the Jewish followers of Jesus, begin “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received...”

The early Passover gatherings, like the home-based *eucharistia* of the early Christians, were influenced by the *symposia* tradition of Greece and Rome. At the symposia, people would gather in a home for an intellectual exchange over a meal. This tradition was passed into the early Christian community (which was Jewish) by Greek and Roman converts.

Among the features that make the meals of both the early Christians and their Jewish contemporaries different is their egalitarian nature. All were welcome and even expected to participate; class and rank did not play a role in gaining access to these celebratory tables.

## U'REHATZ (Washing)

*(Wash hands without reciting a blessing)*

### ✧ LIMUD

Some communities say a prayer over the washing of hands, but it is unnecessary at this point as we will be saying a blessing over the washing of hands later in the Seder. Many practice a beautiful custom wherein each person at the Seder holds the washing bowl and towel for the person next to them, so that we all communally wash and cleanse as we enter into the Seder. This practice symbolizes that no one goes through life alone, and that we all need each other to truly step into full freedom.

### ✝ COMMENTARY

This moment in the Seder may remind you of the practice of the Christian Community on Holy Thursday. The Gospel of John describes Jesus expanding this ritual hand washing beyond its traditional boundaries and describes him washing the feet of his followers. This act of abject servitude – he wraps himself with a towel in the manner of a slave – would have been very shocking to the disciples, who were observant Jews. Christians reenact his foot washing as part of the Holy Thursday liturgy, reminding themselves of Jesus' injunction that people selflessly serve one another.

The washing of the hands may also remind you of the moment in Mass when the priest washes his hands. The practice of hand washing is also grounded in Jewish tradition and is mentioned in many scripture texts including Psalm 26. However, this ritual was not incorporated into the Mass until well into the third century.

## ★ DISCUSSION

During this washing of hands is an excellent time to being discussions about “intention.” This can include personal intentions in life, intentions about what each individual wishes to receive, learn, and/or accomplish through this liturgy, and group intentions about what you want to achieve as a community, both in this evening and in general.

There is a powerful story about “washing” that can be shared at this time:

*A boy was given a hurricane lamp by his grandfather just before he died, and the boy lit it every night. The light from the lamp reminded him of his beloved grandfather, and brought a sense of peace and joy to his soul every night. Over time, the glass part of the lamp got darker and darker with soot; and the boy started getting depressed that he could no longer find the light in his life. He was lost, and no matter how much he cleaned the outside of the glass, it kept getting darker. One evening, he had a dream of his grandfather, who said to him, “The light is always there my grandson. Stop trying to clean the outside. Remove the glass and clean the inside of the lamp, and the light will shine brightly again.” In the morning, the boy did just that: he removed the glass and cleaned the inside of it. Once again, the lamp shone brightly each night, and the boy knew that he only needed to clean the inside in order to let the light come forth.*

*Our lives are like that hurricane lamp. We get “dirty” through the challenges of our daily lives; and it becomes difficult to be aware of the light that is Divine inside all of us. The key is to cleanse ourselves from the inside; and like the lamp we will once again be aware of the light that is always there. This washing of hands is the opportunity to commit to cleansing ourselves from the inside during this sacred evening.*

## ✧ QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION and POSSIBLE DISCUSSION

### Personal

Take a moment and contemplate what personal intentions you have for this evening. Why are you here? What do you hope to cleanse, gain, or learn in this evening? What parts of yourself or habits need to be cleansed on a spiritual level in this “Washing of Hands?” How can the community and this Seder help you cleanse and renew in a way that brings harmony and freedom into your life?

### Community

Why is this community going through all this work and ritual? What cleansing does the community need to do, and how can the community grow as a result of this evening? How can we take care of each other, retaining this practice of serving each other in our “washing?”

## KARPAS (Spring Vegetable)

Each person takes a piece of karpas, the green spring vegetable on their individual plate, and dips it in the saltwater.

Why do we immerse this karpas, this symbol of our liberation in salt water, the universal symbol of suffering? We do this to affirm that to liberate ourselves, our souls, we first must immerse ourselves fully in the depths of our suffering, bringing out into the open our suppressed pain, anguish, and forgotten wounds---and identify it as oppression. Only after we have become fully conscious of our pain can the oppression of ourselves, by the hands of others or by our own hands, finally begin to grow into liberation and freedom.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who brings forth fruit from the earth. Blessed are You, Lord our God, who makes a distinction between the holiness of light and the holiness or darkness; between the holiness of the Sabbath and the holiness of the six days of work, between the holiness of the body and the holiness of the spirit. May our every thought, word, and deed reflect the holiness of Existence.**

### ✧ LIMUD

Everything comes from God, therefore everything is inherently holy. Even evil has its place, if only to make the “good” choices that we make that much more important. As we say a prayer honoring the freedom associated with the spring vegetable, it is to remind us of the distinctions in life. Although in this case it is a distinction between freedom and slavery, this is also a good time to have an open discussion about finding the holiness in things that seem on the surface to initially be “profane.”

It is only when we realize that all things are sacred and have their place in God’s Creation that we can begin to heal those difficult, dark, and painful places inside us as individuals and as a community; and as a result bring more freedom into the world. In this way, we become God’s servants in helping redeem that which has become dark; as the parsley is a reminder that slavery will be transformed into freedom with God’s help.

### ‡ COMMENTARY

Different Christian denominations view the innate holiness of life differently. Some see the creation as depraved due to sin and the Fall. Others, including Roman Catholics, believe that the creation is inherently good; they see all of life as sacred and sacramental. It is not depraved; it is better described as deprived and in need of the grace of God. This world view is consonant with the worldview of the Jewish people.

## YAHATZ (Breaking the Matzah)

*(The middle matzah is broken into two pieces. The larger piece is put aside and will be used as the afikoman at the end of the meal. The smaller piece is put back between the two pieces of matzah on the plate, and the larger piece (afikoman) is wrapped. Sometime between now and the end of the meal, it is hidden by the Seder leader. It will become a game to find it later on, since the Seder meal cannot be completed without it, and whomever finds it will be able to hold it hostage to be redeemed by the Seder leader---usually in exchange for a monetary gift to charity, or a few coins if it is a child that finds it later.*

### ☆ LIMUD

At this point, immediately place the pouch with the Afikomen in your lap. During the first half of the Seder, place it in your shirt, jacket, or somewhere where you have easy access to it, but where it cannot be easily seen.

When the meal is served later in the evening, make it a point to walk around the room greeting people. As you do, hide it someplace; but make sure that it can be seen without having to move anything (you'd be surprised how children especially will start to tear apart a room looking for it, so it's easier to just say that nothing needs to be moved in order to find the Afikomen when the time comes).

### ‡ COMMENTARY

The Christian Eucharist includes two powerful symbolic elements: bread and wine, which are consecrated by the priest or minister and become the Body and Blood of Christ. How Christians understand that transformation varies between denominations. In some traditions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Eucharist is only valid if the bread is unleavened. Special small "hosts" are prepared for use in the Eucharistic liturgy. Matzah is not used.

## MAGGID (Telling the Story)

*(The Matzah is uncovered and the main Seder Plate is held up for all to see)*

Ha Lach-ma An-ya! This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy come and be sheltered. Let all who are oppressed come and celebrate the freedom of Passover. Now we are here, next year may we be free in the land of our hearts, in the land of Israel. Now we are oppressed, next year may we be free.

### *The Four Questions*

*(To be asked by the youngest person at the Seder table that is able to read)*

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night do we eat only unleavened?

On all other nights we eat fruits and vegetables of all kinds, why on this night do we eat bitter herbs?

On all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, why on this night do we dip them twice?

On all other nights we may sit or recline while eating, why on this night do we eat in a reclining position?

### *The Answer - Avadeem Hayeenu - We Were Slaves*

Ava-deem Ha-yeenu l'far b'mitz-ray-eem. We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, until, as the Bible teaches us, God took us from there with "a strong hand and an outstretched arm." If God had not taken us out of bondage, then even we, our children, and our children's children might still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

Therefore, even if we were all wise, all people of understanding, all enlightened beings; even if we were all Elders well versed in the Torah and the writings of the Prophets, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the Exodus, the departure from Egypt so that it will never be forgotten.

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### ★ LIMUD

If you know in advance of a young child that will be attending the Seder, let them have these Four Questions in preparation.

It can be a joyous event for everyone when a small child reads this passage; and they get a sense of personal satisfaction when they read it publicly for all to hear.

This passage is also a reminder that we are all children; all of us are always learning and all of us need to approach this Seder with the wonder and openness of a child. (This concept will be continued with "The Four Children" passage.)

## The Four Children

**Blessed is the Eternal One, whose Law teaches us of the four different kinds of children: the wise, the rebellious, the simple, and the child who is unable to inquire.**

*(Alternating participants)*

The Wise Child asks with curiosity: “What is the meaning of the rules, laws, customs, and traditions which the Lord our God has commanded us to practice during this holy season? This child shall be instructed in the laws of Passover, their symbolism, and practices down to the very last detail of the Afikomen.

The Rebellious Child asks arrogantly: “What is all this trouble you make us go through every year?” By saying “you”, the child has excluded himself from the community. The answer is given that we celebrate the Passover because of what the Lord our God did for “us” when we personally came out from Egypt. For “us” and not for “him,” for had this child been there he would not have been redeemed.

The Simple Child indifferently asks: “What is this all about?” This child will be told that with a mighty hand and outstretched arm the Lord our God delivered us out of the house of bondage and slavery.

And for the child who is unable to inquire, we shall tell the whole story of the Passover; we shall sing the songs and tell the tales so that we all my emotionally experience the bondage of slavery in Egypt, and the redemption that the Lord our God gave to us. For it is said that even when one does not know how to ask, the teacher must know what to teach.

### ★ LIMUD

The Hebrew translates directly to “the wicked child,” but we have used “rebellious” here to avoid the connotations in English of “wicked.” The issue at hand is that this child, who knows about the Passover, has chosen to rebel and isolate himself from the community. This portion of the Seder reminds us that even the child who has rebelled has a place at the Seder table. It is our responsibility as a community to welcome him back into the faith, practices, and support of the community.

## ✠ COMMENTARY

This text is historically based on four types of parent/child relationships found in the Bible (see below). The purpose of the Seder is to tell these stories and to teach the lessons inherent them. The Seder is to be interactive, and it is the responsibility of the Seder Leader to make it a participatory event that has meaning to each type of “child” and to realize that we are all children learning more about slavery and freedom in every moment.

Deut. 6:20 – “What do the testaments, the statutes, and the judgments mean which the Lord God has commanded you? (the wise child)

Exod. 12:26 – “What do you mean by this service?” (the wicked/rebellious child)

Exod. 13:14 – “What is this?” (the simple child)

Exod. 13:8 – “And you shall say to your son, in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did to me when I came forth out of Egypt” (the child unable to inquire)

We are taught that each of these children represents a different generation of people observing the Passover Seder. The first generation, the “wise child,” knows what the rituals are, their intentions and meanings, and how they apply to modernity. He or she is the

head of the family that keeps the practices of Judaism in the home and on the way, and each moment is, for this child, an opportunity to be more aware of their relationship with the Divine.

The next child, the “wicked child” or “rebellious child,” is raised in a home steeped with spiritual rituals and understandings but like many young people, rebels against his parent. This generation learns many of the practices of Judaism, but rejects them before understanding their deeper values. Having grown up in the community, this child makes the conscious choice of excluding themselves from it. But although they have rejected the pathways of their ancestors, they still come to the Passover Seder at their father’s house.

This rebellious child has a child: the “simple child.” Because the rebellious child has no religion in his home, this child doesn’t even know about any of the most basic practices of Judaism. But still, this simple child goes to visit grandpa’s house (the wise child) and intuitively picks up some of the practices, beliefs, and traditions – but doesn’t really understand them. This gets highlighted when this child comes to grandpa’s house for the Passover Seder, and so asks grandfather the simple question of “what is this?”

The wise child dies, and the rebellious child becomes the head of the family. This rebellious child, who is now the Elder, has nothing to do with the faith tradition of their ancestors. But this new head of the family still celebrates a version of the Passover Seder out of respect for past generations. This rebellious child's Seder is ultimately brief, involving no rituals or foods, and is just a family gathering where he says to his family, "They say we were slaves and now we're free. Let's eat." The simple child (his son) has a child, and this boy or girl (the "one who is unable to inquire") knows absolutely nothing about any rituals, other than some weird dinner that grandpa (the rebellious child) has every year in the spring time. This fourth child just doesn't even know what to ask as he has no religious framework within to even pose a question.

Traditionally, there is a large blank space after the fourth child's paragraph. Why? This is emblematic of the fifth child, the son of the "child who is unable to inquire."

When the rebellious child dies, the simple one becomes the head of the family. Not only are there no religious practices in the home, but now there is not even the brief Passover Seder that was celebrated a generation earlier.. As a result, his grandchild (the son or daughter

of the “child who is unable to inquire”) knows nothing at all about Judaism, and does not even know that Passover exists. For this fifth generation, we leave a blank space in the text.

The purpose of the entire Passover Seder is to heal the wounds of these five generations of mankind, and to help each generation become more involved in the teachings, lessons, and practices of Passover-- leading each back to the wholeness of the “wise child.” The Haggadah recognizes that there are all types of “children” and that the Seder experience must be tailored to the participants. If it is a group of “fifth generation” children who know nothing about the Passover story, then just the simplest of rituals, storytelling, and prayers become the gateway that leads them to desire more learning about both the Passover and their religion. If the participants are similar to the second generation of the “rebellious child,” then it becomes incumbent upon the Seder leader to teach some of the hidden meanings of each of the rituals and ceremonial moments; and to help them see and integrate the values of the ceremony into their personal, modern lives.

Guilt and shame are never the way to inspire someone to fully embrace the spiritual teachings of their religion and it is important not to use those techniques in

trying to bring that second generation (the “rebellious child”) back to the faith practices of their ancestors. Instead, use the Passover Seder model as a teaching that they can use in their own lives, today. Where are they still “slaves”? What does it feel to be controlled by external circumstances? And then, how does it feel to really embrace the possibility of being freed from those painful circumstances by a deity that is so loving that this deity even took our ancestors out of Egypt. Remember to make the Exodus from Egypt into a “meta-historical” experience: one that is true historically, but also is a model for modern challenges of personal slavery and the need for true freedom.

We are taught that a “*Baal Tshuvah*,” a “Master of Redemption” can stand where not even the perfectly righteous person can. That might be a redemption from personal rebelliousness, or a spiritually unaware person (the “simple child” or “child unable to inquire”) that redeems themselves through learning and growing within their faith tradition. The greatest teachers are often those who were at one point rebellious, ignorant, or unaware in any number of ways. As a community, it is imperative that we take these generations and inspire them to choose to learn, grow, and practice

the religion; and in so doing, create a generation of “wise children” who are truly great teachers in the way that they live their lives.

**✠ QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

*Parenting, Teaching, and Mentoring*

Can you express gratitude for the teachings that you have received from parents, teachers, and your spiritual community? What technique or practice have you learned from others that you can use in your own parenting and teaching? What have you learned in your life that you can share with the others around the Seder table about effective ways of guiding others to learn, grow, and blossom within their community?

*The Wise Child*

Describe some of the qualities of a “wise child” in your life, and share a story about that person with others around the Seder table. Discuss what some of the responsibilities of the “wise child” are within the community and methods of passing on this knowledge and experience from generation to generation within your spiritual community.

*The Rebellious Child*

Express some of the ways you have rebelled in your life and listen to others’ experiences. What inspired you to stop rebelling and embrace the community or circumstances fully? What techniques work to help someone regain their personal

commitment to God, and what techniques seem to fail? Discuss the fear that is underneath rebelliousness, and how to make a conscious choice into faith instead of living life based on that fear.

### *The Simple Child*

What forms of personal “slavery” keeps you from being an active part of your community? What does it feel like to be doing something entirely new that you have no experience in? What can be done to help encourage that experience, and how can a community help integrate a spiritual experience for the new member?

### *The Child Who is Unable to Inquire*

How do you guide someone into a community when they are unaware that the community exists, unaware of its values, and unaware of the benefits that come from being part of it? The model of the Passover Seder is one of the models for doing just this, where the stories are told through both words and actions. The Passover Haggadah and Seder experience use not only words to teach the stories, but ritualized actions: just as great spiritual leaders throughout history have taught through both the art of storytelling and the example of how they lived. What are the stories of your community that will inspire someone to want to learn more? What rituals of your community can be shared in a way that tells the story of the group and its beliefs? Try to take an old story and teach it as applicable for modern times. What stories can be used to inspire

the generation of people who don't place value on spirituality?

Discuss what you can do and say to help these types of people make a choice to learn and experience more of your community.

*The Fifth Child*

What outreach programs does your community use? What creative programs can you create that will reach out to the young, unaffiliated, and secular individuals in your area? What can you do as an individual to help others not in your community begin their own journey into freedom?

## The Story of the Oppression

*This can be read many ways, but is extremely effective when read by alternating participants except where specified. If it is a large group, individuals can be pre-assigned readings, as well.*

Long, long ago our ancestors worshipped idols as gods, putting the power of the Divine into the wood, metal, and stone that they carved. The idols were more than symbols or tools to bridge a relationship, they were gods themselves. Then our forefather, Abraham, the son of an idolmaker, was called from the bondage of slavery to graven images and empty symbols to serve the Lord our God. Abraham and his wife Sarah were blessed with a son, Isaac, whose name means “laughter,” who with his beloved Rebecca gave birth to Jacob.

After a visionary experience, Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel,” which became the name of the Jewish people. Jacob had twelve sons, from whom come the “tribes of Israel,” the most visionary of these sons was Joseph.

### ★ LIMUD

This story is not “liturgical text” per se, and can be adapted as needed. If you find that the evening is already starting to get late as a result of important previous discussions, make a decision as leader of this Seder to tell the story of The Maggid in your own words. If you do this:

- Make sure not to “idolize” Moses (it is God who is granting us freedom, and it is all too easy to make this evening about Moses rather than God’s gifts)
- Try to guide people into experiencing the pains of slavery and the joys of being redeemed. Help people to realize that we are all still slaves to something; and the importance of relying on God for our freedom.

Genesis, Chapter 17

### ★ COMMENTARY

The name Israel literally means “he who wrestles with God”, and stems from the wrestling experience that Jacob had on the mountain in Gen., Chapter 32. It is a theme of the relationship between Jews and God: it has the intimacy of wrestling along with the continual struggling for understanding and personal experience. Judaism encourages “wrestling” with concepts and sacred texts, and this Seder is one of the best examples of that. Throughout this evening, encourage participants to wrestle with their theological and personal challenges, and to come to a deeper level of awareness of Divinity in their personal lives as a result.

Famine came to the land of Canaan (where Jacob and his family lived), but the family heard that there was plenty of food in Egypt. This was due in a large part to the efforts of Joseph, who had been living in Egypt and had been raised to a position of great power and prestige under the Pharaoh (the ruling monarch of Egypt) as a result of his amazingly accurate dream interpretations. Jacob and his family came to Egypt, numbering only 70 people, and there felt that they would be secure as a result of Pharaoh's pleasure with Joseph.

The Jews came to feel at home in Egypt; and even when the famine ended in Canaan, they continued to live in this foreign land for centuries because it was comfortable and easy. They forgot many of their own values and traditions---some of them even began to keep Egyptian idols in their homes. They forgot their heritage as a free people, even though they were still held in high esteem by the Pharaoh.

The book of Exodus begins with "And there arose a Pharaoh who knew not of Joseph." This new Pharaoh, who was motivated by fear and greed, preferred to ignore the contributions the Jews had made, and, since he needed slave labor to build his desires, enslaved the Jewish people. His process started with accusing them for the problems of the country, accusing them of conspiring with enemy nations, and promoting fear and hatred in the Egyptian people by leading them to believe that the Jews were an alien minority likely to side with an enemy in case of attack, or that they would take over the country of Egypt themselves in a planned coup. The Jews became segregated, persecuted, and ultimately enslaved.

**★ COMMENTARY**

Chapter 1, Verse 8; the first seven verses deal with a list of the generations of Joseph that came to Egypt, so this is where the "story" truly begins.

*(The following poem is to be read by a teenager)*

The last, the very last  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing against a white  
stone...

Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high.  
It went away I'm sure because it wished to kiss the world  
goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived here,  
Pinned up inside these walls  
But I have found my people here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut candles in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly as the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
In the ghetto

---Pavel Friedman

A 12 year old Concentration Camp prisoner who was  
killed in 1942

The Jews became slaves, and built the store cities of Pithom and Raamses. They made the bricks with straw, and were the physical laboring slaves for the nation. But the more that the Egyptian taskmasters set burdens upon them, the more they multiplied, and the more our ancestors prayed to the Lord to be made free once again.

Pharaoh initiated a practice of planned genocide of the Jewish nation. All new-born Jewish males were to be drowned! There are some sages who suggest that Pharaoh did this at the suggestion of some of his mystical advisors, who foretold that a leader would be born to the Jewish people that would lead them out of Egypt. And as Jewish children were mercilessly drowned, the voices of the mothers of Israel were heard by God.

*(The following paragraph is to be read by another teenager)*

We got used to standing in line at seven o'clock in the morning, at twelve noon, and again at seven o'clock in the evening. We stood in a long queue with a plate in our hand into which they ladled a little warmed up water with a salty or a coffee flavor. Or else, they gave us a few potatoes. We got used to sleeping without a bed, to saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks, and then again to walk on the sidewalks. We got used to undeserved slaps, blows, and executions. We got accustomed to seeing piled-up coffins full of corpses, to seeing the sick amidst dirt and filth, and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to the fact that from time to time one thousand unhappy souls would come here and that, from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away...

---From the prose of 15 year old Peter Fischl, who perished in Auschwitz in 1944

It was due to efforts of two of Pharaoh's midwives, Shifra and Pu'ah, that the rebellion began against Pharaoh. Although threatened by Pharaoh with death by fire if they failed to follow his commands, these two women lied to Pharaoh about the Jewish births, and when the Pharaoh questioned their contempt, they lied that "the Hebrew women...are lively and they deliver before the midwife can get to them." These women tried to save what Jews they could. They were not only midwives to the children they delivered, but also to the entire Jewish nation in its deliverance from slavery. Through the defiance of two other women, a mother named Yokheved and her daughter Miriam, the Healer and Prophetess, a Jewish newborn boy was placed in a basket of reeds and put on the river. The Sages teach us "for the sake of the pious women who in lived in that generation, were the Israelites freed from bondage."

*(The following poem and subsequent paragraph should be read by a wise or older woman at the table)*

*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 it's beating for honor's sake.*

*Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame*

---Hannah Senesch 1921-1944

This poem is personified by its author, a young resistance fighter. The Nazis who captured Hannah brought her mother to her, and said that if Hannah didn't reveal the names of the resistance movement, her mother would be killed. Hannah told her mother that she could not betray the resistance. Her mother replied that by not

giving in  
 to the  
 oppresso  
 r,  
 Hannah  
 had  
 proved  
 her love.

**★ COMMENTARY**

This is a great place to emphasize the importance of women and to teach any male teenagers (and teenagers at heart) about respecting women. Often teenage boys think that they are more important, wise, or developed than women, and this is a teaching opportunity to correct them in a gentle and religious way.

Not only did Pu'ah and Shifra risk their own lives for the survival of others but it was the women of that time that kept up the Jewish practices in the homes rather than let the Egyptian idol worshipping take hold. We are free because of women, and they need to be grateful for that and always respect women.

The baby was put on the waters near where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. The baby was taken by the daughter, and named "Moshe," "Moses," which translates as "he who is taken from the waters." Moses was raised as an Egyptian, and became a Prince among men, respected and honored by all for his fair treatment of animals and humans, no matter what their cultural background. But the hand of God was always on the shoulder of Moses, and he was eventually impelled to seek his true roots. Identifying himself as a Jew, he left Egypt, wandered long through the desert, and deepened his relationships with himself and the Almighty.

He finally came upon a community in neighboring Midian, and married the beautiful Zipporah. He devoted himself to raising a family, seeking to forget his people's suffering in the land of Egypt. But it is true what they say, "It's not his just desserts that a man gets, it's his destiny."

One day, while rescuing a lost lamb, Moses came upon a bush that burned but was not consumed. He had a Divine experience, and through his vision and clarity, he knew that not only was this bush a symbol for God, with whom he spoke, but that it was also a teaching that although the Jewish people might be consumed in the flames of slavery and disbelief, they would continue to resist and live, like the branches of this bush. Through the experience, he understood that it was time to return to his people in Egypt, and to help them fulfill their collective destiny.

#### ★ COMMENTARY

It is said that Pharaoh's daughter's arm was not long enough to reach the basket, so God performed a miracle and made her arm stretch so that she could reach it. Once in the palace, he would not drink the breast milk of any nurse, so Pharaoh's daughter was forced to reach out to a Jewish slave mother to see if he would drink that milk, which he did. The slave was Yokheved, Moses' mother; and in this way, he was nursed with his own birth mother.

#### ★ COMMENTARY

Some say that the bush had always been burning since the beginning of Creation, but Moses was the first person who paused long enough to notice the miracle. Most of us don't notice the miracles around us, and this is an opportunity to commit to making a conscious effort to notice the small miracles around us all the time which demonstrate God's presence in the physical world.

Moses returned to Egypt, and enlisted the help of his brother Aaron. For though Moses had a strength and power that glowed from him, it is said that he had a lisp, and Aaron was used as the voice for Moses. Moses appealed to Pharaoh to let his people go, but Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and the more that Moses would plead, the more oppressive Pharaoh became, even to the point of telling the Jews that they would have to make brick without straw.

Many of the Jews, who believed that this new edict was because of Moses' speaking and actions, turned against Moses and Aaron, helping Pharaoh succeed in his quest to divide Israel and keep it conquered. Moses came to Pharaoh again, with not pleas but with threats---but Pharaoh was unmoved. One by one the Ten Plagues, which we shall recite together soon in memory of God's intervention on our behalf, were brought down upon Egypt. It was only with the Final Plague, with the Death of the firstborn of Egypt---including Pharaoh's own son --- that the Jews were told to leave Egypt.

#### ★ COMMENTARY

There is an oral tradition found in Shemot Rabbah (11<sup>th</sup> century) that explains Moses' lisp:

*The magicians of Pharaoh's court were concerned about Moses, who in playing with Pharaoh would often play with his crown. So, they thought that he would be the one to destroy Pharaoh's kingdom. Some of them wanted to kill them, some to burn him alive. But Jethro, who sat among them, said, "This child has yet no understanding. Why not test him? Place before him a vessel with a gold piece and a burning coal in it. If he reaches for the gold, he has understanding, and you may slay him. But if he reaches for the coal, he has no understanding and sentence of death is not called for." The items were brought at once. Then, as Moses put forth his hand to grab the gold, the angel Gabriel came down and shoved it to the side, so that Moses not only seized the coal but also put the hand with the coal into his mouth and burned his tongue. As a result, he became slow of speech and slow of tongue.*

Throughout the narrative, God hardens and softens Pharaoh's heart. There are numerous reasons given for this, including that each time Pharaoh was ready to let the Hebrews go, it was not a true willingness to release them from the depth of his soul. Another reason given is that the children of Israel had to see the miracles that were being performed so that they

would unconditionally accept God's intervention on their behalf, and regain the faith of their ancestors.

As soon as conditions returned to normal in Egypt, Pharaoh had a change of heart, and sent his troops to pursue the Hebrews, who were by now at the shore of the Sea of Reeds, sometimes called the Red Sea. The Hebrews turned and saw the dust of the Egyptian chariots pursuing them, and with their backs to the Sea, turned on Moses for leading them to this destruction. Moses told them to have faith in God, for God would part the waters.

A Hebrew named Nachshon trusted this, and acting totally as a free man, started to walk unhesitatingly into the Sea---ready to take the ultimate risk for freedom. Only after Nachshon and those who followed him, did God part the waters of the Red Sea.

The Jews went across safely, and the Sea closed behind them, successfully blocking the Egyptians from further pursuit. Miriam led the people in song and dance, singing "*Mi Camocha!* Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty! Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! The Lord shall reign forever and ever!"

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#### ★ COMMENTARY

"Yam Suf" in Hebrew, which is more accurately called the "Sea of Reeds"

There is an ancient story that it was nearly sunset when Nachshon walked into the waters all the way up to just below his nose. As the sun set, a great wind blew. It blew all night, and in the morning, there was a large sand bar across the sea. The Hebrews crossed the sea on this sand bar, and when the Egyptians tried to pursue them in their chariots, they were too heavy and sand into the sea. This story can be a good opening for a dialogue about what each individual is willing to risk in their own lives to be free of their personal "slavery." Are we willing to have the faith of Nachshon and walk into the waters in order to be redeemed?

#### ✚ COMMENTARY

Miriam is the sister of both Moses and Aaron. Catholics and other Christians that use the Common Lectionary hear the story of Moses and the miracle of the people passing through the parted waters as well as Miriam's joyful response during the Easter Vigil, the three day prayer that includes Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the nighttime Saturday vigil of Easter.

Although our ancestors' bodies were free of bondage, their spirits were still enslaved. Many trials and problems arose during their long trek through the desert. Like children newly free, they needed to learn the responsibilities that go with true freedom. They were filled with fear, incapable of trusting themselves or their personal and collective boundaries; so much of their inherent energy was largely unavailable to them. Many times they regretted having given up the security of slavery for the insecurity and dangers of freedom. Many times they thought back on "the good old days" of slavery in Egypt.

*"We, as part of that remnant that survived are entitled only to ask, "Are we among the Saving Remnant? Are we fit for that? And on this evening, in that hope, to purify our hearts."*

---Anthony Hecht

But they did not go back to Egypt. Neither did they go forward to self-determination in the Promised Land. The entire generation of slaves, with only the exceptions of Moses, Caleb (a man who demonstrated faith), and Joshua, his successor as leader, wandered in the desert for forty years, unable to find their path to self-liberation. But the next generation, born in the precarious life of the desert, without the sculpting and armoring of Egyptian values and memories of slavery, were independent in both body and soul. They finally made the leap into personal and collective freedom and entered the Promised Land of Israel.

The experience of slavery, and of the going out of Egypt, told to them by their father and mothers who had actually been slaves, left a profound impact on the collective consciousness of these Jews. It gave them an understanding of the preciousness of freedom, and they were imbued with a passionate commitment to the justice that was incorporated in the Torah. They vowed to

remember that their ancestors were once slaves in Egypt, and to retell the story of their liberation once a year.

#### ✧ COMMENTARY

It is taught that their lack of faith in God, despite all the miracles that they had seen, was the factor that kept them in the desert. Specifically, the incident of the "spies" found in the Book of Numbers, Chapter 14 in which the people did not believe that God could lead them successfully into the promised land.

#### ✧ COMMENTARY

The Torah is also known as the Decalogue or the Five Books of Moses. These are the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They are the basis of all Jewish law

This telling started with the newly freed slaves themselves telling it to the little ones around the fires in the desert on the year anniversary of the Exodus, and has continued for over three thousand years in every corner of the globe---even as we tell it again tonight at this table of family and friends.

Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, the revered mystic of the 16<sup>th</sup> century stressed that redemption exists for every generation. And so, we lift our cups together and say,

**The promise made to our ancestors holds true for us. For in every generation there are those who seek to annihilate us. But the Holy One, Praised be thy Name, saves us from their hands.**

## The Ten Plagues

When Moses asked Pharaoh to release the Jewish slaves, and Pharaoh refused, ten plagues were sent to Egypt. And while we are happy that after the plagues we were finally freed from slavery, we must remember to temper our joy with sorrow for the Egyptians who had to die. We are taught that the Angels were rejoicing when the Egyptian tormentors were finally drowned in the Red Sea but that the Creator silenced them saying, "The work of my hand are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing hymns?" Therefore, as we recite the ten plagues, let us dip the end of our finger into our wine cups and cast a drop of wine onto our plate for each plague. In doing so, we consciously diminish our own pleasure and remember to have compassion, even for our enemies.

### Leader

Dam  
Tzfar-day-a  
Kee-Neem  
Arov  
Deh-ver  
Sh-cheen  
Ba-rad  
Ar-beh  
Kho-shech  
Ma-kat Be-kho-rot

### Participants

**Blood**  
**Frogs**  
**Lice**  
**Flies**  
**Pestilence**  
**Boils**  
**Hail**  
**Locusts**  
**Darkness**  
**Slaying of the First Born**

### ★ **DISCUSSION**

This is a wonderful opportunity to make the Seder personally applicable to modern times and your community. Ask each person (or table if you have multiple tables in a large hall) to come up with a "modern plague" (i.e. depression, AIDS, poverty, hunger, etc.). As each participant calls out a modern plague, everyone takes another drop out of their wine glass. This practice is a great way to get your community to experience the relevance of the ten plagues.

### ★ **LIMUD**

Many communities use this as another time to actively involve children in the Seder. Have toys, paper cutouts, or other fun symbols of these plagues, and let the children present throw them off the tables. As an example, be prepared to give each child a "plague bag" filled with rubber frogs, plastic flies, etc.

What can we do as a community to combat modern plagues? Not just theoretically, but can we design practical plans to help relieve the modern plagues in society?

Pirkei Avot 1:2 (part of the Mishnah, one of the sacred texts of Judaism) teaches that the “world rests on three things: Torah, Joyous Labor, and Acts of Loving kindness.” What small (or large) act of kindness can each individual do to help alleviate the suffering and plagues in the world? Can each participant commit to doing one “random act of kindness” each day?

#### ★ LIMUD

Each plague corresponds to one of the ancient Egyptian gods, the first relating to the Nile, which was turned to blood through all ten major Egyptian gods until the last plague, the killing of the first born which demonstrated that Osiris (the Egyptian god of the dead) had no power. This is an especially important understanding, as it showed the many Hebrews who had adopted some of the Egyptian religious beliefs that the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was more powerful than all the illusions that they had started to worship in their time in Egypt, turning them back to the monotheistic religion of Judaism.

#### ★ DISCUSSION

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other hand, remained pure; demonstrating that the plague was specifically upon the Egyptians and had passed over the Hebrews.

Arbeh: The actions of the locusts on behalf of the Hebrews is one of the traditional reasons given that explains why locusts are permitted to be eaten biblically (other insects are all forbidden).

Khoshech: Not just a physical darkness, but a spiritual one as well. While the Hebrews were able to see, the Egyptian slave masters were unable to see even their hand before their face; and unable to have any relationship with anyone around them: they were truly in the dark and alone during this plague.

Makat Bekhorot: There is a teaching that this last plague was so painful to God (who mourns the loss of any life of any person), that the Holy One executed this plague directly.. On the night of the Passover, God visited each first born of the Egyptians (a parallel to the killing of the Hebrew children that had been done during the time of Moses' birth). God showed the Divine Faceto each Egyptian first born, and the soul of each person was awakened and in desire to be unified with God, that the souls jumped out of the bodies of the Egyptians in an ecstatic desire for Divine Love. This legend reframes the tenth plague as not being cruel, but being merciful.

Dam: Not only the Nile River turned to blood, but all water that was owned by Egyptians, even if it was in an isolated pot, turned to blood as well. The water of the Hebrews on the

## Dayenu

*(All present shout out "Dayenu" after each phrase recited by the Leader, which means, "It would have been sufficient!")*

For how many good deeds are we indebted to God!

Had God taken us out of Egypt, and not exacted retributions upon them,

**Dayenu!**

Had God exacted retributions on them, and no destroyed their gods,

**Dayenu!**

Had God destroyed their gods, and not killed their firstborn,

**Dayenu!**

Had God killed their firstborn, and not give us their possessions,

**Dayenu!**

Had God given us their possessions, and not divided the Sea for us,

**Dayenu!**

Had God divided the Sea for us, and not permitted us to cross on dry land,

**Dayenu!**

Had God permitted us to cross on dry land, and not drowned our enemies in it,

**Dayenu!**

Had God drowned our enemies in the Sea, and not sustained us for forty years in the desert,

**Dayenu!**

Had God sustained us for forty years in the desert, and not fed us with manna,

**Dayenu!**

Had God fed us with manna, and not given us the Sabbath,

**Dayenu!**

Had God given us the Sabbath, and not brought us to Mt. Sinai,

**Dayenu!**

Had God brought us to Mt. Sinai, and not given us the Torah,

**Dayenu!**

Had God given us the Torah, and not led us into the Land of Israel,

**Dayenu!**

## ★ LIMUD

Dayenu can also be sung, and you will find the music at the end of this text.. Find a recording online and practice the verses. The gathered community can join in on the refrain, "Dayenu!"

## ★COMMENTARY

This poem praises God for fifteen items, and is accepted by most scholars to have been written either during the time of the Second Temple (516 BCE-70AD), or in post exilic Babylon around the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The first record of it is in the prayer book of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (892-942AD), making it at least over a thousand years old.

## ‡ COMMENTARY

The prayer Dayenu first appears in the prayer book of Saadiah Gaon in the tenth century. However, scholars believe that Dayenu was composed long before that time. Most likely, it was a defensive prayer to respond to Christian critique of the Jewish people as "ungrateful" in the *Improperia*, the "reproaches" in the early ritual prayer for Good Friday. Christians should never, under any circumstances, add verses to this prayer.

Had God led us into the Land of Israel, and not built for us the Temple,  
**Dayenu!**

**How much more so is the great goodness that God has done for us! God took us out of Egypt, exacted retributions upon them, destroyed their gods, killed their firstborn, gave us their possessions, divided the Sea for us, brought us through it on to dry land, drowned our enemies in it, satisfied our needs for forty years, fed us with manna, gave us the Sabbath, brought us before Mt. Sinai, gave us the Torah, brought us into the land of Israel, and built for us the Temple so that we might heal our shortcomings and become whole!**

### **The Passover Symbols**

*(It is customary for the Seder leader to raise the matzah and maror while reciting their explanations)*

#### ***(Alternating Participants)***

Should oppression once again face us through the actions of our enemies without and within; should we once again find ourselves slaves to others or to aspects of our personalities; should we ever again find ourselves controlled by our patterns rather than strengthened by them; the remembrance of the exodus of our ancestors from Egypt will never fail to inspire us with new courage and hope, and the symbols of this festival will help to strengthen our faith in God, who redeems the oppressed. Our relationship with these symbols has always and will continue to inspire us to break through the bonds that enslave us in our lives.

Therefore Rabbi Gamaliel declared "Whoever does not well consider the meaning of these three symbols -- Pesakh, Matzah, and Maror -- has not truly celebrated this Festival."

#### **✠ COMMENTARY**

Rabbi Gamaliel II was a 1<sup>st</sup> century sage and the leader of the Pharisees from 20 – 50 CE. His declaration is cited as one of the first moves to standardize the Passover observation in the home. Rabbi Gamaliel II was the grandson of the great Rabbi Gamaliel I. Luke, in writing the Acts of the Apostles, refers to Rabbi Gamaliel I as "a teacher of the law, respected by all the people." Rabbi Gamaliel I is also described by Luke as intervening eloquently and powerfully on behalf of the Apostles John and Peter (Acts 5:33-39) when they are put on trial in Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin, of which he was President. Rabbi Gamaliel I was also the teacher of Paul of Tarsus, who mentions him in his defense (Acts 22-23).

What is the meaning of Pesakh?

Pesakh means the “pascal lamb,” and is symbolized by this shank bone. This helps us to remember the sacrifice made by our ancestors on the eve of their departure from Egypt. They marked the doorposts of their homes with the blood of the sacrifice. Not only was this a sign that the “Angel of Death” should “pass over” their home, but it was a visual and conscious action to call attention to their revolt. It was a symbol of the refusal to hide from the risks and consequences of the struggle to become free. It is a constant prayer that God, in the same way that he spared the Children of Israel in the ancient “Watch-Night,” will save us in all kinds of distress, and will always shield the afflicted, and forever remove every trace of bondage from among the children of man.

What is meaning of Matzah? Matzah, called “the bread of affliction” was the hasty provision that our ancestors made for their journey. They were hasty to leave Egypt, and were driven out speedily, so there simply was not sufficient time to wait for the dough to rise into bread. They improvised flat cakes that could be baked and consumed in haste – matzah. It is a symbol of humility, for like the flat, yeastless matzah, we too must remove our puffiness and arrogance. The matzah represents the rush to freedom, and is a symbol of the Divine help we received and continue to receive.

What is the meaning of Maror?

Maror means “Bitter Herbs.” We eat it in order to recall the time of our slavery, and the bitterness of our bondage. This bitterness, instead of destroying our ancestors, came to sustain and strengthen them. How often do we condemn our own anger, bitterness, and pain without realizing how much these things give us strength in our daily lives.

#### ✠ COMMENTARY

Scholars of Judaism in the time of Jesus recognize that the sort of formal liturgy with structured prayers for Passover, as found in this Haggadah, had yet to develop while he was alive. They would emerge after the destruction of the temple as Rabbinic Judaism took hold.

However, the three symbols (pesakh, matzah, and maror) Rabbi Gamaliel mentions, as well as other elements such as the ritual washing and the four cups of blessed wine, were most likely part of the experience of Jesus and his disciples in observing Passover, although the Synoptic Gospels only mention the unleavened bread and two cups of wine.

While in an earlier era the ritual meal was held within the precincts of the Temple, at the time of Jesus celebratory meals happened throughout the entirety of Jerusalem due to the large number of residents and pilgrims, many of whom had to rent space for their meal. This is mentioned in the Gospels, where Jesus sends his friends before him to the

“upper room” where they will observe Passover together.

## The Second Cup – The Cup of Redemption

In the days of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition, Judaism was outlawed, yet the dangerous practice of their religion was continued by “Marranos”, people who claimed one religion on the surface, yet secretly practiced and taught the Jewish rites and rituals underground. Yiddish poet Avrom Reisen wrote this poem about these secret Jews of 15<sup>th</sup> century Iberia who quested for their freedom:

In a room in a deep cellar, there my Passover Seder is ready.  
Tell me Marrano, where will you get white matzah?  
In the cellar, under God’s protection, I kneaded the dough.  
Tell me Marrano, how will you manage to get a Haggadah?  
In the cellar, in a deep crevice, I hid a Haggadah long ago.  
Tell me Marrano, if your voice is heard, what will you do then?  
When the enemy captures me, I will die singing.

On April 1, 1933, the Jewish Review of Berlin, an intellectual Zionist newspaper, editorialized about the decree of the Nazis that all Jews must wear the Yellow Star in public. They responded, “The Jewish answer must be clear. It must be that briefest of sentences spoken by Moses to the Egyptian: *Ivri Anochi*. I am a Jew.”

We drink this second cup of wine, and we honor our ancestors who chose to remain true to their religion rather than be assimilated totally and risk falling into the slavery of Egypt once again. It would have been easy for them to disappear as a people and lose their identity, lose their souls. They chose instead to hold on to their roots, even in the face of oppression, and the Lord our God redeemed them...ultimately guiding our forbearers to blend their beauty with the beauty of other cultures. Losing from neither but gaining from all, our world today is richer for the harmony that was created.

### ✦ COMMENTARY

This is an opportunity to also discuss and honor other martyrs through history, who stayed true to their religious beliefs rather than reject them.

### ✦ COMMENTARY

It is devastating for Christians to recognize the extent to which, across the centuries, Jewish people met their martyrdom at the hands of Christians. For centuries, this was particularly egregious on Good Friday due to the vicious condemnation of the Jews in the prayers of that particular liturgy. Mobs of people would often leave their churches to go on a rampage.

While the language of prayer has changed, the persecution of Jews throughout the world continues. While many Christians have been martyred, this moment is best reserved for solidarity and compassion toward a people of faith who have been persecuted for millennia. Christians attending a Seder can use the experience of embracing Jesus’ Jewishness as a source of energy and commitment to undo religious persecution as well as persecution of all kinds.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt, and has enabled us to observe this night of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Lord our God and God of our Ancestors, may we, with Your help, live to celebrate other feasts and holy seasons. May we rejoice in Your salvation and be gladdened by your righteousness. Grant deliverance to all humans. May Your will be done so that your Name shall be sanctified throughout all the earth, and that all people will be moved to worship You with one voice. And we shall sing new songs of praise to You, for our redemption and for the deliverance of our souls. Blessed are You, Lord our God, the Redeemer of humanity.

*(Said together as the second cup of wine is lifted)*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has created the fruit of the vine.**

*(Drink the second cup of wine)*

## RACHTZAH (Washing of hands)

*(Wash hands and recite the following blessing together)*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and inspired us concerning the washing of hands. Hands and hearts are washed clean, ushering in the age of peace.**

### ★ DISCUSS

It is a wonderful custom that each person holds the bowl of water and towels for the next; reminding us that no one goes through life alone, and that we all need to commit to the sacredness of freedom together.

As the hands are being washed, it is a chance for people to discuss how they have started to feel cleansed; and how the personal intention that they discussed in the first washing of hands is starting to manifest.

## MOTZI (Who Brings Forth)

*(The Seder Leader holds the three matzah, with the broken one in the middle, and the following blessing is recited together)*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who brings forth bread from the earth.**

## MATZAH (Blessing over Matzah)

*(The leader holds the broken matzah and the following blessing is recited together)*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us concerning eating matzah.**

*(Break the top matzah and the broken matzah and distribute it to all present to eat)*

### ✧ COMMENTARY

Matzah is a bread that has not risen. Leaven gives size, but not substance to the grain. Matzah is pure, with no puffiness. Have a discussion about the “puffiness” in each person’s life that can be removed, and how the Matzah is a reminder that we can let go of our arrogance, puffiness, and “size” in order to step into the fullness of true freedom.

### ✝ COMMENTARY

The Christian practice of using unleavened bread in the Eucharist reflects this Passover tradition. The early practices of the Christian Church were simple and unscripted. As centuries passed, the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup evolved into what is now known in Catholic practice as the Mass.

## MAROR (Blessing over Bitter Herbs)

(The bitter herbs are dipped in the haroset, and are eaten after the following blessing)

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us concerning eating the bitter herbs.

## KOREKH (Eating the Sandwich of Matzah and Bitter Herbs)

(The third piece of matzah is distributed, and each person makes a small sandwich of matzah, bitter herbs, and haroset, to be eaten after the blessing)

It is the custom to remember and practice the traditions of Rabbi Hillel in the days of the Temple during the first century B.C.E. The scholar Hillel would place maror between pieces of matzah and eat them together not only in order to fulfill the appropriate commandments, but to remind us of the mixture of joy and sorrow; of slavery and freedom.

★ COMMENTARY  
110 B.C.E. – 10A.D.

Rabbi Hillel once said words important not only for every Jew at Passover, but for every human being striving to “go out” of their own narrowness and slavery, of whatever kind.

*“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”* Rabbi Hillel in *Pirkei Avot 1:14*

(Everyone eats their small sandwich)

The Sages asked: Why did we taste the matzah, which represents freedom, before the maror which represents slavery? Historically, the events happened in the exact opposite order. The reason we are given is, only after we have had a taste of freedom do we begin to understand the bitterness of our slavery. As Rabbi Hanoch of Alexander said, “The real slavery of the Jews in Egypt was that they learned to endure it.”

An arrogant man once went from Rabbi to Rabbi, telling them that he would convert to Judaism if they could teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. When he got to Rabbi Hillel, Hillel replied, “What is hateful to yourself, do not do to another. That is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary. Now, go and practice.”

**★ COMMENTARY**

Although very similar to the Golden Rule, there is a subtle but important difference. Because it is phrased in the negative language, it eliminates the possibility of someone who enjoys pain causing pain to another (as opposed to the Golden Rule, which implies that you should treat someone the way you wish to be treated). Additionally, there is the final sentence, which leads the person to experience the power of this ethical teaching by living it day to day.

**✚ COMMENTARY**

Rabbi Hillel was an older contemporary of Jesus. Jesus echoes Hillel when he says “Do unto others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)

#### ✧ COMMENTARY

In recent decades, it has become the practice of some Jewish families to place an orange on the Seder plate. This was started by Dr. Susannah Heschel in the 1980s. She had encountered a story in which a rabbi commented, "There's as much room in Judaism for a lesbian as there is for a crust of bread on the Seder plate." A bread crust, of course, would make the entire house unkosher for Passover, so she did not place bread on the plate. Instead, she chose an orange with seeds (not a navel orange) to represent the fruitfulness of the Jewish community when all people, gay or straight, are welcome. The orange has come to represent all who feel like they are marginalized in the Jewish community, are ostracized or who are the victims of prejudice and in need of the liberation found in Passover. Another version of this story claims that a misogynistic rabbi said, "A woman belongs as a rabbi on the pulpit as much as an orange belongs on the Seder plate", and so the response was for many people to place an orange there during the Seder.

## SHULCHAN ORECH (The Festive Meal)

*This is the time of the feast, where participants share the meal. It is a custom among many communities to begin the meal with a hard boiled egg that has been slightly burned on one side. This is both a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem; and also a reminder that the egg is like the Jewish people: it is the one food that gets stronger when the heat and pressure is increased.*

## TZAFUN (The Hidden)

*During the meal, the Seder leader hides the Afikomen (the piece of matzah that was broken and held on to earlier). After the meal is finished, each participant has a small piece of the Afikomen as the last food that they have this evening. Since the Afikomen has been hidden, there is a community search for it. Whomever finds it can hold it for ransom (if children are present, it is customary to let them find it). The Seder leader must then purchase it back from the person who found it; usually for a few dollars, a book, or a gift to charity in their name. At that point, it is passed around to the community, and finishes the festive meal.*

## **BAREKH (Blessing)**

**Amen**

*(Each cup is filled for the third cup of wine that will come later in the Seder)*

### **Grace After Meal**

*(A call and response prayer between the Seder leader and the community)*

Let us Say Grace

**Let God's Name be blessed for all eternity**

Let God's Name be blessed for all eternity. Let us bless God of whose bounty we have partaken and through whose goodness we live.

**Blessed be God for giving us to eat of the fruits of Creation.**

Bless be God and God's Name

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, who gives food to all. O God, sustain and protect us and grant us strength to bear our burdens. Let us not, O God, become dependent upon men, but let us rather depend on Your hand, which is ever open and gracious, so that we may never be put to shame in Your sight.**

Our God and God of our Ancestors, be always mindful of us, as you have been of our ancestors, so that we find enlargement, grace, mercy, life and peace on this Feast of Unleavened Bread.

**Amen**

Remember us this day in kindness.

**Amen**

Visit us this day with blessings.

**Amen**

Preserve us this day for life

**Amen**

The All-merciful! May God reign over us forever!

The All-merciful! May God sustain us in honor!

**Amen**

The All Merciful! May God bless this community and all assembled here. May we all find favor in the eyes of God and all people!

**Amen**

You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor.

Blessed is the human being that trusts in the Lord; the Lord shall always be there for help.

**The Lord will give strength to His people;**

**The Lord will bless His people with peace.**

## The Third Cup- The Cup of Blessing

*(Alternating Participants)*

In this time of joy and freedom, and from the comfort of full bellies and joyous hearts, we drink this third cup to honor the memory of the Jewish resistance during the Holocaust of the twentieth century. In the midst of our joy, we remember our brothers and sisters who were brutally tortured, murdered and burned by the Nazis.

We remember the apathy of the Allied nations who sabotaged attempts to rescue Jews and closed their doors to the Jewish people. We remember the crime of generals, who refused to bomb the crematorium at Auschwitz or the rail tracks leading to Nazi death camps because, they said, "it would detract from the war effort."

And at this time we take a few moments to remember the courageous fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt. On a night like this, the first night of Passover, April 19, 1943, under the full moon, the revolt of the ghetto residents began against the Nazi oppressors.

Remembering their ancestors' struggle for freedom as told in the Haggadah, a few hundred starving, ragged people chose to "put the Pascal Lamb on their doors." They chose to revolt against the Nazis, and raised a Jewish flag above the ghetto. Armed only with what they had stolen or smuggled into the ghetto, they declared war against the Nazis. With their fists and bottles, with their hearts and souls they took on armored tanks and flame throwers of the enemy. When the great Nazi war machine would come into the ghetto to round up the Jews, they were sent retreating back with their tail between their legs. The greatest propaganda loss to the Third Reich, these Jewish men and women held their ground for 43 days, until the Nazi Air Force had burned the entire ghetto to the ground.

But on Day 44, when the Nazis came into a decimated ghetto with burned down buildings, they were faced with warriors who had still

### ✚ COMMENTARY

There are five cups of wine in the Seder today. There were four cups in the Passover meal at the time of Jesus. Scholars agree that it was the third cup that Jesus drank symbolically. The cup of blessing is the moment where the Eucharist was instituted. Paul, writing in the letter Corinthians, tells us that the cup was "after the meal" (1 Cor 11:24). He also observes, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16). Remember that Paul was a deeply observant Jew, most likely a Pharisee.

lived, and for whom freedom burned brightly in their eyes. They had lived in bunkers underground, and from the depths groups of resistance fighters emerged to avenge the murder of their comrades. Not until September of 1943, five months after the start of the uprising, was the area of the Warsaw Ghetto finally silent. Inspired by the acts of their ancestors in Egypt, these courageous Jews held their ghetto against the Nazis longer than the entire nation of Poland; and became the inspiration for uprisings and revolts against the Nazis for the rest of the war. We honor and remember them with affection, and derive strength from their courage in our modern times.

*(Sung or recited by a young person at the table.)*

Laugh at all my dreams my dearest,  
Laugh and I repeat anew  
That I still believe in man  
As I still believe in you;  
By the passion of our spirit  
Shall our ancient bonds be shed.  
Let the soul be given freedom,  
Let the body have its bread

For my soul is not yet sold  
To the Golden Calf of scorn  
And I still believe in man  
And the Spirit in him born.  
Life and love and strength and action  
In our hearts and blood shall beat  
And our hopes shall be both Heaven  
And the Earth beneath our feet.

Laugh at all my dreams my dearest,  
Laugh and I repeat anew  
That I still believe in man....  
As I still believe in you.)

-Hebrew Original by S. Chernichovsky

The Hebrew word “Baruch”, translates to blessing, praising, and honoring; all of which go hand in hand. We drink this cup of wine to honor those of the past century and through all of human history who have given real meaning to hope and strength; and helped us integrate these qualities within ourselves.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has created the fruit of the vine.**

*(Fill cup for the fourth cup of wine.)*

### The Cup of Elijah

It is said that Eliahu, Elijah the Prophet, comes to Earth from time to time, when hearts are open and the need for peace is great. And it will be Elijah who will herald the End of Days and the Coming of the Messiah, when harmony will reign upon our planet. For we are taught that Elijah has the ability to open the hearts of parents to their children and children to their parents. He is welcome in this community, and in our hearts.

As we have been shown the meaning of physical freedom, and heard the tales of how our people broke the bonds of slavery throughout the ages, Elijah is considered to be the guide to our achieving spiritual freedom. With Elijah’s guidance, we are able to access our “Great Self”, our true spirit personality, the core of who we really are.

Whether we are conscious enough to be aware of Eliahu when he is present, or whether we simply get feelings inside that seem inspired from a higher source, we all have the ability to be guided by this great teacher and prophet....if we are willing to truly listen.

Through Elijah, physically and in our hearts, we are guided to understanding our connection to all things, and we move in harmony with the Universe. As we open the door for Elijah, that he may come and drink at this table, let us open our hearts and our souls that we may act upon his guidance and teachings---and upon the guidance and teachings of our own inner Elijahs.

### ★COMMENTARY

Although the Talmud records an opinion of pouring a fifth cup of wine, the custom of pouring an additional cup of wine for Elijah probably stems back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

There are two common practices about filling Elijah’s cup. The first is to have a filled cup in the middle of the table from the beginning of the Seder, which is then held up by the Leader when discussed. The second is for each participant to take a little bit of wine from their own cup and pour it into Elijah’s. This beautiful practice reminds us that we all need to participate in order to achieve the final redemption that Elijah will herald.

Malachi 3:2-4 As we open the door to Elijah, all present are invited to open their own hearts to each other just a little bit more.

*The front door to the room and building is*

*opened, usually by a child)*

Praise the Lord, all ye nations.

Praise the Lord all ye Peoples.

For God's mercy is great towards us.

And the Truth of the Lord endures forever. Let all now say, For God's mercy endures forever.

(The door is closed)

#### ✦COMMENTARY

Many contemporary Jewish families have added the pouring of another cup, Miriam's cup, alongside Elijah's cup. This cup is filled with water, not wine.

Miriam was the sister of Moses. Legends tell how a well followed her as the Israelites sojourned in the desert. She is also honored as a woman who supported the people as they struggled in their journey toward the promised land. It is said that when Miriam died, there was no water until her two brothers, Moses and Aaron, fell upon their faces before God. God in return brought forth the waters of Meribah.

How Miriam's cup is used varies. One practice is to have each person at the table pour some of their water into the empty cup, filling it. Those present are then invited to tell stories about the women in their lives who have been important.

## **HALLEL (Praise)**

### Psalm 117

Praise the Lord all nations;

Extol God, all peoples.

For God's kindness overwhelms us,

And the Lord's steadfast truth is forever.

Hallelujah!

May Your Name be praised forever, our Ruler, God, the great and holy Master in heaven and earth, because for You are fitting, our God and the God of our ancestors: song and praise, psalm and melody, might and government, eternity, greatness and power, fame and glory, holiness and kingdom, blessings and thanks forever and ever. Blessed are You, Lord our God, Lord great in praise, God of thanks, Master of wonders, who chooses melodious song, Lord God, life of the Universe.

*(Hold up the filled fourth cup of wine)*

With this fourth and final cup, the "Kos Ha'artza-ah", the "Cup of Acceptance", we honor the heart and soul of our people which we have followed through slavery and into freedom; and our own hearts, that they may always guide us in harmony and beauty.

*(Together)*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine

*(Drink fourth cup)*

### **★ COMMENTARY**

Although each of the words of praise are in reality "songs," this final part of the Seder often has folk songs about freedom (such as the ones at the back of this Haggadah) after the final blessing.

### **✚ COMMENTARY**

The praying of the psalms is a practice held in common by the Jewish and Christian communities. In the Gospel of Mark, the evangelist notes, "and having sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mark 14:26). The Gospel of Matthew also observes this (Matthew 26:30). The hymn would have been one of the Hallel psalms given the Passover practices of the time. The Hallel psalms were those recited in the Jewish festival services of the day.

There are many settings of Psalm 117 and one of them may be familiar to your community, such as Go Out to All the World by David Haas (GIA publishers) or Go Out, Go Out to All the World by Curtis Stephan (OCP publishers).

## **NIRTZAH (Concluding Songs)**

With songs of praise we have lifted up our cups, and have called upon the name of God. Let us always lift our souls to God in faith and in hope. Soon, may God cause the glad tidings of redemption to be heard in all places, so that all people, freed from unnecessary violence and united in an eternal covenant of brotherhood and sisterhood---may celebrate the Passover in God's name.

May God bless the whole house of Israel with freedom and keep us safe everywhere.

**Amen**

May God cause the light of Divine countenance to shine upon all peoples, and dispel the darkness of ignorance and prejudice.

**Amen**

May God bless this community and this nation, and render it a true home of liberty and a bulwark of peace. And May Peace be granted to us and to all mankind.

**Amen**

To the Jewish people, Jerusalem is more than just a place, it is the heart and soul of our nation. Jerusalem is the heart of the people that can transform pain into growth and beauty, that can alter destruction and create life. When we speak or sing of Jerusalem, we are speaking of our own personal hearts as well, and our prayers for Jerusalem are our prayers for ourselves. When we pray that we shall be in Jerusalem this coming year, we pray that we will be in and true to our own hearts. Whatever your feelings of Jerusalem the physical city, our prayers at the end of this Seder remind us to always be true to the most light filled places in our hearts. The poet said, "Jerusalem, holy city of truth, of gold, of silver, of light. You are the song, I am the harp."

*(Read by one of the older women present)*

If I forget thee O Jerusalem  
May my right hand wither into uselessness  
May my tongue adhere to my palate and be silenced  
If I do not remember thee  
If I do not elevate Jerusalem  
As the cornerstone of my happiness

The Seder Service now concludes  
Its rites observed in full  
Its purposes revealed

This privilege we share will ever be renewed.  
Until God's plan is known in full,  
God's highest blessing sealed.

This Coming Year in Jerusalem!

This Coming Year in our Hearts!

**AMEN**

✠ COMMENTARY  
"Yerushalyaim She Zahav"  
Naomi Shemer 1967

The final line is drawn from  
Psalm 137

## Who Knows One - A Madrigal of Numbers

*(The Seder Leader asks each question, and then participants volunteer to answer...trying to say each response in one breath; a task that gets progressively more difficult!)*

Who knows One?

I know One: One is the God of the World.

Who knows Two?

I know Two: Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

The tablets given at Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments on them

Who knows Three?

I know Three: Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Who knows Four?

I know Four: Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel

Who knows Five?

I know Five: Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

The Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Who knows Six?

I know Six: Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Seven?

I know Seven: Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

A boy is circumcised on his eighth day (Genesis 17:12)

Who knows Eight?

I know Eight: Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Nine?

I know Nine: Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Ten?

I know Ten: Ten are the Commandments; Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Eleven?

I know Eleven: Eleven stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are the Commandments, Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh, Ephraim, Benjamin

Who knows Twelve?

I know Twelve: Twelve tribes of Israel, Eleven stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are the Commandments, Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Taken from the description of God's attributes in Exodus 34:6-7. They are: The Lord (the indescribable quality of Divinity), ever-present, all-merciful, gracious, compassionate, patient, abounding in kindness, faithful, treasuring up love for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, forgiving transgression, forgiving sin, and pardoning the penitent.

Who knows Thirteen?

I know Thirteen: Thirteen Attributes of God, Twelve tribes of Israel, Eleven stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are the Commandments, Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

## Chad Gad'ya - An Only Kid

Throughout the evening we have experienced and sometimes struggled with issues of life and death; with stories and parables regarding freedom and bondage; with questions about beliefs and our commitments to ourselves and others. Yet, traditionally, we end the evening bringing all of these powerful ideals and teachings back to their roots with a children's song. We remind ourselves of the cycle of all things, and that freedom of any sort truly does begin with a gift being gotten for a child---even if it only cost two zuzim. *(All Sing Together)*

Chad gadya Chad gadya  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the cat  
And ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the dog  
And bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the stick  
And beat the dog  
That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the fire  
That burned the stick  
That beat the dog  
That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Literally, "an only baby goat"; this is a folk song from Eastern Europe that has become almost universal in its usage at the end of the Seder

The equivalent of two pennies.

Then came 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  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came 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  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the butcher  
That slew 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.  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the Angel of Death  
And killed the butcher  
That slew 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  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the Holy One  
Blessed be He  
And destroyed the Angel of Death  
That killed the butcher  
That slew the ox  
That drank the water  
That quenched the fire  
That burned the sticks  
That beat the dog  
That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

## ADDITIONAL SONGS FOR THE SEASON

### DONA, DONA

On a wagon bound for market  
There's a calf with a mournful eye.  
High above him there's a swallow  
Winging swiftly through the sky

#### **(Refrain)**

While the winds are laughing  
They laugh with all their might  
Laugh and laugh the whole day through  
And half of the summer's night.

Dona Dona. Dona Dona Dona Dona

Dona Dona Dona Dona

Dona Don Dona Dona

Dona Dona Dona Dona

Stop complaining said the farmer  
Who told you a calf to be?  
Why don't you have wings to fly with  
Like the swallow so proud and free.

(Refrain)

Calves are easily bound and slaughtered  
Never knowing the reason why.  
Those who love and cherish freedom  
Like the swallow will learn to fly.

(Refrain)

## GO DOWN MOSES

When Israel was in Egypt's land  
Let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand  
Let my people go.

### **(Refrain)**

Go down, Moses  
Way down in Egypt's land.  
Tell ole Pharaoh  
Let my people go.

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said  
Let my people go.  
If not, I'll smite your first born dead  
Let my people go.  
(Refrain)

No more shall they in bondage toil  
Let my people go.  
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil  
Let my people go.  
(Refrain)

We need not always weep and mourn  
Let my people go.  
And wear these slav'ry chains for long.  
Let my people go.  
(Refrain)

## PASSOVER THOUGHTS FOR PRIVATE MEDITATION

Treat this book as a study guide. It is not a text book. Read a page, think about it, sift the ideas through your consciousness. Let what comes from your mind float free, and follow gently. More than what stimulated it, your own production is what counts in spiritual life. This book won't do a thing for you. But your response to it can do everything, with God's grace and the higher mind which is your own.

---Reb Zelman Schacter-Shalomi

We are all leaves of a tree and the tree is humanity.

---Pablo Cassals

Rabbi Mikhal said, "When the Evil Urge tries to tempt man to sin, it tempts him to become all too righteous.

A disciple asked his Rabbi: "How can I best serve God?"

The Rabbi replied: "You can best serve God with whatever you are doing at the moment."

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy

The chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.

Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation)

There is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kill countless ideas and splendid plans:

That the moment one definitely commits oneself,

Then Providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no one could have dreamed would have come his/her way.

Whatever you can do, or dream you can begin it.

Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.

Begin it now.

---Goethe

Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said, "In the world to come, They will not ask me: "Why were you not Moses?" They will ask me: "Why were you not Zusya?""

– Quoted in Martin Buber

Worry about your own spiritual needs and your friends' spiritual needs.

---Rabbi Israel Salanter

Legend has it that once, during the Days of Awe, the great Rabbi Luria felt that his prayers were particularly effective. But the Almighty suddenly revealed to him that another's prayers, those of Shmuel the butcher, were even more potent than his. The great Rabbi sought out the butcher's home, and looked through the window. Inside, he could see the butcher reciting the Hebrew alphabet over and over and saying the following to God, "O Master of the Universe, I am unlearned. Please take my letters and form them into words that will please You." And he repeated this phrase continuously. Upon hearing this, the Rabbi knew that the heartfelt prayers of the simple man were more exalted than any others.

Rabbi Shelomo asked: "What is the worst thing that the Evil Urge can achieve?" And he answered: "To make man forget that he is the son of a king."

Something should remind us once more that the great things in the universe are things that we never see. You walk out at night and look up at the beautiful stars as they bedeck the heavens like swinging lanterns of eternity, and you think you can see all. Oh, no. You can never see the law of gravitation that holds them there.

---Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.

I believe in love even when feeling it not.

I believe in God even when He is silent.

---Inscription on the walls of a cellar in Cologne, Germany, where Jews hid from Nazis

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 prayers of the man.  
---Hannah Senesh

All things have a home: the bird has a nest, the fox has a hole, the bee has a hive. A  
soul has a prayer.  
---Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

I asked God for strength that I might achieve;  
I was made weak, that I might learn to serve.  
I asked for health, that I might do great things;  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.  
I asked for wealth, that I might be happy;  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power, that I might earn the praise of men;  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that might enjoy life;  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing I asked for, but all I hoped for.  
Despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
And I am, among all men, most richly blessed.  
---Prayer of an Anonymous Confederate Soldier

Whenever Rabbi Levi Yitzhak came to that passage in the Haggadah of Passover which deals with the four sons, and in it read about the fourth son, about him who “knows not how to ask,” he said: “The one who knows not how to ask,’ that is myself, Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev. I do not know how to ask you, Lord of the world, and even if I did know, I could not bear to do it. How could I venture to ask you why everything happens as it does, why we are driven from one exile into another, why our foes are allowed to torment us so. But in the Haggadah, the father of him ‘who knows not how to ask’ is told: ‘It is for you to disclose it to him’. And the Haggadah refers to the Scriptures, in which it is written: “‘And you shall tell your son’. And, Lord of the world, am I not your son? I do not beg you to reveal to me the secrets of your ways---I could not bear it! But show me one thing; show it to me more clearly and more deeply: show me what this, which is happening at this very moment, means to me; what it demands of me; what you, Lord of the world, are telling me by way of it. Ah, it is not why I suffer, that I wish to know, but only whether I suffer for Your sake.”

**Psalm 63**  
**A Soul Thirsting for God**

God, you are my God, I am seeking you,  
my soul is thirsting for you,  
my flesh is longing for you,  
a land parched, weary and waterless;  
I long to gaze on you in the Sanctuary,  
and to see your power and glory.  
Your love is better than life itself,  
my lips will recite your praise;  
all my life I will bless you,  
in your name lift up my hands;  
my soul will feast most richly,  
on my lips a song of joy, in my mouth praise.

### **Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love,

Where there is injury, pardon

Where there is doubt, faith,

Where there is despair, hope,

Where there is darkness, light,

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much  
seek to be consoled as to console,  
not so much to be understood as to understand,  
not so much to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.

*St. Francis of Assisi*

### **Our Father**

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom  
come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our  
daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass  
against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

### **Easter Prayer for Jewish-Christian Amity**

Recalling our spiritual roots in biblical Israel,  
and remembering that Jesus was an authentic son of Israel,  
We pray tonight in a special way for the Jewish people,  
our elder brothers and sisters in covenant with God:  
May our peoples be a blessing for each other and for the whole world;  
Let us pray to the Lord.

### **Interfaith Prayer for Peace**

O God, you are the source of life and peace.  
Praised be your name forever.  
We know it is you who turns our minds to thoughts of peace.  
Hear our prayer in this time of crisis.  
Your power changes hearts.

Muslims, Christians, and Jews remember, and profoundly affirm,  
that they are followers of the one God,  
Children of Abraham, brothers and sisters;  
enemies begin to speak to one another;  
those who were estranged join hands in friendship;  
nations seek the way of peace together.

Strengthen our resolve to give witness to these  
truths by the way we live.  
Give to us:  
Understanding that puts an end to strife;  
Mercy that quenches hatred, and  
Forgiveness that overcomes vengeance.  
Empower all people to live in your law of love  
Amen.

## RECIPES FOR PASSOVER

### HAROSET

This food on the Passover plate reminds us of the sweetness of freedom in its taste, and of the mortar that was used to make the pyramids by the Hebrew slaves. There should be some on the Seder leader's plate, as well as a bit on each participant's personal Seder plate. There are many recipes for this dish that can be found in cookbooks or online. Here are a few of our favorites:

#### Ashkenazi Recipe #1

Ingredients:

- 3 medium Gala or Fuji apples, peeled, cored, and finely diced
- 1 1/2 cups walnut halves, lightly toasted, cooled, and coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup sweet red wine such as Manischewitz Extra Heavy Malaga
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar

Preparation

In large bowl, stir together all ingredients. Store, covered, at room temperature until ready to serve.

#### Sephardic Recipe #1

- 20 pitted dates, preferably Medjool
- 3 bananas
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 1/4 cup sweet red wine such as Manischewitz Extra Heavy Malaga
- 3 tablespoons date syrup (*silan*) or honey
- 1/2 cup walnut halves, toasted
- 1/2 cup unsalted shelled pistachio nuts (not dyed red), toasted
- 1/2 cup whole almonds, toasted
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

- 1 teaspoon ground cloves

In food processor, purée dates until smooth. Add bananas, raisins, wine, and date syrup and process to combine. Add walnuts, pistachios, almonds, cinnamon, allspice, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves and process until smooth. Store, covered, at room temperature until ready to serve.

### Sephardic Recipe #2 (with wine)

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 1/2 cups red wine (recommended: cabernet sauvignon or Manischewitz)
- 1 pound (2 1/2 cups) red raisins
- 8 ounces (1 1/2 cups) dried dates, chopped fine
- 4 ounces (3/4 cup) dried apricots, chopped fine
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 8 ounces (1 1/2 cups) roasted almonds
- 1 teaspoon orange blossom water (optional)

Bring wine to a light simmer on medium heat, then stir in fruit and spices. Cook uncovered until fruit is well hydrated and wine has reduced to a thick syrup, about 15 minutes. Add salt to taste and set aside.

In a food processor, roughly chop almonds in short pulses. There should be no whole almonds remaining; a mix of large chunks and small crumbs is preferable. Remove almonds from food processor and transfer to a large mixing bowl.

Add fruit mixture to food processor and pulse until fruit just begins to come together into a paste, 2 to 3 one-second pulses. Do not over process – large chunks of fruit should be intact.

Transfer fruit to mixing bowl and combine well with almonds. Stir in orange blossom water and additional salt if needed. Flavor of haroset will improve over time. Serve warm or at room temperature.

## Gefilte Fish

A traditional Eastern European appetizer, this can be made in a variety of ways; or just bought in jars at the grocery store and dressed with carrots, potatoes, and/or onions.

### **Ingredients**

- 7 to 7 1/2 pounds whole carp, whitefish, and pike, filleted and ground\*
- 4 quarts cold water or to just cover
- 3 teaspoons salt or to taste
- 3 onions, peeled
- 4 medium carrots, peeled
- 2 tablespoons sugar or to taste
- 1 small parsnip, chopped (optional)
- 3 to 4 large eggs
- Freshly ground pepper to taste 1/2 cup cold water (approximately)
  
- 1/3 cup matzah meal (approximately) \*Ask your fishmonger to grind the fish. Ask him to reserve the tails, fins, heads, and bones. Be sure he gives you the bones and trimmings. The more whitefish you add, the softer your gefilte fish will be.

Place the reserved bones, skin, and fish heads in a wide, very large saucepan with a cover. Add the water and 2 teaspoons of the salt and bring to a boil. Remove the foam that accumulates.

Slice 1 onion in rounds and add along with 3 of the carrots. Add the sugar and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for about 20 minutes while the fish mixture is being prepared.

Place the ground fish in a bowl. In a food processor finely chop the remaining onions, the remaining carrot, and the parsnip; or mince them by hand. Add the chopped vegetables to the ground fish.

Add the eggs, one at a time, the remaining teaspoon of salt, pepper, and the cold water, and mix thoroughly. Stir in enough matzah meal to make a light, soft mixture into oval shapes, about 3 inches long. Take the last fish head and stuff the cavity with the ground fish mixture.

Remove from the saucepan the onions, skins, head, and bones and return the stock to a simmer. Gently place the fish patties in the simmering fish stock. Cover loosely and

simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. Taste the liquid while the fish is cooking and add seasoning to taste. Shake the pot periodically so the fish patties won't stick. When gefilte fish is cooked, remove from the water and allow to cool for at least 15 minutes.

Using a slotted spoon carefully remove the gefilte fish and arrange on a platter. Strain some of the stock over the fish, saving the rest in a bowl.

Slice the cooked carrots into rounds cut on a diagonal about 1/4 inch thick. Place a carrot round on top of each gefilte fish patty. Put the fish head in the center and decorate the eyes with carrots. Chill until ready to serve. Serve with a sprig of parsley and horseradish.

### **Aunt Harriett's Matzah Balls**

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup Streit's matzah meal
- 1/2 cup seltzer or club soda
- 4 eggs (separate yolks from whites)
- 1/3 cup melted chicken fat (melted margarine can be substituted)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Dash of pepper

Mix egg yolks, salt, pepper, melted shortening and water. Add matzah meal. Beat egg whites until stiff and add to mixture. Put into refrigerator for one hour. In meantime boil water in large pot. Take out of refrigerator. Wet hands, make small balls and place into boiling water. Cook about an hour or until balls are soft. (This recipe can be doubled.)

### **Aunt Harriett's Chopped Liver**

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 tub of chicken livers
- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 chopped onion
- 1/4 cup oil
- 2 tablespoons of chicken fat
- 1 teaspoon salt
- dash pepper

Boil livers about 20 minutes.

Cook onion in oil until onion is soft and transparent.

Drain livers and place into food processor. Add 2 hard-boiled eggs, salt and pepper and onion along with some of the oil. Chop all together and when done add the chicken fat if available (not required).

## PASSOVER DESSERTS

Since during Passover it is forbidden to eat breads, cakes, or any product with flour in it, kosher desserts have been created throughout the ages to satisfy the sweet tooth.

### Macaroons

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 cups packaged shredded coconut
- 1/2 cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 3 egg whites
- Chopped dried fruit, chocolate chips or whole almonds for garnish, optional

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. In a bowl, toss the coconut, sugar and salt together. Add the egg whites and work them in with a wooden spoon to form a "dough." Take heaping teaspoons of dough and shape them into balls. Place on a lightly greased cookie sheet. If desired, place a piece of garnish on top of each ball. Bake for about 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool for 5 minutes, then remove the macaroons to a cake rack to cool completely. Makes about 20

Variations add:

\* 1/4 cup matzo cake meal for firmer macaroons

\* 1-1/2 teaspoons grated fresh lemon peel

\* Chocolate dipped: melt 6 ounces chocolate with 1 tablespoon shortening; dip macaroon tops

### Passover Chocolate Cake

#### **Ingredients**

- 10 eggs, separated and at room temperature or slightly warmer
- 14 tbsp. (about 1 c.) sugar
- 6 oz. bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, melted slowly over hot water and cooled
- 2 c. finely chopped (not ground) walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Beat the egg yolks and sugar until very thick and lemon colored. Stir in the chocolate. Fold in the nuts.

Beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry and fold into the chocolate nut mixture. Turn into a greased 10 inch spring form pan and bake 1 hour or until the center springs back when lightly touched with the finger tips. Cool in the pan. Frost with your favorite chocolate frosting. Makes 8-12 servings.

### **Passover Mandel Bread**

#### **Ingredients**

2 3/4 c. matzah cake meal  
1/2 lb. butter  
2 c. sugar  
6 eggs  
3/4 c. potato starch  
1/2 tsp. salt  
6 oz. Passover chocolate or chips  
1 c. chopped nuts  
2 tsp. sugar  
1 tsp. cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream the butter with sugar. Add the eggs one at a time. Beat until smooth. Sift the cake meal, potato starch, and salt. Fold the dry mixture into the egg mixture. Mix thoroughly. Add the chopped chocolate and nuts. Form into 3 or 4 loaves on a greased baking sheet, about 3 inches wide, top with a mix of 2 tsp. sugar and 1 tsp. cinnamon. Bake 40-45 minutes

## Aunt Harriett's Chocolate Mandelbrot (similar to biscotti)

### Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 lb margarine or butter
- 6 eggs
- 2 3/4 cups matzah cake meal
- 1/2 teas salt
- 1/4 cup potato starch
- 1/2 cup Passover chocolate chips

Cream sugar and margarine or butter together. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition

Sift together cake meal, salt, and potato starch. Fold these dry ingredients into the creamed mixture of sugar, margarine or butter and eggs Add chocolate bits and mix well. Allow the dough to harden in the bowl for one hour.

Separate dough into two portions, and shape each into a low loaf about two inches wide. Place each on an ungreased cookie sheet (you can sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon if you want extra sweet) and bake in preheated oven 350 oven for 45 minutes.

Slice the loaves into serving slices while they are still warm not hot.

## *Afterword*

### **A Note to Catholic Readers**

One of the opportunities for Christians in experiencing the Passover meal in the company of our Jewish friends and relatives is to remember the power of God's covenant with the Jews and, through that, the power of God's original covenant with us. Catholic Christians follow particularly compelling teaching about the nature of God's irrevocable covenant with the Jewish people. This teaching was expressed in a particularly powerful way in the document *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions from Vatican II. What the document expresses is so important it is worth reading a significant excerpt:

As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ - Abraham's sons according to faith -- are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He

issues-such is the witness of the Apostle. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

This teaching cannot be emphasized enough within the Catholic Community and beyond to the greater Christian world. Pope Francis expressed it this way: "since the Second Vatican Council we have rediscovered that the Jewish People are still for us the holy root that produced Jesus." Recognizing the horror of the Shoah, the Pope affirmed that "God never abandoned his covenant with Israel, and notwithstanding their terrible suffering over the centuries, the Jewish People have kept their faith. For this, we will never be sufficiently grateful to them as a Church, but also as human beings. In the persistence of their faith in the God of the Covenant, they summon all, including us as Christians, to recall the fact that we are awaiting the return of the Lord as pilgrims, and must therefore always remain open to Him and never retreat from what we have already achieved."

If your approach to the Seder is one of generating the "mutual understanding and respect" central to *Nostra Aetate* and so important to the Holy Father, then you are on the right track! There is still so much work to be done throughout the Church on the preconiliar attitudes of condemnation and persecution of the Jews that colored centuries of Catholic life. Not only can you be part of the healing, but through the authentic participation in this Seder, you are part of the healing that changes the world a person at a time.

An important element of respecting the power of the Seder comes through understanding why the Jewish people have observed Passover in this way for thousands of years. When the Jewish people tell the Passover story, it is not simply a recollection, it is remembered in such a deep and transformative way that it becomes a story not only about ancestors long ago, but each person's individual life story today..

This practice of remembering something in such a way that it literally lives anew is part of Christian life, as well. When the Eucharist is celebrated, which Jesus instituted at the Last Supper, Christians experience what theologians call *anamnesis*. Anamnesis is a Greek word that means "memorial" That term derived and developed from Paul's passage in the letter to the people at Corinth that cites Jesus saying, "do this in memory of me." However, what it refers to is much more than conventional understanding of

“memory.” In theological use, it conveys something unique and powerful. To have an experience of *anamnesis* is to participate in an act of remembering that makes something truly and actually present.

The Catholic Catechism (1363) notes, “In the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men (see Ex13:3). In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them.” Each Eucharistic prayer in the Catholic tradition includes a prayer of anamnesis. You may have heard the priest saying, “Therefore, O Lord, we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.” Like the Passover Seder, the Eucharist is not an act of recollection; it is an experience of God present, now.

Both the Passover meal and the Eucharist are about the transformation of our lives that comes through this deep memory-in-reality and the renewed inspiration to action that it brings. As our commentary notes observe, there are still many ways in which people are enslaved today. Some of our brothers and sisters are literally in physical bondage in sweat shops, brothels and other settings, and we must work to be the people of justice who fight for and achieve their freedom. In the Jewish tradition, this is part of the process of “Tikkun Ha’Olam”, literally, “repairing the world”; it is our responsibility as individuals and communities. In the Catholic tradition, Social Teaching speaks of faith’s responsibility to the world. In his first World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis noted, “Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace.”

In addition to working on physical enslavement, we know that in this age, we experience insidious forms of mental and emotional slavery. We can become slaves to our possessions, our addictions, our lust for status and power and more. Facing where we are enslaved is a powerful act of spiritual inventory available to people of all faiths through the Seder.

Finally, respecting the integrity of the experience means resisting the urge to “Christianize” it in any way. It is whole and complete as it is. It does not need to be modified or customized. We exhort you to resist adding Christian prayers or songs to it; do not change the language or delete prayers. This liturgy has evolved over

centuries into an experience that touches heart, mind, and spirit. Trust its integrity and let yourself be moved and changed by its power.

In undertaking interreligious dialogue, you join countless people of good will who work for harmony and peace on our planet. These people include Pope Francis and his dear friend and long-time conversation partner and co-author Rabbi Abraham Skorka, who together presented a model for how we can learn and grow with and through one another.

May their example, and the example of so many people of good will, empower us to pray together:

Y'varech'echa Adonai V'Yishmarecha

May the Lord always bless and protect you

Ya'er Adonai Panav Eleycha V'y'chunecha

May the Lord's face be lifted for you, being gracious with you in all places and times

Issa Adonai Panav Eleycha, v'ya'sim Lecha Shalom

May God's face be with yours, and may the Lord always make for you health, joy, prosperity, fun, compassion, passion, integrity, wisdom, love, and peace.

## The Telling: Participant Haggadah

### BLESSING OVER THE CANDLES

*Light the Candles, and then say the prayer*

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us through Your commandments, and commanded us to kindle the flame of this Festival.**

### KADESH (Sanctification)

We drink this first of four cups of wine at this Seder to mark the struggle for freedom, and in celebration that this evening will be sanctified through our intention.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has created the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who has sanctified us by giving us commandments to fulfill, and who helps us to be joyful by giving us holy days to celebrate. Tonight we celebrate a holy event in our history, our liberation from slavery of the mind, body, and spirit.**

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.**

### U'REHATZ (Washing)

*Wash hands without reciting a blessing*

## KARPAS (Spring Vegetable)

Each person takes a piece of karpas, the green spring vegetable on their individual plate, and dips it in the saltwater.

Why do we immerse this karpas, this symbol of our liberation in salt water, the universal symbol of suffering? We do this to affirm that to liberate ourselves, our souls, we first must immerse ourselves fully in the depths of our suffering, bringing out into the open our suppressed pain, anguish, and forgotten wounds---and identify it as oppression. Only after we have become fully conscious of our pain can the oppression of ourselves, by the hands of others or by our own hands, finally begin to grow into liberation and freedom.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who brings forth fruit from the earth. Blessed are You, Lord our God, who makes a distinction between the holiness of light and the holiness of darkness; between the holiness of the Sabbath and the holiness of the six days of work, between the holiness of the body and the holiness of the spirit. May our every thought, word, and deed reflect the holiness of Existence.**

## YAHATZ (Breaking the Matzah)

The middle matzah is broken into two pieces. The larger piece is put aside and will be used as the afikoman at the end of the meal. The smaller piece is put back between the two pieces of matzah on the main seder plate, and the larger piece (afikoman) is wrapped. Sometime between now and the end of the meal, it is hidden by the Seder leader. It will become a game to find it later on, since the Seder meal cannot be completed without it, and whomever finds it will be able to hold it hostage to be redeemed by the Seder leader---usually in exchange for a monetary gift to charity, or a few coins if it is a child that finds it later.

## **MAGGID (Telling the Story)**

*The Matzah is uncovered and the main Seder Plate is held for to see.*

*(Leader):* Ha Lach-ma An-ya! This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy come and be sheltered. Let all who are oppressed come and celebrate the freedom of Passover. Now we are here, next year may we be free in the land of our hearts, in the land of Israel. Now we are oppressed, next year may we be free.

### **The Four Questions**

*(To be asked by the youngest person at the Seder table that is able to read.)*

Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night do we eat only unleavened?

On all other nights we eat fruits and vegetables of all kinds, why on this night do we eat bitter herbs?

On all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, why on this night do we dip them twice?

On all other nights we may sit or recline while eating, why on this night do we eat in a reclining position?

### **The Answer – Avadeem Hayeenu - We Were Slaves**

*(Leader):* Ava-deem Ha-yee-nu l'far b'mitz-ray-eem. We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, until, as the Bible teaches us, God took us from there with "a strong hand and an outstretched arm." If God had not taken us out of bondage, then even we, our children, and our children's children might still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Therefore, even if we were all wise, all people of understanding, all enlightened beings; even if we were all Elders well versed in the Torah and the writings of the Prophets, it would still be our duty to tell the story of the Exodus, the departure from Egypt, so that it will never be forgotten.

## The Four Children

**Blessed is the Eternal One, whose Law teaches us of the four different kinds of children: the wise, the rebellious, the simple, and the child who is unable to inquire.**

### (ALTERNATING PARTICIPANTS)

The Wise Child asks with curiosity: “What is the meaning of the rules, laws, customs, and traditions which the Lord our God has commanded us to practice during this holy season? This child shall be instructed in the laws of Passover, their symbologies, and practices down to the very last detail of the Afikomen.

The Rebellious Child asks arrogantly: “What is all this trouble you make us go through every year?” By saying “you,” the child has excluded himself from the community. The answer is given that we celebrate the Passover because of what the Lord our God did for “us” when we personally came out from Egypt. For “us” and not for “him,” for had this child been there he would not have been redeemed.

The Simple Child indifferently asks: “What is this all about?” This child will be told that with a mighty hand and outstretched arm the Lord our God delivered us out of the house of bondage and slavery.

And for the child who is unable to inquire, we shall tell the whole story of the Passover; we shall sing the songs and tell the tales so that we all may emotionally experience the bondage of slavery in Egypt, and the redemption that the Lord our God gave to us. For it is said that even when one does not know how to ask, the teacher must know what to teach.

## The Story of the Oppression

*(This can be read many ways, but is extremely effective when read by alternating participants for each paragraph, except where specified. If it is a large group, individuals can be pre-assigned readings as well.)*

Long, long ago our ancestors worshipped idols as gods, putting the power of the Divine into the wood, metal, and stone that they carved. The idols were more than symbols or tools to bridge a relationship, they were gods themselves. Then our forefather, Abraham, the son of an idolmaker, was called from the bondage of slavery to graven images and empty symbols to serve the Lord our God. Abraham and his wife Sarah were blessed with a son, Isaac, whose name means “laughter,” who with his beloved Rebecca gave birth to Jacob. After a visionary experience, Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel,” which became the name of the Jewish people. Jacob had twelve sons, from whom come the “tribes of Israel,” the most visionary of which was Joseph.

Famine came to the land of Canaan (where Jacob and his family lived), but the family heard that there was plenty of food in Egypt. This was due in a large part to the efforts of Joseph, who had been living in Egypt and had risen to a position of great power and prestige under the Pharaoh (the ruling monarch of Egypt) as a result of his amazingly accurate dream interpretations. Jacob and his family came to Egypt, numbering only 70 people, and there felt that they would be secure as a result of Pharaoh’s pleasure with Joseph.

The Jews came to feel at home in Egypt; and even when the famine ended in Canaan, they continued to live in this foreign land for centuries because it was comfortable and easy. They forgot many of their own values and traditions---some of them even began to keep Egyptian idols in their homes. They forgot their heritage as a free people, even though they were still held in high esteem by the Pharaoh.

The book of Exodus begins with “And there arose a Pharaoh who knew not of Joseph.” This new Pharaoh, who was motivated by fear and greed, preferred to ignore the contributions the Jews had made, and, since he needed slave labor to build his desires, enslaved the Jewish people. His process started with accusing them for the problems of the country, accusing them of conspiring with enemy nations, and promoting fear and hatred in the Egyptian people by leading them to believe that the Jews were an alien minority likely to side with an enemy in case of attack, or that they would take over the country of Egypt themselves in a planned coup. The Jews became segregated, persecuted, and ultimately enslaved.

*(The following poem is to be read by a teenager)*

The last, the very last  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high.  
It went away I'm sure because it wished to kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived here,  
Pinned up inside these walls  
But I have found my people here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut candles in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly as the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
In the ghetto

---Pavel Friedman

A 12 year old Concentration Camp prisoner who was killed in 1942

The Jews became slaves, and built the store cities of Pithom and Raamses. They made the bricks with straw, and were the physical laboring slaves for the nation. But the more that the Egyptian taskmasters set burdens upon them, the more they multiplied, and the more our ancestors prayed to the Lord to be made free once again.

Pharaoh initiated a practice of planned genocide of the Jewish nation. All new-born Jewish males were to be drowned! There are some sages who suggest that Pharaoh did this at the suggestion of some of his mystical advisors, who foretold that a leader would be born to the Jewish people that would lead them out of Egypt. And as Jewish

children were mercilessly drowned, the voices of the mothers of Israel were heard by God.

*(The following paragraph is to be read by another teenager)*

We got used to standing in line at seven o'clock in the morning, at twelve noon, and again at seven o'clock in the evening. We stood in a long queue with a plate in our hand into which they ladled a little warmed up water with a salty or a coffee flavor. Or else, they gave us a few potatoes. We got used to sleeping without a bed, to saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks, and then again to walk on the sidewalks. We got used to undeserved slaps, blows, and executions. We got accustomed to seeing piled-up coffins full of corpses, to seeing the sick amidst dirt and filth, and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to the fact that from time to time one thousand unhappy souls would come here and that, from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away...

---From the prose of 15 year old Peter Fischl, who perished in Auschwitz in 1944

It was due to efforts of two of Pharaoh's midwives, Shifra and Pu'ah, that the rebellion began against Pharaoh. Although threatened by Pharaoh with death by fire if they failed to follow his commands, these two women lied to Pharaoh about the Jewish births, and when the Pharaoh questioned their contempt, they lied that "the Hebrew women...are lively and they deliver before the midwife can get to them." These women tried to save what Jews they could. They were not only midwives to the children they delivered, but also to the entire Jewish nation, in its deliverance from slavery. Through the defiance of two other women, a mother named Yokheved and her daughter Miriam, the Healer and Prophetess, a Jewish new born boy was placed in a basket of reeds and put on the river. The Sages teach us "for the sake of the pious women who in lived in that generation, were the Israelites freed from bondage."

*(The following poem and subsequent paragraph should be read by a wise or older woman at the table)*

*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 it's beating for honor's sake.*

*Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame*

---Hannah Senesch 1921-1944

This poem is personified by its author, a young resistance fighter. The Nazis who captured Hannah brought her mother to her, and said that if Hannah didn't reveal the names of the resistance movement, her mother would be killed. Hannah told her mother that she could not betray the resistance. Her mother replied that by not giving in to the oppressor, Hannah had proved her love.

The baby was put on the waters near where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. The baby was taken by the daughter, and named "Moshe," "Moses," which translated to "he who is taken from the waters." Moses was raised as an Egyptian, and became a Prince among men, respected and honored by all for his fair treatment of animals and humans, no matter what their cultural background. But the hand of God was always on the shoulder of Moses, and he was eventually impelled to seek his true roots. Identifying himself as a Jew, he left Egypt, wandered long through the desert, and deepened his relationships with himself and the Almighty. He finally came upon a community in neighboring Midyan, and married the beautiful Zipporah. He devoted himself to raising a family, seeking to forget his people's suffering in the land of Egypt. But it is true what they say, "It's not his just desserts that a man gets, it's his destiny."

One day, while rescuing a lost lamb, Moses came upon a bush that burned but was not consumed. He had a Divine experience, and through his vision and clarity, he knew that not only was this bush a symbol for God, with whom he spoke, but that it was also a teaching that although the Jewish people might be consumed in the flames of slavery and disbelief, they would continue to resist and live, like the branches of this bush. Through the experience, he understood that it was time to return to his people in Egypt, and to help them fulfill their collective destiny.

Moses returned to Egypt, and enlisted the help of his brother Aaron. For though Moses had a strength and power that glowed from him, it is said that had a lisp, and Aaron was used as the voice for Moses. Moses appealed to Pharaoh to let his people go, but Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and the more that Moses would plead, the more

oppressive pharaoh became, even to the point of telling the Jews that they would have to make brick without straw. Many of the Jews, who believed that this new edict was because of Moses' speaking and actions, turned against Moses and Aaron, helping Pharaoh succeed in his quest to divide Israel and keep it conquered. Moses came to Pharaoh again, with not pleas but with threats---but Pharaoh was unmoved. One by one the Ten Plagues, which we shall recite together soon in memory of God's intervention on our behalf, were brought down upon Egypt. It was only with the Final Plague, with the Death of the firstborn of Egypt---including Pharaoh's own son, that the Jews were told to leave Egypt.

As soon as conditions returned to normal in Egypt, Pharaoh had a change of heart, and sent his troops to pursue the Hebrews, who were by now at the shore of the Red Sea.<sup>1</sup> The Hebrews turned and saw the dust of the Egyptian chariots pursuing them, and with their backs to the Sea, turned on Moses for leading them to this destruction. Moses told them to have faith in God, for God would part the waters. A Hebrew named Nachshon trusted this, and acting totally as a free man, started to walk unhesitatingly into the Sea---ready to take the ultimate risk for freedom. Only after Nachshon and those who followed him, did God part the waters of the Red Sea. The Jews went across safely, and the Sea closed behind them, successfully blocking the Egyptians from further pursuit. Miriam<sup>2</sup> led the people in song and dance, singing "*Mi Camocha!* Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty! Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! The Lord shall reign forever and ever!"

Although our ancestors' bodies were free of bondage, their spirits were still enslaved. Many trials and problems arose during their long trek through the desert. Like children newly free, they needed to learn the responsibilities that go with true freedom. They were filled with fear, incapable of trusting themselves or their personal and collective boundaries, so much of their inherent energy was largely unavailable to them. Many times they regretted having given up the security of slavery for the insecurity and dangers of freedom. Many times they thought back on "the good old days" of slavery in Egypt.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Yam Suf" in Hebrew, which is more accurately called the "Sea of Reeds"

<sup>2</sup> The sister of both Moses and Aaron

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*“We, as part of that remnant that survived are entitled only to ask, “Are we among the Saving Remnant? Are we fit for that? And on this evening, in that hope, to purify our hearts.”*

---Anthony Hecht

But they did not go back to Egypt. Neither did they go forward to self-determination in the Promised Land. The entire generation of slaves, with only the exceptions of Moses, Caleb (a man who demonstrated faith), and Joshua, his successor as leader, wandered in the desert for forty years, unable to find their path to self-liberation. But the next generation, born in the precarious life of the desert, without the sculpting and armoring of Egyptian values and memories of slavery, were independent in both body and soul. They finally made the leap into personal and collective freedom and entered the Promised Land of Israel.

The experience of slavery, and of the going out of Egypt, told to them by their father and mothers who had actually been slaves, left a profound impact on the collective consciousness of these Jews. It gave them an understanding of the preciousness of freedom, and they were imbued with a passionate commitment to the justice that was incorporated in the Torah. They vowed to remember that their ancestors were once slaves in Egypt, and to retell the story of their liberation once a year. This telling started with the newly freed slaves themselves telling it to the little ones around the fires in the desert on the year anniversary of the Exodus, and has continued for over three thousand years in every corner of the globe---even as we tell it again tonight at this table of family and friends.

Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, the revered mystic of the 16<sup>th</sup> century stressed that redemption exists for every generation. And so, we lift our cups together and say,

**The promise made to our ancestors holds true for us. For in every generation there are those who seek to annihilate us. But the Holy One, Praised be thy Name, saves us from their hands.**

## The Ten Plagues

When Moses asked Pharaoh to release the Jewish slaves, and Pharaoh refused, ten plagues were sent to Egypt. And while we are happy that after the plagues we were finally freed from slavery, we must remember to temper our joy with sorrow for the Egyptians who had to die. We are taught that the Angels were rejoicing when the Egyptian tormentors were finally drowned in the Red Sea, but that the Creator silenced them saying, "The work of my hand are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing hymns?" Therefore, as we recite the ten plagues, let us dip the end of our finer into our wine cups and cast a drop of wine onto our plate for each plague. In doing so, we consciously diminish our own pleasure and remember to have compassion, even for our enemies.

### LEADER

Dam  
Tzfar-day-a  
Kee-Neem  
Arov  
Deh-ver  
Sh-cheen  
Ba-rad  
Ar-beh  
Kho-shech  
Ma-kat Be-kho-rot

### PARTICIPANTS

**Blood**  
**Frogs**  
**Lice**  
**Flies**  
**Pestilence**  
**Boils**  
**Hail**  
**Locusts**  
**Darkness**  
**Slaying of the First Born**

## Dayenu<sup>3</sup>

*(All present shout out "Dayenu" after each phrase recited by the Leader, which means, "It would have been sufficient!")*

For how many good deeds are we indebted to God!

Had God taken us out of Egypt, and not exacted retributions upon them,

**Dayenu!**

Had God exacted retributions on them, and no destroyed their gods,

**Dayenu!**

Had God destroyed their gods, and not killed their firstborn,

**Dayenu!**

Had God killed their firstborn, and not give us their possessions,

**Dayenu!**

Had God given us their possessions, and not divided the Sea for us,

**Dayenu!**

Had God divided the Sea for us, and not permitted us to cross on dry land,

**Dayenu!**

Had God permitted us to cross on dry land, and not drowned our enemies in it,

**Dayenu!**

Had God drowned our enemies in the Sea, and not sustained us for forty years in the desert,

**Dayenu!**

Had God sustained us for forty years in the desert, and not fed us with manna,

**Dayenu!**

Had God fed us with manna, and not given us the Sabbath,

**Dayenu!**

Had God given us the Sabbath, and not brought us to Mt. Sinai,

**Dayenu!**

Had God brought us to Mt. Sinai, and not given us the Torah,

**Dayenu!**

---

<sup>3</sup> This poem praises God for fifteen items, and is accepted by most scholars to have been written either during the time of the Second Temple (516BCE-70AD), or in post exilic Babylonia around the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The first record of it is in the prayer book of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (892-942AD), making it at least over a thousand years old.

Had God given us the Torah, and not led us into the Land of Israel,

**Dayenu!**

Had God led us into the Land of Israel, and not built for us the Temple,

**Dayenu!**

*(All say the next paragraph together)*

How much more so is the great goodness that God has done for us! God took us out of Egypt, exacted retributions upon them, destroyed their gods, killed their firstborn, gave us their possessions, divided the Sea for us, brought us through it on to dry land, drowned our enemies in it, satisfied our needs for forty years, fed us with manna, gave us the Sabbath, brought us before Mt. Sinai, gave us the Torah, brought us into the land of Israel, and built for us the Temple so that we might heal our shortcomings and become whole!

### **The Passover Symbols**

*(It is customary for the Seder leader to raise the matzah and maror while reciting their explanations)*

*(Alternating Participants)*

Should oppression once again face us through the actions of our enemies without and within; should we once again find ourselves slaves to others or to aspects of our personalities; should we ever again find ourselves controlled by our patterns rather than strengthened by them; the remembrance of the exodus of our ancestors from Egypt will never fail to inspire us with new courage and hope, and the symbols of this festival will help to strengthen our faith in God, who redeems the oppressed. Our relationships with these symbols has always and will continue to inspire us to break through the bonds that enslave us in our lives.

Therefore Rabbi Gamaliel<sup>4</sup> declared “Whoever does not well consider the meaning of these three symbols: Pesakh, Matzah, and Maror, has not truly celebrated this Festival.”

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<sup>4</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> century Sage  
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What is the meaning of Pesakh?

Pesakh means the “pascal lamb,” and is symbolized by this shank bone. This helps us to remember the sacrifice made by our ancestors on the eve of their departure from Egypt. They marked the doorposts of their homes with the blood of the sacrifice. Not only was this a sign that the “Angel of Death” should “Pass-over” their home, but it was a visual and conscious action to call attention to their revolt. It was a symbol of the refusal to hide from the risks and consequences of the struggle to become free. It is a constant prayer that God, in the same way that he spared the Children of Israel in the ancient “Watch-Night,” will save us in all kinds of distress, and will always shield the afflicted, and forever remove every trace of bondage from among the children of man.

What is meaning of Matzah?

Matzah, called “The bread of affliction” was the hasty provision that our ancestors made for their journey. They were hasty to leave Egypt, and were driven out speedily, so there simply was not sufficient time to wait for the dough to rise into bread. They improvised flat cakes that could be baked and consumed in haste – matzah. It is a symbol of humility; for as the flat, yeastless matzah, we too must remove our puffiness and arrogance. The matzah represents the rush to freedom, and is a symbol of the Divine help we received and continue to receive.

What is the meaning of Maror?

Maror means “Bitter Herbs.” We eat it in order to recall the time of our slavery, and the bitterness of our bondage. This bitterness, instead of destroying our ancestors, came to sustain and strengthen them. How often do we condemn our own anger, bitterness, and pain without realizing how much these things give us strength in our daily lives.

### **The Second Cup - The Cup of Redemption**

In the days of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition, Judaism was outlawed, yet the dangerous practice of their religion was continued by “Marranos,” people who

claimed one religion on the surface, yet secretly practiced and taught the Jewish rites and rituals underground. Yiddish poet Avrom Reisen wrote this poem about these secret Jews of 15<sup>th</sup> century Iberia who quested for their freedom:

In a room in a deep cellar, there my Passover Seder is ready.  
Tell me Marrano, where will you get white matzah?  
In the cellar, under God's protection, I kneaded the dough.  
Tell me Marrano, how will you manage to get a Haggadah?  
In the cellar, in a deep crevice, I hid a Haggadah long ago.  
Tell me Marrano, if your voice is heard, what will you do then?  
When the enemy captures me, I will die singing.

On April 1, 1933, the Jewish Review of Berlin, an intellectual Zionist newspaper, editorialized about the decree of the Nazis that all Jews must wear the Yellow Star in public. They responded, "The Jewish answer must be clear. It must be that briefest of sentences spoken by Moses to the Egyptian: *Ivri Anochi*. I am a Jew."

We drink this second cup of wine, and we honor our ancestors who chose to remain true to their religion rather than be assimilated totally and risk falling into the slavery of Egypt once again. It would have been easy for them to disappear as a people and lose their identity, lose their souls. They chose instead to hold on to their roots, even in the face of oppression, and the Lord our God redeemed them...ultimately guiding our forebearers to blend their beauty with the beauty of other cultures. Losing from neither but gaining from all, our world today is richer for the harmony that was created.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt, and has enabled us to observe this night of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Lord our God and God of our Ancestors, may we, with Your help, live to celebrate other feasts and holy seasons. May we rejoice in Your salvation and be gladdened by your righteousness. Grant deliverance to all humans. May Your will be done so that your Name shall be sanctified throughout all the earth, and that all people will be moved to worship You with one voice. And we shall sing new songs of praise to You, for our redemption and for the deliverance of our souls. Blessed are You, Lord our God, the Redeemer of humanity.

*(Said together as the second cup of wine is lifted)*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has created the fruit of the vine.

*(Drink the second cup of wine)*

## **RACHTZAH (Washing of hands)**

*(Wash hands and recite the following blessing together<sup>5</sup>)*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and inspired us concerning the washing of hands. Hands and hearts are washed clean, ushering in the age of peace.

## **MOTZI (Who Brings Forth)**

*(The Seder Leader holds the three matzah, with the broken one in the middle, and the following blessing is recited together)*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who brings forth bread from the earth.

## **MATZAH (Blessing over Matzah)**

*(The leader holds the broken matzah and the following blessing is recited together.)*

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<sup>5</sup> It is a wonderful custom that each person holds the bowl of water and towels for the next; reminding us that no one goes through life alone, and that we all need to commit to the sacredness of freedom together.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us concerning eating matzah.**

*(Break the top matzah and the broken matzah and distribute it to all present to eat.)*

### **MAROR (Blessing over Bitter Herbs)**

*(The bitter herbs are dipped in the haroset, and are eaten after the following blessing)*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us concerning eating the bitter herbs.

### **KOREKH (Eating the Sandwich of Matzah and Bitter Herbs)**

*(The third piece of matzah is distributed, and each person makes a small sandwich of matzah, bitter herbs, and haroset, to be eaten after the blessing.)*

It is the custom to remember and practice the traditions of Rabbi Hillel<sup>6</sup> in the days of the Temple during the first century B.C.E. The scholar Hillel would place maror between pieces of matzah and eat them together not only in order to fulfill the appropriate commandments, but to remind us of the mixture of joy and sorrow; of slavery and freedom.

Rabbi Hillel once said words important not only for every Jew at Passover, but for every human being striving to “go out” of their own narrowness and slavery, of whatever kind.

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

*(Everyone eats their small sandwich)*

---

<sup>6</sup> 110 B.C.E. – 10A.D.  
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The Sages asked: why did we taste the matzah, which represents freedom, before the maror which represents slavery? Historically, the events happened in the exact opposite order. The reason we are given is, only after we have had a taste of freedom do we begin to understand the bitterness of our slavery. As Rabbi Hanoch of Alexander said, "The real slavery of the Jews in Egypt was that they learned to endure it."

An arrogant man once went from Rabbi to Rabbi, telling them that he would convert to Judaism if they could teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. When he got to Rabbi Hillel, Hillel replied, "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to another. That is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary. Now, go and practice."

### **SHULCHAN ORECH (The Festive Meal)**

*This is the time of the feast, where participants share the meal. It is a custom among many communities to begin the meal with a hard boiled egg that has been slightly burned on one side. This is both a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem; and also a reminder that the egg is like the Jewish people: it is the one food that gets stronger when the heat and pressure is increased.*

### **TZAFUN (The Hidden)**

*During the meal, the Seder leader hides the Afikomen (the piece of matzah that was broken and held on to earlier). After the meal is finished, each participant has a small piece of the Afikomen as the last food that they have this evening. Since the Afikomen has been hidden, there is a community search for it. Whomever finds it can hold it for ransom (if children are present, it is customary to let them find it). The Seder leader must then purchase it back from the person who found it; usually for a few dollars, a book, or a gift to charity in their name. At that point, it is passed around to the community, and finishes the festive meal.*

## **BAREKH (Blessing)**

*(Each cup is filled for the third cup of wine that will come later in the Seder)*

### **Grace After Meal**

*(A call and response prayer between the Seder leader and the community)*

Let us Say Grace

**Let God's Name be blessed for all eternity**

Let God's Name be blessed for all eternity. Let us bless him of whose bounty we have partaken and through whose goodness we live.

**Blessed be God for giving us to eat of the fruits of Creation.**

Bless be God and God's Name

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, who gives food to all. O God, sustain and protect us and grant us strength to bear our burdens. Let us not, O God, become dependent upon men, but let us rather depend on Your hand, which is ever open and gracious, so that we may never be put to shame in Your sight.**

Our God and God of our Ancestors, be always mindful of us, as you have been of our ancestors, so that we find enlargement, grace, mercy, life and peace on this Feast of Unleavened Bread.

**Amen**

Remember us this day in kindness.

**Amen**

Visit us this day with blessings.

**Amen**

Preserve us this day for life

**Amen**

The All-merciful! May He reign over us forever!

**Amen**

The All-merciful! May He sustain us in honor!

**Amen**

The All Merciful! May He bless this community and all assembled here. May we all find favor in the eyes of God and men!

**Amen**

You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor. Blessed is the human being that trusts in the Lord; the Lord shall always be there for help.

**The Lord will give strength to his people;**

**The Lord will bless his people with peace.**

### **The Third Cup- The Cup of Blessing**

*(Alternating Participants)*

In this time of joy and freedom, and from the comfort of full bellies and joyous hearts, we drink this third cup to honor the memory of the Jewish resistance during the Holocaust of the twentieth century. In the midst of our joy, we remember our brothers and sisters who were brutally tortured, murdered and burned by the Nazis.

We remember the apathy of the Allied nations who sabotaged attempts to rescue Jews and closed their doors to the Jewish people. We remember the crime of generals, who refused to bomb the crematorium at Auschwitz or the rail tracks leading to Nazi death camps because, they said, "it would detract from the war effort."

And at this time we take a few moments to remember the courageous fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt. On a night like this, the first night of Passover, April 19, 1943, under the full moon, the revolt of the ghetto residents began against the Nazi oppressors. Remembering their ancestors' struggle for freedom as told in the Haggadah, a few hundred starving, ragged people chose to "put the Pascal Lamb on their doors." They chose to revolt against the Nazis, and raised a Jewish flag above the ghetto. Armed only with what they had stolen or smuggled into the ghetto, they declared war against the Nazis. With their fists and bottles, with their hearts and souls they took on armoured tanks and flame throwers of the enemy. When the great Nazi

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war machine would come into the ghetto to round up the Jews, they were sent retreating back with their tail between their legs. The greatest propaganda loss to the Third Reich, these Jewish men and women held their ground for 43 days, until the Nazi Air Force had burned the entire ghetto to the ground.

But on Day 44, when the Nazis came into a decimated ghetto with burned down buildings, they were faced with warriors who had still lived, and for whom freedom burned brightly in their eyes. They had lived in bunkers underground, and from the depths groups of resistance fighters emerged to avenge the murder of their comrades. Not until September of 1943, five months after the start of the uprising, was the area of the Warsaw Ghetto finally silent. Inspired by the acts of their ancestors in Egypt, these courageous Jews held their ghetto against the Nazis longer than the entire nation of Poland; and became the inspiration for uprisings and revolts against the Nazis for the rest of the war. We honor and remember them with affection, and derive strength from their courage in our modern times.

*(Sung or recited by a young person at the table)*

Laugh at all my dreams my dearest,  
Laugh and I repeat anew  
That I still believe in man  
As I still believe in you;  
By the passion of our spirit  
Shall our ancient bonds be shed.  
Let the soul be given freedom,  
Let the body have its bread

For my soul is not yet sold  
To the Golden Calf of scorn  
And I still believe in man  
And the Spirit in him born.  
Life and love and strength and action  
In our hearts and blood shall beat  
And our hopes shall be both Heaven  
And the Earth beneath our feet.

Laugh at all my dreams my dearest,  
Laugh and I repeat anew  
That I still believe in man....  
As I still believe in you.  
---Hebrew Original by S. Chernichovsky

The Hebrew word “Baruch,” translates to blessing, praising, and honoring; all of which go hand in hand. We drink this cup of wine to honor those of the past century and through all of human history who have given real meaning to hope and strength; and helped us integrate these qualities within ourselves.

**Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who has created the fruit of the vine.**

*(Fill cup for the fourth cup of wine, which will be drunk shortly)*

### **The Cup of Elijah**

It is said that Eliahu, Elijah the Prophet, comes to Earth from time to time, when hearts are open and the need for peace is great. And it will be Elijah who will herald the End of Days and the Coming of the Messiah, when harmony will reign upon our planet. For we are taught that Elijah has the ability to open the hearts of parents to their children and children to their parents. He is welcome in this community, and in our hearts.

As we have been shown the meaning of physical freedom, and heard the tales of how our people broke the bonds of slavery throughout the ages, Elijah is considered to be the guide to our achieving spiritual freedom. With Elijah’s guidance, we are able to access our “Great Self,” our true spirit personality, the core of who we really are. Whether we are conscious enough to be aware of Eliahu when he is present, or whether we simply get feelings inside that seem inspired from a higher source, we all have the ability to be guided by this great teacher and prophet....if we are willing to truly listen.

Through Elijah, physically and in our hearts, we are guided to understanding our connection to all things, and we move in harmony with the Universe. As we open the door for Elijah, that he may come and drink at this table, let us open our hearts and our souls, that we may act upon his guidance and teachings---and upon the guidance and teachings of our own inner Elijahs.

*(The front door to the room and building is opened, usually by a child)*

Praise the Lord, all ye nations.

Praise the Lord all ye Peoples.

For His mercy is great towards us.

And the Truth of the Lord endures forever. Let all now say, For His mercy endures forever.

(The door is closed)

## **HALLEL (Praise)**

### Psalm 117

Praise the Lord all nations;

Extol Him, all peoples.

For his kindness overwhelms us,

And the Lord's steadfast truth is forever.

Hallelujah!

May Your Name be praised forever, our King, God, the great and holy King in heaven and earth, because for You are fitting, our God and the God of our ancestors: song and praise, psalm and melody, might and government, eternity, greatness and power, fame and glory, holiness and kingdom, blessings and thanks forever and ever. Blessed are You, Lord our God, King great in praise, God of thanks, Master of wonders, who chooses melodious song, King God, life of the Universe.

*(Hold up the filled fourth cup of wine)*

With this fourth and final cup, the “Kos Ha’artza-ah,” the “Cup of Acceptance,” we honor the heart and soul of our people which we have followed through slavery and into freedom; and our own hearts, that they may always guide us in harmony and beauty.

*(Together)*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine

*(Drink fourth cup)*

### **NIRTZAH (Concluding Songs)**

With songs of praise we have lifted up our cups, and have called upon the name of God. Let us always lift our souls to God in faith and in hope. Soon, may God cause the glad tidings of redemption to be heard in all places, so that all people, freed from unnecessary violence and united in an eternal covenant of brotherhood and sisterhood--may celebrate the Passover in God’s name.

May God bless the whole house of Israel with freedom and keep us safe everywhere.

Amen

May God cause the light of his countenance to shine upon all peoples, and dispel the darkness of ignorance and prejudice.

Amen

May God bless this community and this nation, and render it a true home of liberty and a bulwark of peace. And May Peace be granted to us and to all mankind.

Amen

To the Jewish people, Jerusalem is more than just a place, it is the heart and soul of our nation. Jerusalem is the heart of the people that can transform pain into growth and beauty, that can alter destruction and create life. When we speak or sing of Jerusalem, we are speaking of our own personal hearts as well, and our prayers for Jerusalem are our prayers for ourselves. When we pray that we shall be in Jerusalem this coming year, we pray that we will be in and true to our own hearts. The poet said, “Jerusalem, holy city of truth, of gold, of silver, of light. You are the song, I am the harp.”

*(Read by one of the older women present)*

If I forget thee O Jerusalem  
May my right hand wither into uselessness  
May my tongue adhere to my palate and be silenced  
If I do not remember thee  
If I do not elevate Jerusalem  
As the cornerstone of my happiness

The Seder Service now concludes  
Its rites observed in full  
Its purposes revealed

This privilege we share will ever be renewed.  
Until God's plan is known in full,  
God's highest blessing sealed.  
This Coming Year in Jerusalem!  
This Coming Year in our Hearts!

**AMEN**

## Who Knows One - A Madrigal of Numbers

*(The Seder Leader asks each question, and then participants volunteer to answer...trying to say each response in one breath: a task that gets progressively more difficult.)*

Who knows One?

I know One: One is the God of the World.

Who knows Two?

I know Two: Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Three?

I know Three: Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Four?

I know Four: Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Five?

I know Five: Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Six?

I know Six: Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Seven?

I know Seven: Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Eight?

I know Eight: Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Nine?

I know Nine: Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Ten?

I know Ten: Ten are the Commandments; Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Eleven?

I know Eleven: Eleven stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are the Commandments, Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Twelve?

I know Twelve: Twelve tribes of Israel, Eleven stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are the Commandments, Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

Who knows Thirteen?

I know Thirteen: Thirteen Attributes of God, Twelve tribes of Israel, Eleven stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are the Commandments, Nine are the months of pregnancy, Eight days until circumcision, Seven days of the week, Six days of Creation, Five Books of Moses, Four Mothers of Israel, Three Patriarchs, Two Tablets of the Law, One God of the World.

## Chad Gad'ya - An Only Kid

Throughout the evening we have experienced and sometimes struggled with issues of life and death; with stories and parables regarding freedom and bondage; with questions about beliefs and our commitments to ourselves and others. Yet, traditionally, we end the evening bringing all of these powerful ideals and teachings back to their roots with a children's song. We remind ourselves of the cycle of all things, and that freedom of any sort truly does begin with a gift being gotten for a child---even if it only cost two zuzim.<sup>7</sup>

*(All Sing Together)*

Chad gadya Chad gadya  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the cat  
And ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the dog  
And bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the stick  
And beat the dog  
That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the fire  
That burned the stick  
That beat the dog

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<sup>7</sup> The equivalent of two pennies.  
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That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came 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  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came 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  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the butcher  
That slew 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.  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the Angel of Death  
And killed the butcher  
That slew 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  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.

Then came the Holy One  
Blessed be He  
And destroyed the Angel of Death  
That killed the butcher  
That slew the ox  
That drank the water  
That quenched the fire  
That burned the sticks  
That beat the dog  
That bit the cat  
That ate the kid  
My father bought for two zuzim  
Chad gadya Chad gadya.