

The Opening

Let us open our hearts, our minds, and our selves to this gathering and this seder.

Kamti ani lif-to-ach le-dodi, kamti ani lif-to-ach le dodi (x2)
I will open to you my beloved, will you open, open to me (x2)

Hee-nay ma tov umana-yim shevet achim gam yachad (x4)
Behold how good and pleasant it is when people can dwell together in unity

The Introductions



Introduce yourself by saying your name (Hebrew if you have one) and the names of your mother and father:

Women: (Your name), bat (your mother's name) v' (your father's name)

Men: (Your name), ben (your mother's name) v' (your father's name)

Anointing with Oil

Anointing with oil is an ancient custom that boasts origins from around the world. Pagans and Wiccans would select oils based on the powers attributed to different plants, herbs, and flowers, and anoint themselves before certain dances and rituals. The oil would evaporate and emit a scent that would provide a desired effect. Eastern cultures anointed guests with oil as a sign of respect, and perhaps a cover-up and refresher from the scent of travel.

Jews also embraced this practice for priests and the kings of Israel: "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office" (Exodus 30:30). The Hebrew word "Messiah" translates to English as "anointed one"; its Greek translation is "Christ", thus the importance of the practice to early Christians.

Let us anoint ourselves to begin this honored ritual and journey.

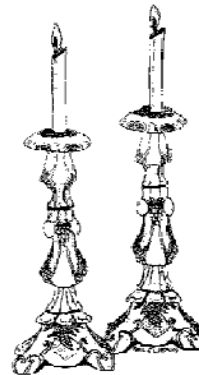
Pass a cup of olive oil (or other desired oil) around the table, each person putting a few drops on the back of their hands or by their ears.

The Candle Lighting

How long have people been drawn to fire? This most elemental thing, dangerous and beautiful at the same time. Since the earliest humans huddled around a fire, it has represented warmth, sustenance in cooking food, and comfort as we dare to peer into the darkest corners of our world. We are now in the process of saying goodbye to the dim coldness of winter, and ushering in springtime with its renewing warmth and enduring light. With these candles, let us grasp a part of their light that we may kindle within ourselves for the journeys ahead.

Light the candles, and all draw the light towards themselves with their hands, and cover their eyes.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.



Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vetzivanu lehadlik ner shel (Shabbat v'shel) Yom Tov.

Blessed are You, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who makes us holy with mitzvot and commands us to kindle the lights of (Shabbat and) the festival day.

The First Cup of Wine

On this night, we drink four cups of wine. These are often linked to G*d's four promises to our people in the book of Exodus (6:6-7):

“I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt;
I will deliver you from their bondage;
I will redeem you;
I will take you as my people and be your G*d.”

The next verse of that chapter introduces a fifth promise. The Rabbis debated about whether that promise, “I shall bring you to the land” (Exodus 6:8) reflected G*d's

promise of Messianic redemption, which would be heralded by Elijah. Hence the fifth cup, the cup of Elijah.

Pour wine or juice into each person's cup



The winter snow settles upon each of us in its own way. It blankets the grass and clings to the skeletal tree branches as it freezes and stills the world, a chance to slumber and meditate upon the year past and the year to come. We withdraw within our houses and our selves, making our own new year's resolutions. And eventually, sometimes ever so slowly, the snow turns to droplets on the tree branch. The first crocus pushes out of the ground. The ice on the river begins to thin, break, and flow. The world becomes alive again, coming out of its frozen burden as the Jews came out from the burdens of Egypt.

Let this cup of wine melt the ice that remains within us and between us.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'olam asher bachar banu mikol am verom'manu mikol lashon vekidshanu bemitzvotav. Vatiten lanu, Adonai Elohenu, be'ahavah (shabatot limnucha u) mo'adim lesimcha, chagim uxmanim lesason, et yom (hashabat hazeh v'et yom) chag hamatzot hazed, zeman cherutenu, (be'ahavah) mikra kodesh, zecher l'tziyat Mitzrayim. Ki vanu vacharta, ve'otenu kidashta, mikol ha'amim (veshabat) umo'adei kadshecha (be'avah uvratzon) besimcha uv'sason hinchaltanu. Baruch Atah Adonai Mekadesh (hashabat v') Yisrael vehazmanim.

Blessed are you, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who creates the fruit of the vine.

You are Blessed, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who has chosen us and distinguished us by sanctifying us by the mitzvot. You have lovingly favored us with (Shabbat for rest and) festivals for joy, seasons and holidays for happiness, among them (this Shabbat and) this day of Pesach, the season of our liberation, a day of sacred assembly commemorating the Exodus from Mitzrayim. You have chosen us, sanctifying us among all peoples by granting us (Shabbat and) Your sacred festivals (lovingly and gladly) in joy and happiness. You are Blessed, O G*d, who sanctifies (Shabbat and) the people Israel and the festival seasons.

Shechecheyanu



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחַיֵּנוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן
הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'olam
Shechecheyanu vekiyanu vehigiyanu lazman hazeh.

You are Blessed, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who keeps us in life,
Who sustains us, and who enables us to reach this season.

Refill your cups as needed.

Washing of the Hands

The melting of the ice gives us water, another basic elemental. Water has a variety of meanings to us: quenching thirst, nourishing our crops, and providing comfort and purification as we settle into a hot bath at the end of a long day. The deliverance of the Jews started in water, as the Nile conveyed Moses to the daughter of Pharaoh. In their departure, the Israelites walked through the Sea of Reeds, an abundance of water, into the desert, a place of no water. Both were necessary in their transformation into a new people.

Let us wash our hands to begin our own transformation, to wash away things that blind the eye, so that we may see within ourselves more clearly.

All wash hands, without a blessing.

Karpas

The objects on our seder plate do not have exclusively Jewish histories. These same things have had meanings to the ancient Canaanites, the Phoenicians, Goddess- and

Earth-worshipping cultures, Jews, Christians, and other civilizations. Just as we tell stories tonight of where we come from and consider who we are, we will look into what these symbols have meant to us and others.

Many cultures had celebrations around the Spring equinox. The Chinese considered that the world was controlled by Yin, a feminine energy governed by water and the moon and was most powerful in the winter; and Yang, a masculine energy governed by earth and the sun and most powerful in summer. The equinox was a time when these two energies were most balanced, as the daylight and darkness were equal.



The start of the growing season made this a very important time of the year. The practices are full of purification rites, fertility rites, and renewal of the land and ourselves. The karpas, the greens, symbolized this new growth in their tender green leaves that rose from the earth. These are then dipped in salt water. Goddess-worshipping cultures had an earth-centric view, and considered the salt water as a representation of the ocean, and also of the birth water surrounding a fetus. God-worshipping cultures had a human-centric view, and the Jews said that the salt water represented the tears of the Israelites in slavery. Christians adapted water in the baptismal process, symbolizing a cleansing from sin.

Take a piece of greens and dip it in salt water.

For new life, for old tears, and for cleansing of the earth and ourselves, we say:

**בָּרַךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה.**

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, boray pri ha-adamah.

Blessed are you, O G*d, who brings forth food from the earth.

Eat the greens

Breaking the Middle Matzah

Why do we break the middle matzah? Why don't we break the top matzah? It is customary to save the top and bottom matzot, for use as the bread over which we make

the blessing before our meal, the “hamotzee lechem min ha’aretz” (Blessed is the one...who brings forth bread from the Earth).

Why do we save the larger half of the middle matzah? According to Rav Hai Gaon, poor people and slaves do not necessarily know when they will have their next meal. Thus, they eat a small amount and save the rest for later. In observing this custom, we attempt to feel as did our ancestors, the slaves in Mitzrayim, and the poor and the homeless currently in the world.

The middle matzah is broken, and the larger portion is hidden.

Telling the Story

This is the Bread of Poverty

“This is the Bread of Poverty, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come in to eat. Let all who are in need come and join us in celebrating Pesach. This year we are here; next year, may be in the Land of Israel. This year, we are still slaves; next year, may be truly free.”

This formula has been part of the Hagaddah since at least some time after the destruction of the Second Temple. Some scholars think it may go back as far as the first exile in Babylon. It is in Aramaic, which was the spoken language of the time, so that the invitation to come in and share the celebration would be understood by all. But the two words, *L'shanah Ha-Ba-ah*, “next year,” are in Hebrew. It is said that this was so that neighbors would not actually think that the Jews were planning to leave. Maimonides' Hagaddah gives these words, too, in Aramaic.

Even those who celebrate Passover in Israel, and even those who celebrate in modern Jerusalem, say these same words. The reason is because Messianic times have not yet arrived. We are still part of a world which is not free, and we are still enslaved by our past and our long-standing habits and practices, which prevent us from being truly free.

The Four Questions

מה-נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל-הַלַּיְלוֹת:
שֶׁבְּכָל-הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֲמִץ וּמָצָה. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה בְּלוּ
מָצָה:

שֶׁבְּכָל-הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יֵרָקוֹת. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה
מָרוֹר:

שֶׁבְּכָל-הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אֶפְיֵלוּ פְּעַם אַחַת.
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים:

שֶׁבְּכָל-הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין.
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה בְּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין:

Question: Why is this always called the four questions, when the classic text is one question with four answers?

The four questions teach us about life's duality, balance, and the appreciation of opposites.

Why on other nights do we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but tonight only matzo?

Matzo is the bread of haste, a thing that is done quickly but with great care. Passover matzo must be completed in 18 minutes or less, as opposed to the hours spent with challah. Yet both are beloved foods, integral to our Jewish identity.

The Internet age gives us many things quickly. However, it still takes years to develop our personalities, our perspectives, and our relationships. The Jews spent 400 years in slavery to become a people ready to leave, they departed in haste, and then took 40 years to become the people ready to enter the land of Israel.

Why on other nights do we eat all kinds of vegetables, but this night only maror?

How often do we eat something as bitter and pungent as raw horseradish? Yet this thing that causes us to wince and tear makes the sweet charoset even more delectable. The Jews came out from the narrow place of slavery to the air of freedom, just as the maror clears our head, purifies us, and allows us to breathe freely.

Why on other nights do we not dip herbs at all, but tonight we dip twice in salt water?

The salt water is said to represent the tears of our ancestors. We all want to be happy, but it is the difficult times, the loss, and the sadness that dramatically shapes who we are. In molding clay, the harshest punches and pressing immediately change its character, while a gentle caress smooths the surface. There can be joy even in the depth of sorrow, as it moves us to grow and become something more than we already are.

Why on other nights do we eat sitting up or reclining, but tonight we eat reclining?

We recline as a symbol of the leisure that freedom provided us. However, there are fewer responsibilities greater than freedom. Rather than having someone else dictate what to do and how to do it, we must constantly make choices and take responsibility for our actions and their results.

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Tonight we celebrate our freedom, our right to self-determination, our ability to choose. These questions show us the spectrum of things from which we can choose: haste or time, bitter and sweet, sorrow and joy, work and rest. Let us strive to enjoy the full measure of our options, to suck out the marrow from life, and to make every night its own jewel, special and different from all other nights.

We Were Slaves in Egypt

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and then the Source of Life brought us out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. But if our G*d had not brought our ancestors out of Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

So even if all of us were wise, all of us understanding, all of us old, all of us learned in the Torah, it would still be a mitzvah for us to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

Would we really still be enslaved to Pharaoh, thousands of years later, if G*d had not delivered us from Egypt? How many power structures from four thousand years ago still exist today? In giving us freedom, G*d gave us the power to choose our own destiny. How many of us have chosen our own forms of enslavement: to our jobs, to material

things, to giving too much, to bad relationships, to loneliness? To be obligated and responsible to ourselves and those around us is important, but to be enslaved is now our own personal decision.

Let us recognize the difference between responsibility and enslavement, and to have the courage to free ourselves.

Avadim hayinu lefar'oh Bemitzrayim. Vatotzi'enu Ya misham beyad chazaka uvizro'a netuyah. Ve'ilu lo hotzi'ah Mekor Chayenu et avotenu v'et imotenu Mimitzrayim, harei anu vetze'etza'enu, vetze'etza'ei amen meshubadim hayinu lefar'oh Bemitzrayim. Ve'afilu kulanu chachamim, kulanu nevonim, kulanu zekenim, kulanu yod'im et hatorah, mitzvah alenu lesaper bitziyat Mitzrayim. Vechol haamarbeh lesaper bitziyat Mitzrayim harei ze meshubach.

The Rabbis at B'nai Berak

“It once happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Y'hoshua, Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akivah, and Rabbi Tarfon were celebrating the Seder together in B'nei B'rak. They spoke about the exodus from Egypt all night, until their students came and said to them, ‘Rabbis, it is time for the morning service!’”

This story illustrates the point that even the wisest scholars are obligated to talk about the exodus from Egypt. Here we find the greatest sages of their time, including the heads of the Sanhedrin, talking about the exodus for the entire night.

The Talmud tells us of a debate in the Sanhedrin as to whether the Seder should go all night or should end by midnight. Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaryah was of the opinion that the Seder had to end by midnight. Rabbi Eliezer agreed with him. But B'nei B'rak was the seat of Rabbi Akivah's academy. So these rabbis participated in this all-night Seder, in deference to Rabbi Akivah's authority in his jurisdiction. This teaches us that we may not be so certain of our own opinions as to be intolerant of other views.

Since this event took place after the destruction of the Second Temple, some say that the Rabbis may have also been talking about liberation from Rome as well as from Egypt, and that this was why Rabbi Akivah's older colleagues, three of whom had been his teachers, were in B'nei B'rak for this Seder. Rabbi Akivah was one of the leaders of the last Jewish revolt against Roman rule, along with Bar Kochba, and was eventually executed for his stand by the Romans.

The Four Children

The Torah alludes to four children, another set of four like G*d's promises, the cups of wine, and the questions. These are the wise, the cynical, the innocent, and the one who does not know how to ask.



The wise one says, "What are the Passover rituals and activities about?" This child should be taught to perform the specific actions of the Passover celebration, and then given an opportunity to share and create personally meaningful rituals. This child should be told about the many types of Mitzrayim there are in life, and about the ways to move into liberation.

The cynical child isolates and manifests anger and a closed heart asking, "What is this service to you?" This child should be answered with patience and loving energy, and an invitation to participate even if the feeling and the understanding are not there. For it is often in the "doing" that the feeling is changed; it is often in the "doing" that the sense of being "a part of" becomes real.



The innocent child asks, "What is this? Why are we doing this?" This child should be told facts, that we get together every year to celebrate a time long, long ago when G*d freed us from being slaves in a place called Mitzrayim.

And for the child who does not know how to ask, we bring them to a point of present awareness. We entertain them and show them what is in front of them, the unique things about the table: the Passover plate and its contents, the matzot, and the fact that everyone is gathered. Then we ask them what they imagine from everything they see.



Our Ancestors were Idolators

The first story of the Torah tells of the creation. In this story, we are taught that G*d made Adam out of the clay of the earth, another basic elemental. To give life, it is said that G*d breathed into him a single "soul breath" of air, the final elemental. But if G*d

only gave a single breath, what happened after Adam exhaled it? It is said that this one single “soul breath” continued to be shared between Adam and G*d, sustaining us to this day.

Our ancestors saw all the wonders of the earth, and did not understand them. They perceived them to be from many gods, to which they gave form and served. Yet Abraham saw that these wonders were all a product of one G*d, and we say even today:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד!

Shema Yisroel, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad!

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our G*d, the Lord is one!

Thus we express that the Jewish G*d is the singular G*d, not the many that were worshipped by the ancestors of Abraham.

Our Ancestors were Wanderers

The Torah teaches us that our ancestors were wanderers. Few in number, we traveled with our families and our possessions, our livestock and our treasures. When the land was fertile, our lives were good: we planted and harvested, and raised our children as farmers and shepherds.

Sarah gave birth to Isaac by Abraham. Rebekah gave birth to Jacob and Esau by Isaac. Leah gave birth to many sons by Jacob (also known as Israel), and Rachel gave birth to Joseph by Jacob. It was his brothers’ jealousy that led to Joseph being sold to a passing caravan, the one that brought him into Egypt. Had there not been this jealousy and treachery, would we still be a wandering desert people today?

Joseph was able to use his wisdom and G*d-given gifts to become a trusted advisor to Pharaoh by interpreting his dreams. As with so many things in Jewish history, he was able to use a bad situation to his best advantage, and prospered. When a time of famine came, he was able to forgive his brothers and brought them and their families into Egypt. What was supposed to have been a temporary sojourn became a semi-permanent residency. What would have happened if Joseph had not been so forgiving?

But there arose in Egypt a Pharaoh who did not remember Joseph. By then, the children of Jacob had prospered and become numerous, and the Pharaoh said, “This people, the Children of Israel, is more numerous and powerful than we!” He commanded that hard labor be given to them, and set task masters over them. They helped to build cities

through the making of bricks, stomping straw into water and clay. Pharaoh was pushing the Israelites back into the earth from which G*d had made them.

Still the Israelites grew in numbers and strength, just as fire hardens clay in the kiln. So Pharaoh commanded his people, saying, “Every son that is born you shall cast into the River Nile, but let every daughter live.” Not having been able to grind the Israelites into the clay, he felt they would be dissolved by water. Yet air in clay allows it to float, just as Moses floated to Pharaoh’s daughter.

The Israelites cried out to G*d, and the One who remembered Sarah, Abraham, and all the ancestors, heard us. G*d said,

“I have seen, yes, seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt, their cry have I heard in the face of the slave-drivers; indeed, I have known their sufferings!”

1st Next reader: Narrator

2nd Next reader: Moses, speech impediment similar to Sylvester the Cat

*3rd Next reader: G*d, gruff but lovable*

4th Next reader: Pharaoh, stubborn and bossy

Everyone else: People

Narrator: G*d came to Moses in the form of a burning bush, telling him that he was to be the deliverer of Israel. But Moses protested, citing all of his inadequacies, and especially his speech impediment. G*d insisted that Moses was to be the leader. It probably went something like this...

Moses: Oh look, a burning buth.

G*d: Behold, Moses.

Moses: A talking burning buth.

G*d: Put off thy shoes.

Moses: A bothy, talking, burning buth.

G*d: Go take my people out of bondage.

Moses: Who am I to do thith great thing?

G*d: I will be with you.

Moses: Who are you, if anybody athkth?

G*d: I am that I am.

Moses: A yam? You're a yam?

G*d: OK Mo, call me a yam but the next time you see me burning, you better scam!

Moses: A point well taken. Thee you at Pharaoh's palath!

Narrator: And you know what happened next...

Moses: Lithen Pharaoh, my people, like anybody elthe, don't mind working, but they hate being slaveth!

People: (in unison) We don't mind working, cause we're no knaves
But don't be whippin', cause we hate being slaves!

Pharaoh: Tough. Nothing personal but my heart's been hardened. And you should see what they've done to my gizzard.

People: (in unison) Unfeeling brute! Bounder! Cad!
He won't listen, but he'll wish he had!

Moses: God, lithen. Pharaoh won't lithen. He won't do like you athked and let my people go.

People: (in unison) You got to let that Pharaoh know,
He got to let your people go!

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

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh to "Let my people go!"

We need not always weep and mourn
Let my people go.
And wear these chains of slaves forlorn
Let my people go.

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh to "Let my people go!"

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

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh to "Let my people go!"

The Ten Plagues

As each plague is read, each person should remove a drop of wine or juice with a finger. Because innocent Egyptians were killed in the wake of our liberation, we lessen our joy by removing these drops of wine.



Blood

Dam

דָּם



Frogs

Tzefarde'a

צִפְרֵדִיעַ



Lice

Kinim

כִּנִּים



Beasts

Arov

עֲרוֹב



Cattle disease Dever

דֵּבֵר



Boils

Sh'chin

שַׁחִין



Hail

Barad

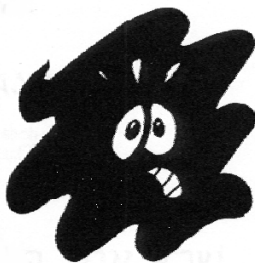
בָּרָד



Locusts

Arbeh

אַרְבֵּה



Darkness

Choshech

חֹשֶׁךְ

Slaying of the Makat

firstborn

Bechorot

מַכַּת
בְּכוֹרוֹת



Dayenu (Enough Already)

Ilu hotzi' anu Mimitzrayim, velo kara lanu et hayem	Dayenu
Ilu kara lanu et hayam, velo he'eviranu vetocho becharava	Dayenu
Ilu he'eviranu vetocho becharava, velo sipek tzarchenu bamidbar	
Arba'im shana	Dayenu
Ilu sipek tzarchenu bamidbar arba'im shan , velo he'echilanu et haman	Dayenu
Ilu he'echilanu et haman, velo natan lanu et hashabat	Dayenu
Ilu natan lanu et hashabat, velo kervarnu lifnei har Sinai	Dayenu
Ilu kervanu lifnei har Sinai, velo natan lanu et hatorah	Dayenu
Ilu natan lanu et hatorah, velo hichnisanu le'erezt Yisrael	Dayenu

Read responsively

Had G*d brought us out of Egypt, and not split the Sea for us	It would have been enough!
Had G*d split the sea for us, and not brought us safely through it	Without even getting our feet wet
Had G*d brought us safely through it without even getting our feet wet,	And not supplied our needs in the Wilderness
Had G*d supplied our needs in the Wilderness, and not fed us with manna	Had G*d fed us with manna, and not given us the Sabbath
Had G*d given us the Sabbath, and not brought us to the foot of Mt. Sinai	Had G*d brought us to the foot of Mt. Sinai, and not given us the Torah
Had G*d brought us to the foot of Mt. Sinai, and not given us the Torah	Had G*d given us the Torah, and not brought us into the Land of Israel
Had G*d given us the Torah, and not brought us into the Land of Israel	

Shankbone – Matzah – Maror

Our seder plate includes a lamb shankbone. The Canaanites and Phoenicians sacrificed the firstborn spring lamb on the first night of the full moon after the spring equinox, and the head of each household would daub its blood on their tent posts. The purpose of this was to make a blessing for the coming harvest. The animal was roasted whole after dark, taking several hours while people told stories, sang, and danced. The lamb would then be eaten late at night, and must be fully consumed by morning.

Goddess-worshippers felt that blood was the symbol of life, and sometimes used wine to represent it. Some substituted a beet for the shankbone, as it also produced “blood.” Jews provided the paschal lamb as a Temple sacrifice, and painted their doorposts with

blood so that G*d might “pass over” their house in the plague of killing the firstborn. Christians adapted this toward Jesus, calling him the “lamb of G*d” in his crucifixion at this time of year.

The matzah finds its origin with barley, which had grown in the Nile valley since prehistoric times. It was the first crop to ripen, and wandering Semitic shepherds considered its sprouting to represent resurrection. The ancient Aegeans baked barley cakes for the “Queen of Heaven.” Barley is sacred to no fewer than eleven Goddesses, including Demeter, the Barley Mother, Goddess of agriculture.

The Canaanites and Phoenicians celebrated the barley harvest on the second night of the full moon after the spring equinox, and cleaned their houses of any sour dough or leavening so as to start a fresh batch of leavening for the new harvest. Priests would wave barley over the altars and chant blessings to guard against crop failure. The Jews used this ritual to symbolize the haste with which the slaves departed from Egypt, not leaving enough time for the bread to leaven and rise. Christians use Communion wafers and wine to recall the Last Supper, when Jesus observed Passover with his apostles. Jesus is often represented as a Semitic shepherd, and he used the matzah to represent his body.

The maror, or horseradish, is the purifier. It was used by the ancient Greeks for lower back pain and as an aphrodisiac, its syrup as a cough suppressant, as a balm for headaches in the American South. It has been used to eliminate parasites in food, to remove pollutants from water, and to cleanse the body.

The Jews used it to represent the bitterness of slavery: “And they embittered their lives with hard labor in mortar and bricks, with every servitude of the field, with torment.” (Exodus 1:14)

In Every Generation

As the Israelites came out of Mitzrayim, they were rising from the clay of their brick pits to be able to reclaim the free air of the original soul breath from G*d. In every generation, all of us are obligated to see ourselves as though we personally had gone forth from Egypt. Therefore, we rejoice in our obligation to lift our voices to the one who is the Source of miracles for our ancestors and for us. Our Redeemer brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to celebration, from darkness to great light, from bondage to redemption.

Halleluyah

A bowl of warm sand is passed around, everyone putting their hands in it to experience a part of the feeling of leaving Mitzrayim

Halelu, halelu, halelu, halelu, halelu, halelu

The Second Cup

The second cup pertains to G*d's promise, "I will deliver you from their bondage." We tell the story of ancestors from thousands of years ago, but there are much more recent stories of ancestors who came out from the "narrow places."

Life in Russia was not easy for Jews. The Czar's men were known as "baby snatchers." They would steal baby boys from Jewish families, give them to Russian families to be raised as Christians, and then taken into the Russian Army. Jewish women working in the fields were regularly raped by Russian men, and babies born with red hair were considered to be the result of such violations. And there were the pogroms.

They called her Esther la roya, Esther the red, because of her flaming red hair. She and her husband, Ephroym Yosef, gave birth to their third child and first son, Lazarus. All the hardships of Russia made Ephroym's younger brother, Nathan, leave to come to America. By the time Lazarus was a teenager, Esther had passed away. Ephroym, Lazarus, and the second daughter followed Nathan, making their way out of their own bondage and Mitzrayim to America.

To all our ancestors and their personal journeys to freedom, we dedicate the second cup.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא, פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

Blessed are you, O G*d, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Washing of the Hands (with blessing)

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

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu
Al netilat yahayim.

Blessed are you, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who makes us holy with mitzvot
and commands us regarding the washing of the hands.

*Remain silent until you say the blessing for matzah, because the act of washing is linked
to the act of eating.*

Matzi – Matzah

Raise the top and bottom matzah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן־הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, ha-motzi lechem min-ha-aretz.

Blessed are you, O G*d, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Each take a piece of matzah

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav
Vetzivanu al achilat matzah.

Blessed are you, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who made us holy with mitzvot
And commands us concerning the eating of matzah.

Eat the matzah

Bitter Herb

Take a piece of horseradish

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Mele ha'olam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav
Vetzivanu al achilat maror.

Blessed are you, O G*d, Guardian of time and space, who made us holy with mitzvot
And commands us concerning the eating of bitter herbs.

Eat the horseradish separately, or with charoset.

Hillel Sandwich

Sandwich maror between two pieces of matzah, charoset to taste

Hillel, the first century sage, called for mixing together these foods so that no taste would overwhelm the others. We follow this practice, balancing our telling of this story with the bitter and the mild, the memory of bitterness and sustenance, the fear of the seemingly endless journey through the desert and the comfort of G*d's perpetual presence along the way.

Eat the sandwich

Egg

With the symbols of blood (life), barley (resurrection), and horseradish (purification), we come to the egg...new life. The world is now bursting into life, just as the chick bursts from the egg. The symbols of the Norse Goddess Ostara were the hare and the egg, both of which represented fertility, and led to the Christian symbols of the Easter bunny and Easter eggs. The circular shape also represented the continuance of time and cycles without end.

The Jews said that the egg represented the Jews themselves, as it is the only food that gets harder, rather than softer, with cooking. And if we keep talking, we're going to get pretty hard-boiled ourselves.



LET'S EAT!!!!

Afikomen

The afikomen is found (we hope), and a prize is given. Everyone eats a piece of it, as it is the true, although perhaps not the sweetest, dessert of the meal.

Blessing After the Meal

There are four blessings of thanks that are given after we eat. In one sense, they are for things that are above us, things that are below us, things that are far from us, and things that are near to us.

The first is for G*d, that which is above us. Some sages claim the Song of Songs is a representation of G*d's love for Israel. If this is the case, its portrayal of G*d is very different from our stereotypical perception, and may be owed to feminine authorship. It is also said that G*d is love, and the book is undeniably a paean of love, sensuality, and springtime.

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love...

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spoke, and said unto me ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.’”

--*The Song of Songs, Chapter 2*

Baruch ata Adonai, hazan et ha-kol.

Blessed are you, O G*d, sustainer of all.

The second blessing is for the earth and for providing us food from the earth, that which is below us. There are special blessings for different types of food: bread, wine, food from the earth, food from trees, and all other food. When we say these blessings, we must think about the origins of what we are consuming. This takes one of the most basic activities, eating, and makes it holy—“ha kadosh”—to lift it from the mundane. Pesach is the only holiday for which food is prescribed, and with the seder we are able to lift up our food and ourselves with it.

Baruch ata Adonai, ol ha-aretz vi-ol ha-mazon.

Blessed are you, O G*d, for the earth and the food.

The third blessing is for Jerusalem and for our tribal homeland, Israel, that which is far from us. It can be difficult to feel a connection to a land so far away, that many have only seen in photographs or news coverage. Yet it is like the face of ancestors in a family album. We may only know their names, and not how they acted, what they felt, or how they lived from day to day. But their lives touch ours through the ethics and truths they passed to their children and grandchildren; just as we look to pass our own knowledge to the generations to come. The spark of Jerusalem, however distant, is alive within us.

Baruch ata Adonai, bo-nay bi-rachamav Yerushalayim, amen.

Blessed are you, O G*d, for building up Jerusalem.

The final blessing is for loving kindness, that which is near to us. So often we have asked ourselves what love is. We have found love in the wrong places, and those we love can find ways to hurt us. Sometimes we have probably doubted love, yet it always finds a way to creep back into our lives. Love comes in many flavors: the love we have for friends, the love we have for pets, the love we have for parents, for spouses, for siblings, for children, and for ourselves. The love between each of us is shaped by the personalities of the giver and receiver, and as unique as snowflakes.

When love beckons to you, follow him
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.
And when he speaks to you believe in him,
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the North Wind lays waste the garden.
For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so he
is for your pruning.
Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the
sun,
So shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.

- *The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran*

That is the true season of love
When we know that we alone can love,
That no one has loved so before us
And no one will love so again in the same way after us.

- *Goethe*

Baruch ata Adonai, ha-tov vi-ha-may-teev la-kol

Blessed are you, O G*d, for bringing us to the light of goodness and love.

The Third Cup

The third cup of wine commemorates G*d's promise, "I will redeem you." The concept of redemption is usually associated with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when we fast and pray to atone for the actions of the past year. It indicates that we are starting from an area of weakness or failing, and moving to an area of strength or success.

Was there a moment in this past year that you felt redeemed or transformed as a person?

Tell your own personal story.

To the journey we are on and our continuing search for transformation, we dedicate the third cup.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא, פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

Elijah's Cup / Miriam's Cup / Hallelujah

In the second book of Kings, the Prophet Eliyahu (Elijah) is last seen ascending to Heaven in a fiery chariot pulled by fiery horses. A tradition grew up around Eliyahu, that he would return to prophesize the arrival of the Messiah. It is considered that the doing of mitzvot and increasing the level of goodness in the world will help to bring the Messianic Era. Of course, we do not know if this will be within our own lifetimes or in the distant future. Yet we must persist in a quest to make the world a better place every day.

An old man was planting a carob tree. "Why do you plant a tree that will not bear fruit for seventy years?" he was asked "Do you expect to live to eat the fruit of your labor?"

"No," the old man responded, "but I did not find the world a barren place when I was born into it. As my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for the children who will come after me."

This is Elijah's cup, the cup of redemption.

Pour wine into Elijah's cup.

Miriam was also a Prophet and Moses' sister. When the Sea of Reeds was parted, Miriam and the women sang and danced at the joy of the miracle, and to cheer the people onwards. As the Israelites made their way through the desert, Miriam's wells acted as way-stations for them.

Our journey is long, and our destination sometimes seems beyond our reach. So we stop, rest, replenish ourselves with food and water, and chart how far we have come; and we are filled with new energy and hope for success. Without these respites, we would grind ourselves down with hunger and a failing spirit. Knowing our own limits, when we must renew ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually, is the only way that we can achieve our goal.

This is Miriam's cup, the cup of sustenance and renewal.

Pour water into Miriam's cup.

Open the door for Elijah and Miriam.

Eliyahu ha-na-vi
Eliyahu ha-tish-bi
Eliyahu, Eliyahu
Eliyahu ha-gi-la-di.

Bim-hay-ra bi-ya-manu
Yah-voe ay-laynu
Im mo-shi-ach ben David
Im mo-shi-ach ben David

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song,
Sing a song to one whom we've exalted
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history
With every strand and every thread she crafted her delight
A woman touched with spirit she dances toward the light.

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song,
Sing a song to one whom we've exalted
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

When Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the Sea
The wonder of this miracle she soon came to believe
Whoever thought the Sea would part with an outstretched hand
And we would pass to freedom and march to the promised land.

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song,
Sing a song to one whom we've exalted
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

And Miriam the Prophet took her timbrel in her hand
And all the women followed her just as she had planned,
And Miriam raised her voice in song, she sang with praise and might
We've just lived through a miracle, we're going to dance tonight.

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song,
Sing a song to one whom we've exalted
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

The Fourth Cup

The fourth cup commemorates G*d's promise, "I will take you as my people and be your G*d." But before they could enter the land of Israel, they wandered in the desert for 40 years. The event we celebrate tonight was just the beginning of the journey. It is said that G*d wanted all the people who remembered slavery in Egypt first-hand to be gone, so that the people could enter Israel with a new mind.

For the younger ones who are with us, where do you think you will be in 40 years? Who will you be and what will you be doing?

Tell your own thoughts.

To our children's journey that is just beginning, we dedicate the fourth cup.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא, פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

Conclusion

Tonight we have remembered where we have come from, who we are, and considered where we are going. We have praised G*d for the many things we have, which we must not take for granted. We are free; free to think, free to do, and free to be, and free to become. Let us choose wisely, that we may be truly worthy of being G*d's people.

Next year in Jerusalem!

