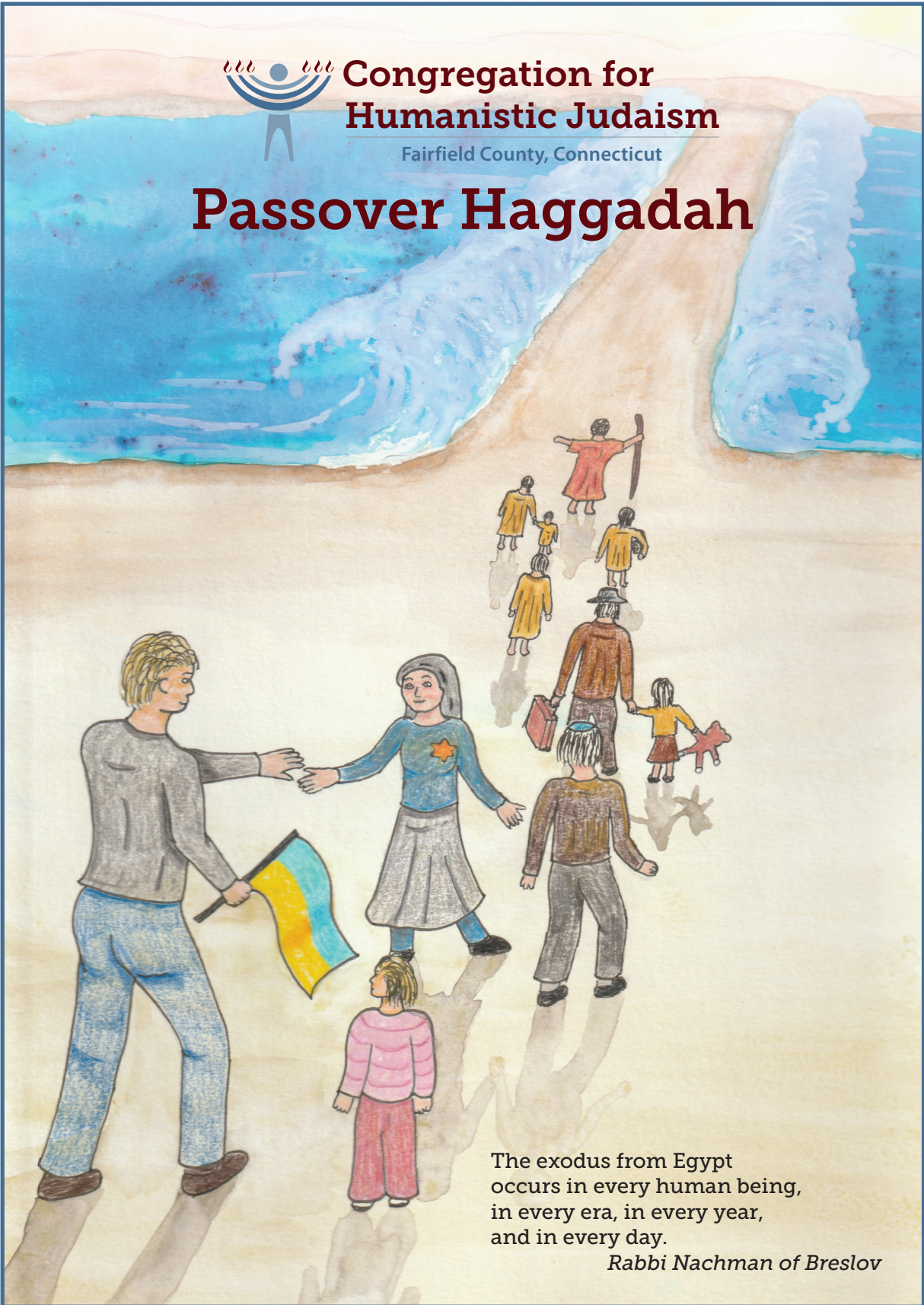




**Congregation for
Humanistic Judaism**

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Passover Haggadah



The exodus from Egypt
occurs in every human being,
in every era, in every year,
and in every day.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

"The Answer"

Original illustration by Deborah Ilana Light

THE ORDER OF THE SEDER

Passover, one of the oldest and most popular of the Jewish holidays, celebrates the ideal of human freedom in a setting of family unity and love. The Haggadah, which means “the telling,” is the guidebook for the retelling of the Exodus story. The word seder, meaning “order,” refers to the structure of the service, and proceeds as follows:

Kiddush	<i>blessing over wine or grape juice</i>
Karpas	<i>green vegetable dipped in salt water</i>
Yachatz	<i>breaking the middle matzah and hiding the afikomen</i>
Maggid	<i>telling the Passover story</i>
Matzah	<i>eating the matzah</i>
Maror	<i>eating the bitter herb</i>
Korech	<i>eating a sandwich of matzah, charoset, and maror</i>
Shulchan Aruch	<i>the main meal</i>
Tzafun	<i>finding and eating the afikomen (dessert)</i>
Nirtzah	<i>concluding the seder</i>

SYMBOLS OF THE SEDER

Matzah: Three pieces of matzah are placed on a plate in a folded napkin or matzah cover. These symbolize the ancient religious ranking into three classes, grouped together to show the unity of the Jewish people: the Kohanim (priests); the Levites (lesser priests and temple workers); and the Israelites (the people). Matzah also represents the unleavened bread that our ancestors ate in their hasty departure from Egypt.

Maror: Bitter herbs, usually horseradish, symbolizing the bitterness of slavery. Sometimes lettuce is also used because the first taste is sweet and then turns bitter – as did the history of the Jews in Egypt and elsewhere.

Pesach: A roasted lamb shank bone represents the sacrificial lamb (“*pesach*”) that Jews offered in the Temple of Jerusalem in gratitude for being spared the plagues that befell their Egyptian oppressors.

Charoset: This mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon, sweet wine, and honey reminds us of the mortar used by the Hebrew slaves to build Egyptian cities.

Karpas: Leafy green vegetables, such as parsley and celery, symbolize the coming of spring and remind us to be grateful for the rich bounties of the earth.

Baytsa: The roasted egg is an ancient delicacy symbolizing fertility, birth, and rebirth.

Yayin: Wine accompanies festivities, raises the spirits, and opens the heart. An extra cup of wine is set aside for the prophet Elijah, who is said to visit each Jewish home where a seder is held.

Salt Water: The salt water stands for the bitter tears shed by our ancestors as they toiled in slavery. As we dip the karpas into the salt water, we experience the mingling of hope and despair.

Orange: A relatively new addition to the seder plate, the orange stands for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ Jews and others who have been historically marginalized by the mainstream Jewish community.



A greeting from CHJ's President

Song: Hineh Ma Tov

*Hi-neh ma tov u-ma na-eem
She-vet a-cheem gam ya-chad. (Repeat many times.)*

(Behold how good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity – Psalms.)

CANDLE LIGHTING

Leader:

We begin our seder as we begin all Jewish celebrations – with the kindling of candles. The light of Passover is the light of freedom. Our ancestors suffered in the darkness of slavery and dreamed of liberty. Some of our brothers and sisters must yet do the same.

As we light the Passover candles, let us celebrate the light of freedom that illuminates our lives.

Reader 1:

Baruch ha-or ba-olam.
Precious is the light of freedom in the world.
[Light first candle.]

Baruch ha-or ba-adam.
Precious is the light within each of us.
[Light second candle.]

Baruch ha-or be-Pesach.
Precious is the light of Pesach.
[Light third candle.]



THE FIRST CUP OF WINE
Awakening

Leader:

We fill the first of the four traditional cups of wine and toast this holiday of joy and fulfillment. Together we say:

B'rucha ha-adama borey p'ret ha-gafen.
Precious is the earth which brings forth the vines and their grapes. [All drink.]



Reader 2:

Tonight, we gather around the seder table to recount the ancient Israelites' journey from slavery to freedom. Their story began with an awakening: as our tradition teaches, Moses saw the burning bush and recognized that he was called to liberate his people from Egypt.

Our journey, too, begins with an awakening. May this first cup of wine rouse each of us to the injustice that persists in our world today. May we recognize our own capacity to make a difference and commit ourselves to building a better world.

KARPAS – THE GREEN VEGETABLE

Leader:

Pesach takes place on the full moon of the first month of the Hebrew calendar, at the beginning of spring in Israel. Our ancestors left Egypt by the light of the full moon. In the long wandering that took them out of bondage and eventually to the promised land, our people began a new life, just as the earth begins anew each spring.

Reader 3:

Green is the color of life. Even in the cold of winter, the evergreen survives. Life is strong. Though often threatened, it is continually renewed. The winter passes, the brown earth and bare trees turn green with grass and leaves. The world is young again.

The “Song of Songs” captures the coming of spring with this poem:

Rise up, my loved ones, my dear friends, and come away.
For winter is past.

The rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth.
The time of singing has come.

The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth her green figs.
And the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance.
Arise and come with us!

(Shir Hashirim – “Song of Songs”)



As we dip the karpas into the salt water, we see the tears of all who suffer injustice mingling with our hopes for renewal and a just world for all.

[All dip leafy green vegetable into salt water and eat.]

BREAKING THE MATZAH

Reader 4:

Matzah represents the unleavened bread that our ancestors ate in their hasty departure from Egypt.

From these three pieces of matzah we will take the middle piece and break it in two, reflecting the deep brokenness in our world and our commitment to repair it. The smaller piece will be served as the first food of the seder. The larger piece, the afikomen, will be wrapped in a napkin and served as the final dessert of the evening. Thus, as tradition prescribes, the meal will end as it began.

The afikomen will be hidden during the seder so that children may search for it at the conclusion of the meal and receive token gifts for its return.

It is traditional to open our door at this time and say:

“May all who are hungry come and share our meal. May all who struggle for freedom come and share our spirit.”

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Leader:

At the Passover seder, the feast itself is symbolic. The special foods and the special ways of eating them carry meaning beyond the usual. What are these meanings? We begin by asking the proper questions. Only then can we give the proper answers about the meaning of Passover.

There are four crucial questions to explore, and we will ask them in both Hebrew and English.

Song: Ma Nishtanah

Ma nish-ta-na ha-lai-la ha-zeh, mi kol ha-lay-lot? Mi kol ha-lay-lot?

*She-b'chol ha-lay-lot a-nu och-lin chamatz u-matzah? Chamatz u-matzah?
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, ku-lo matzah. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-zeh ku-lo matzah.*

*She-b'chol ha-lay-lot a-nu ochleen sh'ar y'ra-kot? Sh'ar y'ra-kot?
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, ku-lo maror. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, ku-lo maror.*

*She-b'chol ha-lay-lot ein a-nu mat-bi-lin a-fi-lu pa-am e-chat? A-fi-lu pa-am e-chat?
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, sh'tay p'amim. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, sh'tay p'amim.*

*She-b'chol ha-lay-lot a-nu ochleen bayn yosh-vin u-bayn m'su-bin? Bayn yosh-vin u-bayn m'su-bin?
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, ku-la-nu m'su-bin. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-ze, ku-la-nu m'su-bin.*

Reader 5:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat bread or matzah.
Why on this night do we eat only matzah?

On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs.
Why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs?

On all other nights we do not dip our food even once.
Why on this night do we dip twice?

On all other nights we eat either sitting or leaning.
Why on this night do we all lean?



THE FIFTH QUESTION

Reader 6:

On most other nights, we often allow the news of tragedy in our country and elsewhere to simply pass us by. We succumb to compassion fatigue – aware that we can't possibly respond to every injustice that arises around the world.

On this night, we are reminded of our legacy as the descendants of slaves. We bear a different kind of responsibility: we must protect the stranger because we were strangers in the land of Egypt.

So tonight, let us add a fifth question to this year's seder. Let us ask ourselves:

How can we make this year different from all other years?

Reader 7:

This year, let us recommit to our responsibility to protect the stranger, the poor, and the vulnerable.

- When tasting the matzah, the bread of affliction, let us find ways to help the poor and the hungry.
- When eating the maror, the bitter herbs, let us commit to help those whose lives are embittered by discrimination, persecution, and hate.
- When spilling the wine from our glasses to mourn the Egyptians' suffering during the ten plagues, let us pledge to aid those who suffer from modern afflictions.
- When reclining in celebration of our freedom, let us seek opportunities to help those who are still oppressed today.

SECOND CUP OF WINE

Solidarity



Reader 8:

The first cup of wine awakened us to injustice and to our capacity to bring about change. The second cup is the first step toward realizing that change.

We shall never forget the slavery of Egypt and the cruelty of Pharaoh. We shall be mindful always of the ancient Exodus, and the modern need for vigilance to protect basic freedoms around the world.

We raise our glass in solidarity with all who experience injustice, and dedicate ourselves to working together to bring dignity and freedom to all.

L'hayyim! To life!

[All drink.]

Reader 9:

MAGGID *A poem by Marge Piercy*

The courage to let go of the door, the handle.
The courage to shed the familiar walls whose very
stains and leaks are comfortable as the little moles
of the upper arm; stains that recall a feast,
a child's naughtiness, a loud battering storm
that slapped the roof hard, pouring through.

The courage to abandon the graves dug into the hill,
the small bones of children and the brittle bones
of the old whose marrow hunger had stolen;
the courage to desert the tree planted and only
begun to bear; the riverside where promises were
shaped; the street where their empty pots were broken.

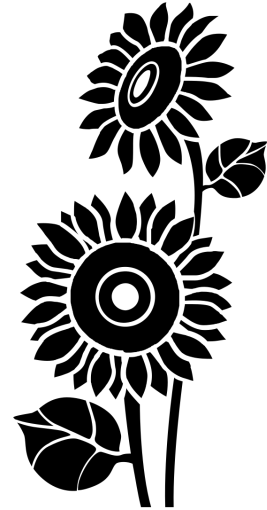
The courage to leave the place whose language you learned
as early as your own, whose customs however
dangerous or demeaning, bind you like a halter
you have learned to pull inside, to move your load;
the land fertile with the blood spilled on it;
the roads mapped and annotated for survival.

The courage to walk out of the pain that is known
into the pain that cannot be imagined,
mapless, walking into the wilderness, going
barefoot with a canteen into the desert;
stuffed in the stinking hold of a rotting ship
sailing off the map into dragons' mouths,

So they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way
out of Russia under loads of straw; so they steamed
out of the bloody smoking charnel house of Europe
on overloaded freighters forbidden all ports –

out of pain into death or freedom or a different
painful dignity, into squalor and politics.
We Jews are all born of wanderers, with shoes
under our pillows and a memory of blood that is ours
raining down. We honor only those Jews who changed
tonight, those who chose the desert over bondage,

who walked into the strange and became strangers
and gave birth to children who could look down
on them standing on their shoulders for having
been slaves. We honor those who let go of everything
but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought,
who became other by saving themselves.



MAGGID – THE PASSOVER STORY

Reader 10:

The Passover story begins well before Moses. Four thousand years ago, it is said, our forefather Jacob was a nomadic shepherd. In a time of famine, he went to Egypt and settled there with his twelve sons. The Pharaoh, King of Egypt, gave him the land of Goshen to live in. And the children of Jacob prospered there for many generations.

But there arose a new Pharaoh who feared the Jews. "See how strong these children of Israel are!" he said to his people. "If war comes, they may join our enemies and fight against us!"

The Pharaoh made slaves of our ancestors and set taskmasters over them to afflict them with oppressive work. He tried to reduce their numbers by casting their male newborns into the river.

Reader 11:

One Jewish mother, trying to save her son, placed him in the river in a boat of reeds, trusting to the current rather than to man's cruelty. That baby was Moses.

Moses' older sister, Miriam, watched as the Pharaoh's daughter found the little boat and its precious cargo, and she arranged for Moses' own mother to be hired as his nurse. Moses grew up as the son of the princess, but he never forgot his Jewish roots. Many years later he saved a Jew who was being beaten by an Egyptian overseer. He fled to the desert to avoid capture, and lived with a friendly tribe for many years.

One day, while grazing his flock, he envisioned a bush that burned and burned but was not consumed. Moses understood this as a sign to return to his own people and to lead them from their bondage and their pain. On returning to Egypt, Moses appealed to the Pharaoh many times, asking him to let the Jews go. But each time the Pharaoh refused, and his heart hardened more each time Moses asked.

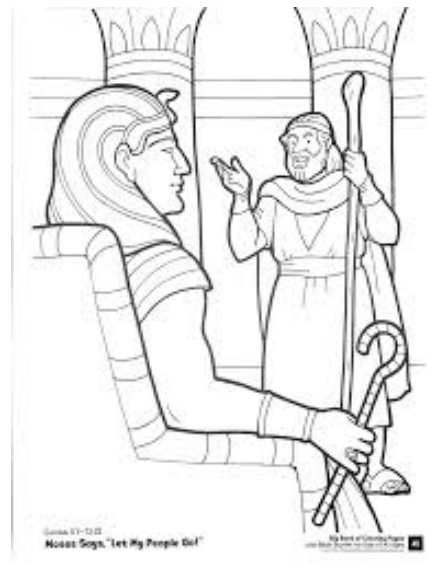
Song: Let My People Go

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

Chorus:
*Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh:
Let my people go.*

*No more shall they in bondage toil,
Let my people go!
Let them come out of Egypt's soil,
Let my people go.*

[Chorus]



THE TEN PLAGUES

Reader 12:

Then, says the legend, came the plagues, one by one, descending upon Egypt:
Blood. Frogs. Lice. Flies. Blight. Boils. Hail. Locusts. Darkness. Death of the firstborn.

Many Egyptians perished, and their suffering was great. Each time a plague appeared, Pharaoh agreed to let the Jews leave. But each time the plague subsided, Pharaoh changed his mind. This continued until the very worst of the plagues, when the firstborn son of every family in Egypt died. Only the Israelite families, who were instructed to mark their houses with lamb's blood, were spared. The holiday is called *Passover* because the angel of death was said to have passed over the homes of the Jews.

Finally, feeling great sorrow over the death of his own firstborn son, Pharaoh ordered Moses to take his people out of the land. The Jews hurriedly prepared for their journey, even taking their bread from the oven before it could rise. As the story goes, Pharaoh changed his mind once again, and sent his armies to stop them. When Moses and his people reached the Red Sea, its waters parted to let them through – and then closed over their pursuing oppressors.

Reader 13:

In years past, we have reduced the wine in our cups by one drop for each plague to express our sorrow for the pain and loss caused to the people of Egypt. Tonight, let each drop stand for the hope that we can wipe out the plagues of injustice that cause pain and loss to people everywhere:

**The making of war,
the teaching of hate,
the despoiling of the earth,
the perversion of justice,
the foment of crime,
the neglect of human needs,
the oppression of peoples,
the corruption of culture.
the subjugation of learning,
the erosions of freedoms.**



In celebrating Passover, we resolve to be vigilant about freedom, both as individuals and as a people. We will be on guard against the tyranny of fear and the evil of the sword, remembering that true liberation never comes from the power of the fist but from the strength of truth, justice, and peace.

Song: Dayenu

*Ee-loo ho-tzee, ho-tzee a-nu
Ho-tzee a-nu mee-mitz-ra-yim
Ho-tzee a-nu mee-mitz-ra-yim
Da-yay-nu.*

Chorus:

*Da-da yaynu, da-da yaynu, da-da yaynu
Da-yaynu da-yaynu, da-yaynu; [Repeat Chorus]*

*Ee-loo na-tan, na-tan la-lu
Na-tan la-nu et ha Shabbat
Na-tan la-nu et ha Shabbat
Da-yay-nu.*

Chorus

*Ee-loo na-tan, na-tan la-lu
Na-tan la-nu et ha Torah
Na-tan la-nu et ha Torah
Da-yay-nu.*

Chorus



DAYENU

Supporting the long journey to freedom

Reader 14:

The long version of the song *Dayenu* recalls every step in our path to redemption: departure from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, sustenance in the wilderness, our arrival in the land of Israel, and many in between. And although we express gratitude for each moment by saying, “It would have been enough,” we know that *all* of these steps were necessary to achieve full freedom. Had the journey ended with the leaving of Egypt, we would not be a free people.

Just as the Israelites needed support at each step of their journey, so too do those around the world who yet struggle to be free from oppression.

To that we say,

If the world hears the cries of those beaten down and oppressed, but does not come to their aid...
It will not be enough.

If we empower our brothers and sisters to escape violence, but fail to offer them refuge...
It will not be enough.

If our generosity supports the needs of today, but forsakes the needs of tomorrow...
It will not be enough.

However, if we persevere until stability, peace and justice have been attained...

Dayenu! Then it will be enough.

THE THIRD CUP OF WINE

Remembrance

Reader 15:

On this seder night we remember our brothers and sisters lost to pogroms, persecution, and the Holocaust. We remember, too, the heroism of Jews and our allies, who fought in the ghettos, in the camps, in the forests, on the war fronts.



Let us be true to their memory by being fighters for freedom and justice.

Let us raise our glass to those who have resisted and who have fought back; and to those who *will* resist, who *will* fight back.

[All drink.]

THE FOUR QUESTIONS – A RESPONSE

Reader 16:

The Passover seder is replete with symbols and rituals that intertwine with the Passover story we just heard. Why is this night different from all other nights? For many reasons, so let's get started.

Why on this night do we eat only matzah? *[Raise matzah for all to see.]*

Matzah is both the bread of affliction and the bread of freedom. We're told that when our ancestors fled Egypt they moved so quickly that the bread they'd prepared had no yeast and didn't rise. They ate it as they waited to leave their enslavement in Egypt, and ate it in the desert as they traveled toward freedom. Eating *matzah* tonight reminds us of the many people today who are hungry and homeless. We hope that all those in need will one day share in their own liberation feast. *[Eat matzah.]*

Why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs? *[Raise bitter herb.]*

The bitter herb, or *maror*, reminds us of the bitterness that our ancestors experienced in their time of bondage. In the book of *Exodus* we read: "And they made their lives miserable with hard labor."

Bitter herbs also remind us that not all know the taste of freedom. Let us remember the embittered lives of those in the world who remain in bondage, physically or mentally, and continue to suffer without relief.

[Dip a piece of matzah in bitter herbs and eat.]

Reader 17:

On all other nights we rarely dip our food. Why on this night do we dip twice?

Tonight we dipped parsley into salt water and we dipped matzah into the bitter herb.

The ancient sage Hillel started a tradition of eating *matzah* and *maror* together. For him, slavery and freedom were opposing sides of the human condition. In times of freedom we must not forget the bitterness of slavery; in times of oppression we must keep the hope of freedom alive.

Today we add *charoset* – a mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine – to the Hillel sandwich. The *charoset* symbolizes the mortar that the Israelite slaves used to construct buildings for the Pharaoh, and reminds us that life is bittersweet.

[Eat a "Hillel sandwich" of charoset, maror, and matzah.]

On all other nights we eat either sitting or leaning. Why on this night do we all recline?

At the seder, we recline in the luxury of freedom, and thus symbolically experience the great achievement of the Exodus. At the same time, we should never forget our ancestors' persecution by the Pharaoh, and we must be ever mindful of the bondage of other peoples in today's world.

SYMBOLS OF THE SEDER PLATE AND BEYOND

Reader 18:

On the seder plate we see a striking tableau of the themes of the Exodus story. We have already addressed some of the symbols: the *karpas*, the *maror*, and the *charoset*. Let's now take a look at the others.

The *baytsa*, or roasted egg, was a traditional appetizer in the ancient world. To us, as to peoples of many faiths, it is a symbol of birth and renewal.

The *Pesach*, or *Zeroa*, represents the young lamb offered as a Passover sacrifice in biblical times. On the night of the Exodus, a roasted lamb was eaten as a reminder of the shepherd days of freedom and happiness that the Jews hoped to see once again. The blood of the lamb was painted on their houses so the angel of death would know to "pass over." A roasted beet can substitute for the shank bone – a popular choice at vegetarian seders.

Many seder plates now feature an orange to acknowledge the role of LGBTQ+ Jews and others who have been historically marginalized within the Jewish community.

We also put out a cup of water to honor Miriam, who is said to have accompanied the Israelites through the desert with a well of healing waters that sustained them. The presence of Miriam's Cup at the seder celebrates her role in the deliverance from slavery and honors the contributions of other women who have sometimes been overlooked.

Reader 19:

Miriam's Cup *A poem by Marge Piercy*

The cup of Elijah holds wine;
the cup of Miriam holds water.
Wine is more precious
until you have no water.

Water that flows in our veins
water that is the stuff of life
for we are made of breath
and water, vision

and fact. Elijah is
the extraordinary; Miriam
brings the daily wonders:
the joy of a fresh morning

like a newly prepared table,
a white linen cloth on which
nothing has yet spilled.
The descent into the heavy

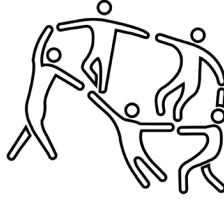
waters of sleep healing us.
The scent of bread baking,
roasting chicken, fresh herbs,
the faces of friends across

the table: what sustains us
every morning, every evening,
the common daily miracles
like the taste of cool water.



MIRIAM'S SONG – by Debbie Friedman

Let's all get up and dance!



Leader:

It's almost time for the Shulcan Aruch, the main meal. But first, let us fill a cup and invite Elijah to join us as a symbol of our welcome to all Jews, and to anyone who wishes to share this story.

THE FOURTH CUP OF WINE

Elijah's Cup

Reader 20:

Elijah's cup stands at the center of our table. According to Biblical accounts, Elijah was a prophet who denounced the oppression and injustice of his time, and advocated for those in need. The earliest rabbis regarded Elijah as a symbol of hope who would someday return and usher in a world of peace and understanding.

As humanists, we don't wait for Elijah's return. We know that we, ourselves, must work to bring about a world of justice and peace. But we welcome Elijah's ideas by pouring him a glass of wine and opening our door in the hope that his vision will soon be realized.

We may not live to complete the task, but neither may we refrain from beginning. If not now, when? May this wine give us joy for the work ahead!

[Pour fourth glass of wine. Door is opened.]

Song: Eliyahu Hanavi

*Eliyahu hanavi, Eliyahu hatishbi
Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu hagiladi.*

*Bim-hey-ra, oob'yo-me-nu, Ya-vo Eliyahu
Bim-hey-ra, oob'yo-me-nu, Ya-vo Eliyahu
[repeat all]*

Reader 21: We raise this last glass of wine and affirm our unity with all peoples in the struggle for human freedom.

Let us say together:

All:

May slavery give way to freedom,
May hate give way to love.
May ignorance give way to wisdom,
May despair give way to hope.

[All drink the last glass of wine. The door is closed.]

THE MAIN MEAL IS SERVED

NIRTZAH – CONCLUSION

Leader:

The prescribed order of the Passover service is now complete. We have retold the ancient tale of Israel's liberation, and we have partaken of the traditional foods.

As we have observed the seder tonight, may all of us celebrate it together next year – in health and in good spirits.

Reader 22:

May the spirit of this festival of freedom and renewal remain with us throughout the coming year, and may we continue to learn from its teachings.

May Israel and its neighbors achieve peace, and may our people, may *all* people, live in harmony and contentment.

Song: Shalom Chaverim

*Shalom chaverim
Shalom chaverim
Shalom, shalom
L' hi-tra-ot, l'hi-tra-ot
Shalom . . . shalom . . .*

*Shalom is a call
For justice to all,
Shalom, good will.
Shalom is for peace
So sing it again,
Shalom, Shalom.*



(Goodbye, friends, until we meet again.)

Song: Hevenu Shalom Alechem

*Hevenu shalom alechem
Hevenu shalom alechem
Hevenu shalom alechem
Hevenu shalom, shalom, shalom alechem. [repeat]*

(Peace be with you.)

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