The New Reality Haggadah

for a virtual Seder

2020

Created by: The Jewish Federations of North America
Introduction

Lighting the Candles

The Seder officially begins with a physical act: lighting the candles. In Jewish tradition, lighting candles and saying a blessing over them marks a time of transition, from the day that is ending to the one that is beginning, from ordinary time to sacred time. Lighting the candles is an important part of our Passover celebration because their flickering light reminds us of the importance of keeping the fragile flame of freedom alive in the world.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with laws and commanded us to light the festival lights.

As we light the festival candles, we acknowledge that as they brighten our Passover table, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds brighten our days.
Introduction

Why We Are Together Tonight

Leader:

We have come together this evening for many reasons. We are here because Spring is all around, the Earth is reborn, and it is a good time to celebrate with family and friends. We are here because we are Jews, because we are members of the Jewish nation, with its deep historic roots and its valuable old memories and stories.

We are here to remember the old story of the liberation of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt - a great struggle for freedom and dignity. We are here because the struggle for human freedom never stops. We are here to remember all people - Jews and non-Jews - who are still struggling for their freedom.

As we feel how wonderful and important it is for diverse peoples to come together, let us recite and then sing the words of HINNEH MAH TOV.

HINNEH, MAH TOV - BEHOLD, HOW GOOD! (Adaptation* of Th'hillim / Psalms 133.1)

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when peoples come together in unity!*

Hinneh, mah tov u-mah naim shevet achim gam yahad!

*adapted for current situation
Kadesh

All Jewish celebrations, from holidays to weddings, include wine as a symbol of our joy—not to mention a practical way to increase that joy. The Seder starts with wine and then gives us three more opportunities to refill our cup and drink.

כָּרוּךְ אוֹתָהּ וְכָלָהָ יִלְיָדָה יִתְנַפֵּר בְּוֹרֵא פָּרֵי מִשְׁכָּב

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p’ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who chose us from all peoples and languages, and sanctified us with commandments, and lovingly gave to us special times for happiness, holidays and this time of celebrating the Holiday of Matzah, the time of liberation, reading our sacred stories, and remembering the Exodus from Egypt. For you chose us and sanctified us among all peoples. And you have given us joyful holidays. We praise God, who sanctifies the people of Israel and the holidays.

כָּרוּךְ אוֹתָהּ וְכָלָהָ יִלְיָדָה יִתְנַפֵּר

she-hicheyanu v’key’mana v’higianu lazman hazeh.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who has kept us alive, raised us up, and brought us to this happy moment.

Drink the first glass of wine!
Blessing For Hand Washing During a Pandemic

As we wash our hands
We pray,
Blessed is the Soul of the Universe,
Breathing us in and breathing us out.
May our breaths continue
And our health and the health of all
Be preserved
In this time of sickness and fear of sickness.
Holy Wholeness,
We take as much responsibility for this as we can
By observing the obligation to wash our hands
Thoroughly.
Amen
Karpas

Passover, like many of our holidays, combines the celebration of an event from our Jewish memory with a recognition of the cycles of nature. As we remember the liberation from Egypt, we also recognize the stirrings of spring and rebirth happening in the world around us. The symbols on our table bring together elements of both kinds of celebration.

We now take a vegetable, representing our joy at the dawning of spring after our long, cold winter. Most families use a green vegetable, such as parsley or celery, but some families from Eastern Europe have a tradition of using a boiled potato since greens were hard to come by at Passover time. Whatever symbol of spring and sustenance we’re using, we now dip it into salt water, a symbol of the tears our ancestors shed as slaves. Before we eat it, we recite a short blessing:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p’ree ha-adama.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruits of the earth.

We look forward to spring and the reawakening of flowers and greenery. They haven’t been lost, just buried beneath the snow, getting ready for reappearance just when we most need them.
**Yachatz- Breaking the middle Matzah**

The middle matzah on the plate is broken in half. One half is put back with the stack; the other half is placed in a napkin (or special holder) and designated the Afikomen (the dessert) and put aside. It is traditional in some homes to hide the afikomen now for children to find before it is eaten after the meal, or for children to “steal” the Afikomen and “hold it ransom.”

Perhaps, this silent and reflective act of the breaking of the matzah is a symbol for our incompleteness? We have prayers to be finished and promises to be redeemed. We hide part of the broken matzah, hoping it will be found at the end of the Seder, and pray that we will ultimately know ourselves. We continue to discover what makes us whole. As we hide the larger broken part of the matzah we recognize that more is hidden to us than revealed. With many generations before us and with each other here, our search for our future presses on. And, the revelation of our true selves is yet to come.

**Maggid- Telling the Story**

_Ha Lachma Anya (Hold up the plate of matzah)_

This is the bread of suffering/poverty/affliction/anya that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is famished should come and eat, anyone who needs should come and partake of the Pesach sacrifice. Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free people.

This is a strange invitation. What hospitality is it to offer the hungry the taste of suffering? In fact, though, this is profound insight into the nature of slavery and freedom...Matzah represents two things: it is the food of slaves, and also the bread eaten by the Israelites as they left Egypt in liberty. What transforms the bread of oppression into the bread of freedom is the willingness to share it with others... Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer her bread to others. But one who is willing to divide her food with a stranger has already shown herself to be capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the seder by inviting others to join us. Bread shared is no longer the bread of oppression... (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Pesach Haggadah, pp. 22-25)
Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.
The Four Questions

The formal telling of the story of Passover is framed as a discussion with lots of questions and answers. The tradition that the youngest person asks the questions reflects the centrality of involving everyone in the Seder. The rabbis who created the set format for the Seder gave us the Four Questions to help break the ice in case no one had their own questions. Asking questions is a core tradition in Jewish life. If everyone at your Seder is around the same age, perhaps the person with the least Seder experience can ask them— or everyone can sing them all together.

Ma nishtana halaila hazeh mikol haleilot?

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Shebichol haleilot anu ochlin chameitz u-matzah. Halaila hazeh kulo matzah.

On all other nights we eat both leavened bread and matzah. Tonight we only eat matzah.

Shebichol haleilot anu ochlin shi’ar yirakot halaila hazeh maror.

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

Shebichol haleilot ain anu matbilin afulu pa-am echat. Halaila hazeh shtei fi-amim.

On all other nights we aren’t expected to dip our vegetables one time. Tonight we do it twice.

Shebichol haleilot anu ochlin bein yoshvin uvein m’subin. Halaila hazeh kulamu m’subin.

On all other nights we eat either sitting normally or reclining. Tonight we recline.
Traditionally, The Four Sons (or Children) include a wise son, a wicked (or rebellious) son, a simple son and one who does not even know enough to ask. Each of the first three ask questions about the Seder, essentially "Explain all this to me - what are my responsibilities?" "What has all this nonsense you are babbling about got to do with me?" and "What IS all this anyway?" while the fourth is silent - requiring the adults to be proactive in providing an explanation of the Seder proceedings.

Some say that The Four Children is a metaphor for four different attitudes toward tradition, toward belonging and toward being active or passive in the face of injustice. Some say it is about stages of life, from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood (and, potentially, back again toward old age).

In the spirit of telling the story of Exodus and different attitudes that one might take to one's communal and global responsibilities, think about your relationship to your tradition, the people from whom or the place from which you come and the events taking place there.

- Do you understand what is going on?
- Do you feel any obligation to do anything about it?
- What would you do if you could?
- What should you tell your children about it?
-- Exodus Story

Telling our Story

Our story starts in ancient times, with Abraham, the first person to have the idea that maybe all those little statues his contemporaries worshiped as gods were just statues. The idea of one God, invisible and all-powerful, inspired him to leave his family and begin a new people in Canaan, the land that would one day bear his grandson Jacob’s adopted name, Israel.

God had made a promise to Abraham that his family would become a great nation, but this promise came with a frightening vision of the troubles along the way: “Your descendants will dwell for a time in a land that is not their own, and they will be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years; however, I will punish the nation that enslaved them, and afterwards they shall leave with great wealth.”

Raise the glass of wine and say:

לְהִירָא שֶׁנְָקָמַדְתָּ נַפָּתיִבָּה יִנְּאָה

V’hi she-amda l’avoteinu v’lanu.

This promise has sustained our ancestors and us.

For not only one enemy has risen against us to annihilate us, but in every generation, there are those who rise against us. But God saves us from those who seek to harm us.

The glass of wine is put down.

In the years our ancestors lived in Egypt, our numbers grew, and soon the family of Jacob became the People of Israel. Pharaoh and the leaders of Egypt grew alarmed by this great nation growing within their borders, so they enslaved us. We were forced to perform hard labor, perhaps even building pyramids. The Egyptians feared that even as slaves, the Israelites might grow strong and rebel. So, Pharaoh decreed that Israelite baby boys should be drowned, to prevent the Israelites from overthrowing those who had enslaved them.

But God heard the cries of the Israelites. And God brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with great awe, miraculous signs and wonders. God brought us out not by angel or messenger, but through God’s own intervention.
Pleasure and Pain

Leader:
Let us all refill our cups.

[Take turns reading. Each person is invited to read a grouped set of lines - or to pass.]

Tonight, we drink four cups of the fruit of the vine. There are many explanations for this custom. They may be seen as symbols of various things: the four corners of the earth, for freedom must live everywhere; the four seasons of the year, for freedom's cycle must last through all the seasons; or the four matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel.

A full cup of wine symbolizes complete happiness. The triumph of Passover is diminished by the sacrifice of many human lives when ten plagues were visited upon the people of Egypt. In the story, the plagues that befell the Egyptians resulted from the decisions of tyrants, but the greatest suffering occurred among those who had no choice but to follow.

It is fitting that we mourn their loss of life, and express our sorrow over their suffering. For as Jews and as human beings we cannot take joy in the suffering of others. Therefore, let us diminish the wine in our cups as we recall the ten plagues that befell the Egyptian people.

Leader:

As we recite the name of each plague, in English and then in Hebrew, please dip a finger in your wine and then touch your plate to remove the drop.

Everyone:

**Blood** - Dam (Dahm)
**Frogs** - Ts'phardea (Ts'phar-DEH-ah)
**Gnats** - Kinim (Kib-NEEM)
**Flies** - Arov (Ah-ROV)
**Cattle Disease** - Dever (DEH-vehr)
**Boils** - Sh'hin (Sh'-KHEEN)
**Hail** - Barad (Bah-RAHD)
**Locusts** - 'Arbeh (Ar-BEH)
**Darkness** - Hoshekh (KHO-shekh)
**Death of the Firstborn** - Makkat B'khorot (Ma-katB'kho-ROT)
[Take turns reading. Each person is invited to read a grouped set of lines - or to pass.]

In the same spirit, our celebration today also is shadowed
by our awareness of continuing sorrow and oppression in all parts of the world.
Ancient plagues are mirrored in modern tragedies.

In our own time, as in ancient Egypt, ordinary people suffer and die
as a result of the actions of the tyrants who rule over them.
While we may rejoice in the defeat of tyrants in our own time,
we must also express our sorrow at the suffering of the many innocent people
who had little or no choice but to follow.

Leader:

As the pain of others diminishes our joys,
let us once more diminish the ceremonial drink of our festival
as we together recite the names of these modern plagues:

Hunger
War
Tyranny
Greed
Bigotry
Injustice
Poverty
Ignorance
Pollution of the Earth
Indifference to Suffering

Leader:
Let us sing a song expressing our hope for a better world.
The plagues and our subsequent redemption from Egypt are but one example of the care God has shown for us in our history. Had God but done any one of these kindnesses, it would have been enough – dayeinu.
We are grateful ~ Dayenu

We are grateful that we are connected on this night as a family ~ Dayenu

We are grateful that we are able to share this moment ~ Dayenu

We are grateful that we are, alive and healthy ~ Dayenu

We are grateful that we are able to eat “together” ~ Dayenu

We are grateful that we have a light shining upon us ~ Dayenu

We are grateful for everything and everyone that we have ~ Dayenu

We are grateful for all that has touched our lives (but not physically touched us) ~ Dayenu

We are grateful that our ancestors never gave up home, and to them we drink the second glass of wine together ~ Dayenu

-- Cup #2 & Dayenu

In Every Generation & Second Cup

In every generation, everyone is obligated to see themselves as though they personally left Egypt.

The Seder reminds us that it was not only our ancestors whom God redeemed; God redeemed us too along with them. That’s why the Torah says “God brought us out from there in order to lead us to and give us the land promised to our ancestors.”

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt, enabling us to reach this night and eat matzah and bitter herbs. May we continue to reach future holidays in peace and happiness.
We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

*Drink the second glass of wine!*

### Miriam’s Cup

Another relatively new Passover tradition is that of Miriam’s cup. The cup is filled with water and placed next to Elijah’s cup. Miriam was the sister of Moses and a prophetess in her own right. After the exodus when the Israelites are wandering through the desert, just as Hashem gave them Manna to eat, legend says that a well of water followed Miriam and it was called ‘Miriam’s Well’. The tradition of Miriam’s cup is meant to honor Miriam’s role in the story of the Jewish people and the spirit of all women, who nurture their families just as Miriam helped sustain the Israelites.

### Miriam Ha’nviah (to tune of Eliyahu)

Miriam ha-n’vi’ah oz v’zimrah b’yadah.
Miriam tirkod itanu l’hagdil zimrat olam.
Miriam tirkod itanu l’taken et ha-olam.
Bimheyrah v’yameynu t’vi’einu el mey ha-y’shuah.

English translation
- Miriam the prophet, strength and song in her hand
- Miriam dance with us in order to increase the song of the world.
- Miriam dance with us in order to repair the world.
- Soon she will bring us to the waters of redemption.
Rachtzah

As we now transition from the formal telling of the Passover story to the celebratory meal, we once again wash our hands to prepare ourselves. In Judaism, a good meal together with friends and family is itself a sacred act, so we prepare for it just as we prepared for our holiday ritual, recalling the way ancient priests once prepared for service in the Temple.

Some people distinguish between washing to prepare for prayer and washing to prepare for food by changing the way they pour water on their hands. For washing before food, pour water three times on your right hand and then three times on your left hand.

After you have poured the water over your hands, recite this short blessing.

כְּרֻךְ אֲלֵהַי יִם אֵלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָאֵלָהָם אָשֶׁר קִדְשֵׁנִי בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וַיִּצְוָהוּ עַל נַתֵּל בֹּדֶים

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu al n’tilat yadayim.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to wash our hands.
The blessing over the meal and matzah | *motzi matzah* | מזא'יה מַצָּה

The familiar *hamotzi* blessing marks the formal start of the meal. Because we are using matzah instead of bread, we add a blessing celebrating this mitzvah.

*ברוך אתה埃尔והינו מלך העולם, המזא'יה מַצָּה מְלֵא אֲדַרְדָּר*.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.*

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who brings bread from the land.

*ברוך אתה埃尔והינו מלך העולם, שָׁלוֹחֲךָ לְאָדָם מִנָּה גְּדֹלָה הַמַּצָּה, לְאָדָם שָׁלוֹחֲךָ לְהַשֵּׁב מַצָּה לְאָדָם.*

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'izivnu al achilat matzah.*

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to eat matzah.

Eat the top and middle matzah.
Dipping the bitter herb in sweet charoset | maror | מָרוֹר

In creating a holiday about the joy of freedom, we turn the story of our bitter history into a sweet celebration. We recognize this by dipping our bitter herbs into the sweet charoset. We don’t totally eradicate the taste of the bitter with the taste of the sweet… but doesn’t the sweet mean more when it’s layered over the bitterness?

כברות אתנה ו, אֶלְוְהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעֲולָם, אֵשֶר קיِדְשָנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֵנוּ וַיִּצְוָנוּ אֶל אֶכְרֵילָה מָרוֹר.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu al achilat maror.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to eat bitter herbs.
Hillel Sandwich

When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, the biggest ritual of them all was eating the lamb offered as the Pesach or Passover sacrifice. The great sage Hillel would put the meat in a sandwich made of matzah, along with some of the bitter herbs. While we do not make sacrifices any more – and, in fact, some Jews have a custom of purposely avoiding lamb during the Seder so that it is not mistaken as a sacrifice – we honor this custom by eating a sandwich of the remaining matzah and bitter herbs. Some people will also include charoset in the sandwich to remind us that God’s kindness helped relieve the bitterness of slavery.
Bareich

Refill everyone’s wine glass.

We now say grace after the meal, thanking God for the food we’ve eaten. On Passover, this becomes something like an extended toast to God, culminating with drinking our third glass of wine for the evening:

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, whose goodness sustains the world. You are the origin of love and compassion, the source of bread for all. Thanks to You, we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for everyone. We praise God, source of food for everyone.

As it says in the Torah: When you have eaten and are satisfied, give praise to your God who has given you this good earth. We praise God for the earth and for its sustenance.

Renew our spiritual center in our time. We praise God, who centers us.

May the source of peace grant peace to us, to the Jewish people, and to the entire world. Amen.

The Third Glass of Wine

The blessing over the meal is immediately followed by another blessing over the wine:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p’ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the third glass of wine!
The Cup of Elijah

We now refill our wine glasses once last time and open the front door to invite the prophet Elijah to join our Seder.

In the Bible, Elijah was a fierce defender of God to a disbelieving people. At the end of his life, rather than dying, he was whisked away to heaven. Tradition holds that he will return in advance of messianic days to herald a new era of peace, so we set a place for Elijah at many joyous, hopeful Jewish occasions, such as a baby’s bris and the Passover Seder.

Eliyahu hanavi
Eliyahu hatishbi
Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu hagiladi
Bimheirah b’yameinu, yavo eileinu
Im mashiah ben-David,
Im mashiah ben-David

Elijah the prophet, the returning, the man of Gilad:
return to us speedily,
in our days with the messiah,
son of David.
That's High Praise

Reflect & Share

Have each person offer a single word of praise about the world, nature, humanity, food, etc.

Cup #4:

Take a moment to raise a glass and share your favorite toasts!

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהים מלך העולם בורא פרי הא食べる

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam Borei Pri HaGafen.

We acknowledge the Unity of All, and express gratitude for the fruit of the vine.

*Drink Cup #4!*
Tonight, we have joined in an unbroken chain with our ancestors and our ancestors’ ancestors (and our ancestors’ ancestors’ ancestors!) in commemorating this sacred day, remembering that we were once in bondage and now are liberated. We will be grateful. We will remember those who came before us and we will lovingly envision those who will come after. We will stand against the enslavement of any living beings and we will uplift all of our brothers and sisters and we will know that none of us are free while another suffers in bondage.

We will celebrate again, next year, in the promised land!
Conclusion

Virtual Conclusion

This year we do things a little differently. So much has changed in the last month and we seek understanding in a new reality. Not dissimilar from Moses and Aaron as they sent scouts to survey the promised land. May we learn from their lessons and remain open to new possibilities for our people. While we cannot be together, we connect because we are family, we connect because we are community, we connect because we are human.

JUST TO BE IS A BLESSING,
JUST TO LIVE IS HOLY.

Abraham Joshua Heschel
ECHAD MI YODEA

Echad mi yode'a
Echad ani yode'a
Echad Eloheinu shebashamaim uva'aretz.

Shnaim mi yode'a
Shnaim ani yode'a
shnei luchot habrit
echad eloheinu shebashamaim uva'aretz.

Shloscha mi yode'a,
Shloscha ani yode'a.
Shloscha avot,
shnei luchot habrit
echad eloheinu shebashamaim uva'aretz.

Arba mi yode'a
arba ani yode'a
arba imahot
Shloscha avot,
shnei luchot habrit
echad eloheinu shebashamaim uva'aretz.

Chamisha, mi yode'a
Chamisha, ani yode'a
Chamisha chumshei torah
arba imahot
Shloscha avot,
shnei luchot habrit
echad eloheinu shebashamaim uva'aretz.

Shloscha-asar mi yode'a
Shloscha-asar ani yode'a
Shloscha-asar midaya
shneim-asar shivtaya
achad asar kochvaya
asara dibraya
tish'ah chodshei leidah
shmonah yemei milah
shiv'ah yemei shabatah
Shisha, sidre mishna
Chamisha chumshei torah
arba imahot
Shloscha avot,
shnei luchot habrit
echad eloheinu shebashamaim uva'aretz.
Matzah Ball Tonight
(to the tune of "Comedy Tonight")

Something historic, something caloric
Something for everyone, a matzah ball tonight.
Tales that are thrilling, food that is filling
Something for everyone, a matzah ball tonight.
Waters that part, great pyramids,
Bring on the yentas, kvetchers and kids.
Something neurotic, something melodic
Singing of Hebrews taking flight!
Matzah brei tomorrow, matzah balls tonight!

Some yadda yadda from the haggaddah
Something for everyone, a matzah ball tonight
So much to question, such indigestion
Something for everyone, a matzah ball tonight
Hide your brioche, throw out your bread.
Eat macaroons and matzah instead.
Something observant, festive and fervent
Praise Adonai with all your might!
Matzah brei tomorrow, matzah balls tonight!

Something enduring, see Grandpa snoring
Something for everyone, a matzah ball tonight
Motzi and Kiddush, Hebrew and Yiddish
Something for everyone, a matzah ball tonight
Prayers to be prayed, songs to be sung
Family and friends, the old and the young
Something so Jewish, so Dayenu-ish,
Thank God it all turned out alright!
Matzah brei tomorrow, matzah balls tonight!

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Blessing For Hand Washing During a Pandemic

As we wash our hands
We pray,
Blessed is the Soul of the Universe,
Breathing us in and breathing us out.
May our breaths continue
And our health and the health of all
Be preserved
In this time of sickness and fear of sickness.
Holy Wholeness,
We take as much responsibility for this as we can
By observing the obligation to wash our hands
Thoroughly:
For as long as it takes to say this prayer.
Amen