

THE WANDERING IS OVER HAGGADAH

A SEDER FOR EVERYONE



JewishBoston

HOW TO USE THIS HAGGADAH

Passover is a holiday celebrating and commemorating the Israelites' liberation from slavery and their exodus from Egypt, as told in the beginning of the Book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible (and subsequently reinterpreted in several debatably good movies). Following the command that the story should always be taught to the next generation, Jews across time and space have celebrated this joyful holiday. As you might imagine, many aspects of the Passover celebration have withstood the millennia of observance, and many traditions have been added, taken away and changed over time. Now, the choice is yours.

This seder is generally designed to take about 45 minutes from start to dinner, and to be accessible to everyone. Make the experience your own by including additional readings or favorite family traditions. You can also create new traditions relevant for the guests with whom you will be sharing your seder.

You'll notice the meal is right in the middle; if you just stop there, you'll miss some of the best parts (including half the wine)! But be realistic—if you don't think you and your guests will want to pick up the Haggadah again after the entrée, consider moving some of the second-half highlights to the pre-dinner slot.

Just as seders vary from household to household, so do leadership styles. Our recommendation is to encourage lots of participation; that way everyone is invested in the experience and there will be more lively conversation.

This Haggadah deliberately minimizes the role of the leader so every guest can participate at his or her comfort level. Take the time to make sure everyone at the seder introduces themselves and let them know they can participate as much or as little as they'd like.

As leader, though, you're not completely off the hook! It's your job to keep things moving forward and to help each person participate.



RUNNING THE SEDER

Once everyone is seated at the table, it may be helpful to provide a bit of information about Passover and its traditions, as well as set some expectations before launching into the seder. Explain how long you predict the seder will run, when you anticipate dinner to be and if there will be food served before dinner.

It may also be helpful to discuss how you intend to handle participation in the seder. If you plan to go around the table, letting everyone read a paragraph, let your guests know how that will work. There's not a lot of Hebrew in this Haggadah, but it's helpful to let your guests know there is some and they can choose to read it if they know Hebrew or just read the English.

Here's a list of supplies you'll need to host the seder (keep reading for more detailed descriptions):

On the table:

- Seder plate and symbolic food items
- Plate with three pieces of matzah covered by a cloth or napkin
- Wine or grape juice
- *Kiddush* cup (any wine glass will do)
- Elijah's cup (any wine glass will do)
- Small bowls of salt water
- Plate with extra matzah
- Cloth or napkin for wrapping the *afikoman*
- Prize for finding the *afikoman*

Optional items:

- Hard-boiled eggs
- Veggies or other light foods to eat during the seder
- Interactive props (you can make your seder more engaging with things like toys, for example, to represent the 10 plagues)

At each chair:

- Standard dinner place setting, with appetizer plate
- Wine glass
- Pillow for reclining



HIDING THE AFIKOMAN

There are three pieces of matzah stacked on the table covered by a cloth or napkin. When indicated in the Haggadah, you will break the middle matzah into two pieces. The leader and/or host should wrap up the larger half and, at some point before the end of dinner, find a place to hide it. This piece is called the *afikoman*, literally “dessert” in Greek.

After dinner, the guests will have to hunt for the *afikoman* to wrap up the meal—and win a prize! Make sure to have a reward handy for the lucky winner; cash works but you can also be as creative as you want. Once the *afikoman* is found and redeemed, send it around the table so everyone can eat a small piece of it for dessert.

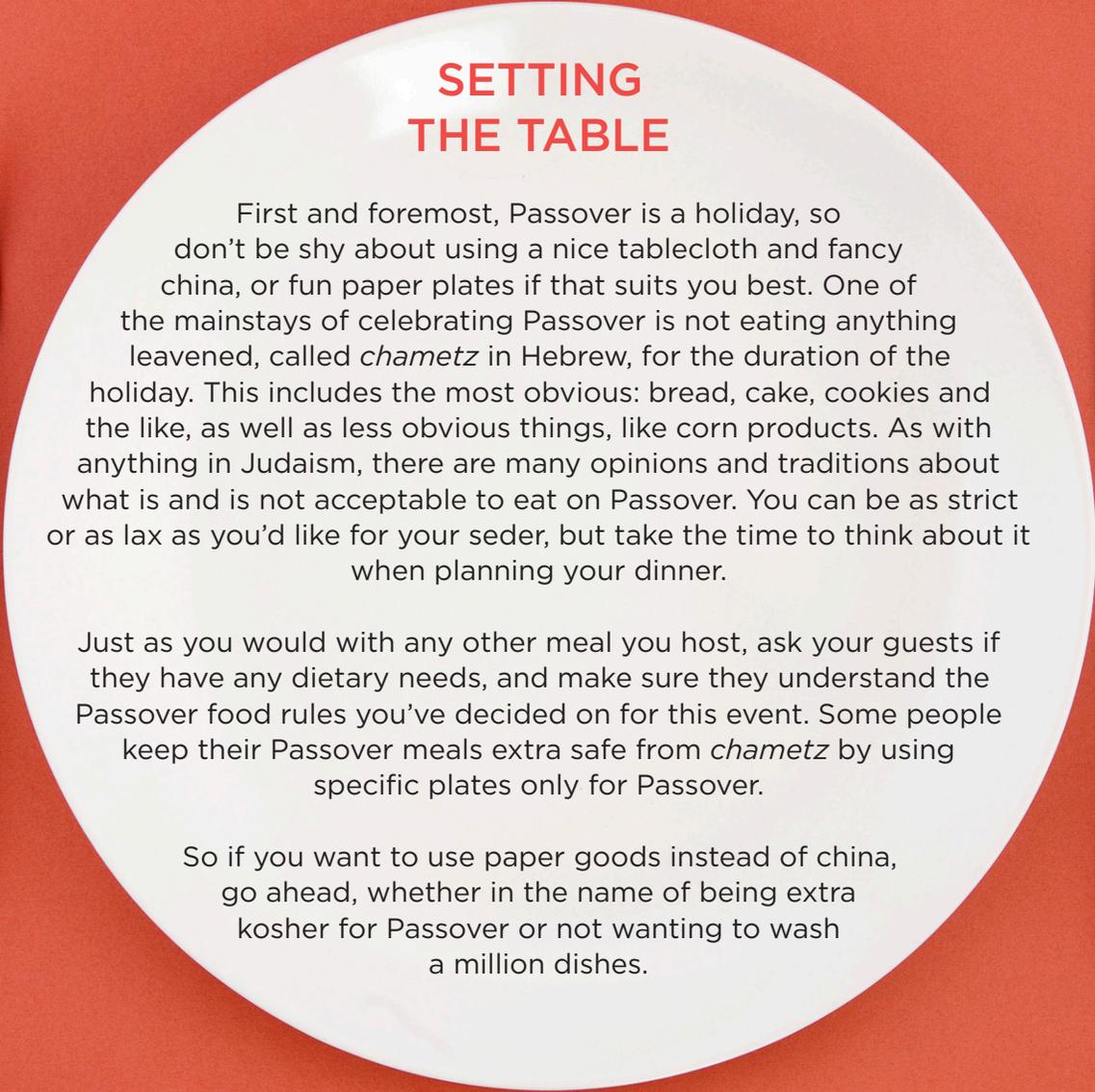
THE FOUR QUESTIONS

The Four Questions are traditionally sung by the youngest participant at the seder. These questions are designed to help explain how the evenings of Passover are different from regular evenings. There's a tune for these questions and often someone will know it. If you and/or your guests aren't familiar with the Hebrew, just read them in English as you would the rest of the seder.

SERVING THE MEAL

No one should have to skip the seder because they're stuck in the kitchen preparing the meal. Luckily, many great seder foods, from brisket to roast chicken to kugel to tzimmes, a traditional carrot dish, can be prepared ahead and left in a warm oven.

But you don't need to wait to feed your guests until the meal portion of the Haggadah. The *Karpas* - *Dipping a green vegetable in salt water* section, which happens fairly early, was designed by rabbis as a way to work appetizers into the seder. After you've dipped your vegetables into salt water and said the corresponding blessing, consider bringing out a vegetable course, the gefilte fish or the boiled eggs.



SETTING THE TABLE

First and foremost, Passover is a holiday, so don't be shy about using a nice tablecloth and fancy china, or fun paper plates if that suits you best. One of the mainstays of celebrating Passover is not eating anything leavened, called *chametz* in Hebrew, for the duration of the holiday. This includes the most obvious: bread, cake, cookies and the like, as well as less obvious things, like corn products. As with anything in Judaism, there are many opinions and traditions about what is and is not acceptable to eat on Passover. You can be as strict or as lax as you'd like for your seder, but take the time to think about it when planning your dinner.

Just as you would with any other meal you host, ask your guests if they have any dietary needs, and make sure they understand the Passover food rules you've decided on for this event. Some people keep their Passover meals extra safe from *chametz* by using specific plates only for Passover.

So if you want to use paper goods instead of china, go ahead, whether in the name of being extra kosher for Passover or not wanting to wash a million dishes.

THE SEDER PLATE

The seder plate holds most of the main symbols we talk about during the seder. There are many beautiful seder plates handed down through generations, and certainly many that are available for purchase with a wide variety of artistry and cost. A seder plate will usually have specific spaces, often named, for each item. Since there can be a bit of variation on what appears on a seder plate, some have five spaces, while others have six.

Several things have been added in recent times to the seder plate (listed below) and are optional but certainly meaningful. Although there might not be a designated place for these items on the average seder plate, feel free to add them where they fit or just put them on the table.



Roasted egg (*Beitzah*):

The roasted egg (yes, roasted!) symbolizes rebirth and springtime. Just as we grew into a free nation through our exodus from Egypt, the egg symbolizes growth and new life. Boil your egg first, then put it inside the oven (at about 350 degrees) and roast it until the shell starts to brown. (But if you use a simple boiled egg, no one is likely to know the difference.) Looking for a vegan substitute? Try plant seeds, an avocado pit or a large nut.

Spring greens (*Karpas*):

This vegetable represents the spring season of the Passover holiday, and is used for the Karpas part of the seder. Most people use parsley, but some use celery, boiled potatoes or onions instead.



Bitter herb (*Maror*):

Generally, this is horseradish, which embodies the bitterness of slavery. Traditionalists will tell you it must be the actual horseradish root. But many people use the chopped stuff from a jar, which can then do double-duty as a condiment for your gefilte fish. Note: A little horseradish goes on the seder plate, but everyone will eat a bit of bitter herb during the seder. You can either put it on individual plates or in a few little bowls on the table.



Chopped apples and nuts (*Charoset*):

This is the fruit-based mixture that represents the mortar of bricks we laid as slaves in Egypt. It's also sweet, like freedom. Just about every Jewish community in the world has its own take on charoset, so if you're feeling ambitious, Google different recipes and make a few! Note: Like the horseradish, just a little bit of charoset goes on the seder plate. Put most of it in bowls around the table so everyone can enjoy it during the seder.



Shank bone (*Zeroah*):



This is a symbol of the Passover lamb; our forefathers used its blood to mark their doorposts, and the angel of death passed over their homes in the Passover story. Often, you can ask your butcher for a piece of lamb shank bone. In the weeks leading up to Passover, kosher specialty stores will have shank bones available, but they can go fast. Before you put it on the plate, remember to roast it—you wouldn't want raw animal parts on your table! (You can even throw it in the oven with the egg.) If you miss out or forget to purchase an actual lamb shank bone, you wouldn't be the first to substitute a chicken leg bone. Want a vegetarian option? Steamed or roasted beets have a deep red color and serve as a popular alternative.



Lettuce (*Chazeret*):

This is the one that sometimes gets left off, but the idea here is to use Romaine or a similarly bitter green, which takes on the symbolism of both the bitter herbs and the parsley, of slavery and renewal.

Optional modern additions:

- **Orange** for LGBTQ and gender equality
- **Artichoke heart** for the inclusion of interfaith families
- **Fair-trade chocolate or cocoa beans** for economic freedom (most of the world's chocolate production relies on underpaid or slave laborers, often children)
- **Tomato** for solidarity with those suffering from slavery, underpaid labor and oppressive working conditions in American agriculture
- **Olive** for peace in the Middle East
- **Cashews** for support of American troops
- **Banana** for standing with refugees
- **Pinecone** to call out for criminal justice reform



OTHER ITEMS ON THE TABLE

Salt water:

Since you need to dip the parsley in salt water, be sure to mix up little bowls of salt water and sprinkle them around the table.

Water for hand-washing:

If you're so inclined, you may want to have a pitcher and bowl on a side table for the ritual washing that takes place. If not, people can get up and wash at the sink. For a contemporary riff on the ritual, pass around moist towelettes or hand sanitizer.

Matzah:

For the seder itself, you'll need three pieces of matzah on a plate, covered by a cloth or napkin. Unlike the items on the seder plate, you will eat this matzah at specific points in the seder. It's traditional to use only plain matzah here, although some people choose their favorite flavor. Since many people love to munch on matzah, you could have an additional plate of it on the table.

Elijah's Cup:

Toward the end of the seder, it's traditional to open the door to welcome in the prophet Elijah. If he does, in fact, come through your door, it's probably a good idea to have some wine waiting for him in an extra glass. Some families have special, fancy wine goblets specifically made to be "Elijah's Cup," but any wine glass on the table not assigned to a guest will do. Some leaders fill Elijah's Cup at the start of the seder; others wait until the part of the seder that specifically mentions Elijah.

Miriam's Cup:

Even though Miriam, the sister of Moses, plays an essential role in the Passover story, the traditional Haggadah text minimizes her by heavily focusing on the male figures. In the modern era and in progressive Judaism, there is great emphasis on egalitarianism and recognizing both our forefathers and foremothers. To celebrate Miriam's contributions in the Exodus story, many have added a second cup. Miriam's Cup is filled with water to symbolize Miriam's well, which often provided much-needed water for the Israelites wandering in the desert after their exodus from Egypt.

Happy hosting!



THE WANDERING IS OVER HAGGADAH

Tonight, we gather together to celebrate Passover. Passover is a holiday commemorating the Israelites' liberation from slavery and their exodus from Egypt, as told in the beginning of the Book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible.

Following the command that the story should always be taught to the next generation, Jews across time and space have celebrated this joyful holiday.

As you might imagine, there are many aspects of the Passover celebration that have withstood the millennia of observance, and many traditions have been added, taken away and changed over time.

Tonight, we will eat a great meal together, enjoy four glasses (at least!) of wine, and tell the story of our ancestors' liberation from slavery.

We welcome all our guests to reflect with us on the meaning of freedom in each of our lives, traditions and histories.

We will have the opportunity to consider our blessings, pledge to work harder at freeing those who still suffer, and try to cast off the things in our own lives that feel oppressive.

THE ORDER OF THE SEDER

Our Passover meal is called a seder, which means “order” in Hebrew, because we go through 14 specific steps as we retell the story of the Israelites’ liberation from slavery. Some people like to begin their seder by reciting or singing the names of the 14 steps:

<i>Kiddush</i> (the blessing over wine) <i>Kadeish</i>	קִדּוּשׁ
Ritual hand-washing in preparation for the seder <i>Urchatz</i>	וּרְחַץ
Dipping a green vegetable in salt water <i>Karpas</i>	כַּרְפָּס
Breaking the middle matzah <i>Yachatz</i>	יַחַץ
Telling the story of Passover <i>Magid</i>	מַגִּיד
Ritual hand-washing in preparation for the meal <i>Rachtza</i>	רְחַצָּה
The blessing over the meal and matzah <i>Motzi Matzah</i>	מוֹצֵיאַ מַצָּה
Dipping the bitter herb in sweet <i>charoset</i> <i>Maror</i>	מָרֹר
Dipping the bitter herb in sweet <i>charoset</i> <i>Koreich</i>	כוֹרֵיךְ
Eating the meal! <i>Shulchan Oreich</i>	שֻׁלְחַן עוֹרֵיךְ
Finding and eating the <i>afikoman</i> <i>Tzafoon</i>	צִפּוֹן
Saying grace after the meal and inviting Elijah the Prophet <i>Bareich</i>	בָּרַךְ
Singing songs that praise God <i>Hallel</i>	הַלֵּל
Ending the seder and thinking about the future <i>Nirtzah</i>	נִרְצָה

Kiddush (the blessing over wine) | Kadeish / קִדּוּשׁ

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 cups and drink.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who created a heritage that endures through the ages, ever changing and ever meaningful. We thank You for the many opportunities for holiness as we celebrate this joyous holiday of matzah together, remembering the liberation, the Exodus from Egypt. We praise you, God, who makes us holy in our celebration.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, she-hechyanu v'key'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this joyous season.

Drink the first glass of wine!



Ritual hand-washing for the seder | *Urchatz* / וְרַחֵץ

As in many world cultures and religions, water is a symbol of purification in Judaism. We will wash our hands twice during our seder—now, with no blessing, to get us ready for the rituals to come, and then again later, with a blessing, to prepare us for the meal, which Judaism thinks of as a ritual in itself. (The Jewish obsession with food is older than you thought!)

To wash your hands, you don't need soap, but you do need a cup to pour water over them. Pour water on each of your hands three times, alternating between them.

Celebrating Passover gives us all the opportunity to pause and reflect on what brings us together.



Let's take a moment to consider what we hope to get out of our evening together. Go around the table and share one hope or expectation you have, or something you want to learn at tonight's seder.

Dipping a green vegetable in salt water | *Karpas* / כַּרְפָּס

Passover, like many Jewish holidays, combines the celebration of an event from Jewish history and memory, as well as the continued cycle of our natural world. As we remember the Israelites' liberation, we also welcome the beginning of spring, the budding of new plants and rebirth happening in the world around us.

We now take a vegetable, representing our joy at the dawning of spring after our long, cold winter. Many use a green vegetable such as parsley or celery, but some people, primarily from Eastern Europe, have a tradition of using a boiled potato since greens were harder 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 the Israelites shed as slaves. Before we eat it, we recite a short blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, 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 when we most need them.



We all have aspects of ourselves that sometimes get buried under the stresses of our busy lives. What has this winter taught us? What elements of our own lives do we hope to revive this spring?

Breaking the middle matzah | *Yachatz* / יָחַץ

There are three pieces of matzah stacked on the table. We now break the middle matzah into two pieces. Our host will wrap up the larger of the pieces and, at some point between now and the end of dinner, hide it. This piece is called the *afikoman*, literally “dessert” in Greek. After dinner, all of us will have to hunt for the *afikoman*, and whoever finds it will win a prize!

We eat matzah, unleavened bread, to remind us that when the Israelites were finally freed, they fled Egypt so quickly that their bread did not have time to rise.

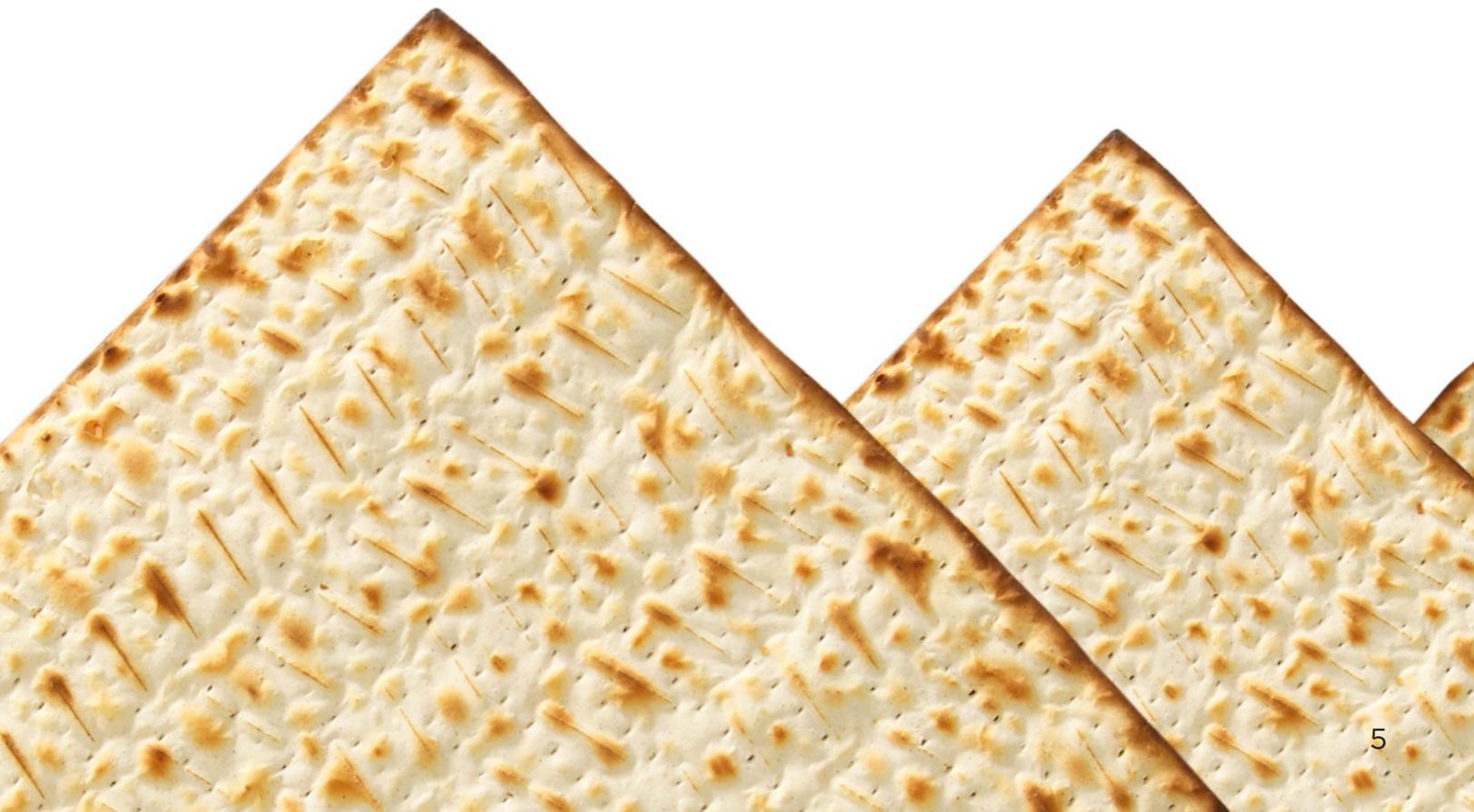
Uncover and hold up the three pieces of matzah and say:

“This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat; all who are needy come and celebrate Passover with us. This year we are here; next year we will be in Israel. This year we are slaves; next year we will be free.”

While we recline and enjoy our Passover celebration, we are reminded not only of the history that we commemorate, but also of our obligation to make our world better for those still enslaved, whether in bondage or by poverty or circumstance. We are commanded to seek out those who are hungry, to share in our bread of affliction, as we seek to ensure that the story of slavery is our past, not our present or future.



Unfortunately, slavery exists in many forms in our world and for each of us. How can we take these words to heart this Passover?



Pour your second glass of wine.

The Haggadah doesn't tell the story of Passover in a linear fashion. We don't hear of Moses being found by the daughter of Pharaoh; actually, we don't hear much of Moses at all.

Instead, we get an impressionistic collection of songs, images and stories of both the Exodus and from Passover celebrations through the centuries.

Some say that minimizing the role of Moses keeps us focused on the miracles God performed for us.

Others insist that we keep the focus on the role that every member of the community has in bringing about positive change.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

The formal telling of the story of Passover is framed as a series of questions and answers. The tradition that the youngest person at the seder asks the questions reflects the importance of sharing the story, symbolism and purpose with the next generation. Asking questions is a core tradition in Jewish life; the rabbis who formatted the seder sought to teach this important story through these questions.

מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

Ma nishtana halaila hazeh mikol haleilot?

Why is this night different from all other nights?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמָצָה. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מַצָּה:

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.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יֵרָקוֹת. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מְרֹר:

Shebichol haleilot anu ochlin shi'ar yirakot. Halaila hazeh maror.

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

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אֶפְּלוֹ פַּעַם אַחַת. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פַּעַמִּים:

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

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

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין:

Shebichol haleilot anu ochlin bein yoshvin uvein m'subin. Halaila hazeh kulanu m'subin.

On all other nights we eat either sitting normally or reclining. Tonight, we recline.

ANSWERING OUR QUESTIONS

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ. עַתָּה בָּנֵי חוֹרִין:

Avadim hayinu. Ata b'nei chorin.

We were slaves. Now we are free.



THE FOUR CHILDREN

Jewish tradition tells of four children with unique ways of understanding Passover: the wise child, the wicked child, the simple child and the silent child. Yet we know that no child is all wise, all wicked, all simple or incapable of asking anything. At different points in our lives, we have been each of these children.

What does the wise child say?

The wise child asks diligently, “What are the testimonies and laws which God commanded you?”

What does it mean to be the wise child?

It means to be fully engaged in the community, to know the limits of your understanding, to be able to search for the answers to that which you do not know.

At different points in our lives, we have been this child—inquisitive, caring, eager to learn and to understand, willing to ask for information we do not have, hopeful that an answer can be found.

What does the wicked child say?

The wicked child asks, “What does this service mean to *you*?”
To *you* and not to *himself or herself*.

What does it mean to be the wicked child?

It means to stand apart from the community, to feel alienated and alone, depending only on yourself, to have little trust in the people around you to help or answer your questions.

At different points in our lives, we have been this child—detached, suspicious, challenging.

What does the simple child say?

The simple child asks, “What is this?”

What does it mean to be a simple child?

It means to see only one layer of meaning, to ask the most basic of questions, to be too innocent or impatient to grasp complicated questions.

At different points in our lives, we have all been this child—simply curious and innocently unaware of the complexities around us.

What about the child who doesn't know how to ask a question?

Help this child ask. Start telling the story: “It is because of what God did for me in taking me out of Egypt.”

What does it mean to be the silent child?

This can be the indifferent child, no longer willing to engage. It can be the passive child, who just shows up. Or it can be the child whose spiritual life is based on faith, not rational arguments, the child who hears something deeper than words, who knows how to be silent and to listen to the surrounding silence.

At different points in our lives, we have all been this child—unable to articulate, quiet, searching for the right words, listening in silence.



We have asked the cleverest of questions; we have challenged provocatively; we have simply wanted to know the answer; and we have been so confused that we could not speak. We have been all of these children. Which one are you tonight?

TELLING OUR STORY

Our story starts in ancient times with Abraham, who followed God's command and became the very first believer. 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 made a promise to Abraham that his family would become a great nation, but this promise came with a 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 your glass of wine and say:

וְהִיא שְׁעֵמֶדָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ.

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.

Put down your glass of wine.

In the years our ancestors lived in Egypt, our numbers multiplied, and soon the family of Jacob became the People of Israel. Pharaoh and his advisers became alarmed by this great nation flourishing within their borders, so they enslaved us. We were forced to perform hard labor, perhaps even build pyramids. Our oppressors feared that even as slaves, the Israelites might grow strong and overthrow them, so Pharaoh decreed that Israelite baby boys should be drowned in the Nile.

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.

THE TEN PLAGUES

As we rejoice at the Israelites' deliverance from slavery, we acknowledge this freedom was hard-earned. We regret that freedom came at the cost of others' suffering, for we are all made in the image of God. Therefore, we take away just a little bit of our joy of wine by placing a drop of it on our plates as we recite each of the Ten Plagues.

Dip a finger or a spoon into your wine glass to get a drop for each plague.

Blood <i>Dam</i>	דָּם
Frogs <i>Tzfardeiya</i>	צְפַרְדֵּיָא
Lice <i>Kinim</i>	כְּנִים
Beasts <i>Arov</i>	עֲרֹב
Cattle disease <i>Dever</i>	דֶּבֶר
Boils <i>Sh'chin</i>	שַׁחִין
Hail <i>Barad</i>	בָּרָד
Locusts <i>Arbeh</i>	אַרְבֶּה
Darkness <i>Choshech</i>	חֹשֶׁךְ
Death of the firstborn <i>Makat b'chorot</i>	מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

The Ten Plagues wreaked havoc on the country of Egypt and all its inhabitants, including the mighty Pharaoh. They ruined livestock and agriculture, water and health, staples in ancient society as well as today. While the plagues in our story have a clear message and purpose, they are still often things that plague our world today. What else might you add to this list? What are the plagues of our day? What work can we do to rid our world of them?

THE MODERN PLAGUES

The Passover Haggadah recounts ten plagues that afflicted Egyptian society. In our tradition, Passover is the season in which we imagine our own lives within the story and the story within our lives. Accordingly, we turn our thoughts to the many plagues affecting our society today. Our journey from slavery to redemption is ongoing, demanding the work of our hearts and hands. Here are ten “modern plagues”:

Homelessness

In any given year, about 3.5 million people are likely to experience homelessness, about a third of them children, according to the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. A recent study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed the majority of major cities lack the capacity to shelter those in need and are forced to turn people away. We are reminded time and again in the Torah that the Exodus is a story about a wandering people, once suffering from enslavement, who, through God’s help, eventually find their way to their homeland. As we inherit this story, we affirm our commitment to pursue an end to homelessness.

Hunger

About 49 million Americans experience food insecurity, 16 million of them children. While living in a world blessed with more than enough food to ensure all of God’s children are well nourished, on Passover we declare, “Let all who are hungry come and eat!” These are not empty words, but rather a heartfelt and age-old prayer to end the man-made plague of hunger.

Inequality

Access to affordable housing, quality health care, nutritious food and quality education is far from equal. The disparity between the privileged and the poor is growing, with opportunities for upward mobility still gravely limited. Maimonides taught, “Everyone in the house of Israel is obligated to study Torah, regardless of whether one is rich or poor, physically able or with a physical disability.” Unequal access to basic human needs, based on one’s real or perceived identity, like race, gender or disability, is a plague, antithetical to the inclusive spirit of the Jewish tradition.

Greed

In the Talmud, the sage Ben Zoma asks: “Who is wealthy? One who is happy with one’s lot.” These teachings evidence what we know in our conscience—a human propensity to desire more than we need, to want what is not ours and, at times, to allow this inclination to conquer us, leading to sin. Passover urges us against the plague of greed, toward an attitude of gratitude.

Discrimination and hatred

The Jewish people, as quintessential victims of hatred and discrimination, are especially sensitized to this plague in our own day and age. Today, half a century after the civil rights movement in the United States, we still are far from the actualization of the dream Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. articulated in Washington, D.C., a vision rooted in the message of our prophets. On Passover, we affirm our own identity as the once oppressed, and we refuse to stand idly by amid the plagues of discrimination and hatred.

Environmental destruction

Humans actively destroy the environment through various forms of pollution, wastefulness, deforestation and widespread apathy toward improving our behaviors and detrimental civic policies. Rabbi Nachman of Breslav taught, “If you believe you can destroy, you must believe you can repair.” Our precious world is in need of repair, now more than ever.

Stigma of mental illness

One in five Americans experiences mental illness in a given year. Even more alarming, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, nearly two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment, and minority communities are the least likely to search for or have access to mental health resources. Social stigma toward those with mental illness is a widespread plague. Historically, people with mental health issues have suffered from severe discrimination and brutality, yet our society is increasingly equipped with the knowledge and resources to alleviate the plague of social stigma and offer critical support.

Ignoring refugees

We are living through the worst refugee crisis since the Holocaust. On this day, we remember that “we were foreigners in the land of Egypt,” and God liberated us for a reason: to love the stranger as ourselves. With the memory of generations upon generations of our ancestors living as refugees, we commit ourselves to safely and lovingly opening our hearts and our doors to all peace-loving refugees.

Powerlessness

When faced with these modern plagues, how often do we doubt or question our own ability to make a difference? How often do we feel paralyzed because we do not know what to do to bring about change? How often do we find ourselves powerless to transform the world as it is into the world as we know it should be, overflowing with justice and peace?

Written in collaboration with Temple Israel of Boston



DAYEINU

The plagues and subsequent redemption are but one example of the might and protection of God. As we tell this story of triumph, we sing the words of *Dayeinu* (“It would have been enough”), for just a single act of love from God would have sufficed, and yet God continues to show us compassion.

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים, דינו:

Illo hotzianu mi-mitzrayim, Dayeinu

If God had only taken us out of Egypt, that would have been enough!

אלו נתן לנו את התורה, דינו:

Illo natan lanu et ha-Torah, Dayeinu

If God had only given us the Torah, that would have been enough!

Dayeinu tells the entire story of the Exodus from Egypt as a series of miracles God performed for us. It also reminds us that each of our lives is the cumulative result of many blessings, small and large.

If God had taken us out of Egypt and not judged the Egyptians—*Dayeinu*.

If God had judged the Egyptians, and not their idols—*Dayeinu*.

If God had judged their idols, and not killed their firstborns—*Dayeinu*.

If God had killed their firstborns, and not given us their wealth—*Dayeinu*.

If God had given us their wealth, and not torn the sea in two—*Dayeinu*.

If God had torn the sea in two, and not let us through it on dry land—*Dayeinu*.

If God had let us through on dry land, and not drowned our enemies—*Dayeinu*.

If God had drowned our enemies, and not sustained us with manna in the desert for 40 years—*Dayeinu*.

If God had fed us manna, and had not given us Shabbat—*Dayeinu*.

If God had given us Shabbat, and had not brought us to Mount Sinai—*Dayeinu*.

If God had brought us to Mount Sinai, and had not given us the Torah—*Dayeinu*.

If God had given us the Torah, and had not brought us to the land of Israel—*Dayeinu*.

If God had brought us to the land of Israel, and not built the Temple for us—*Dayeinu*.



What are the blessings in your life? Go around the table and share the things you feel grateful for in your life, both small and large.

THE PASSOVER SYMBOLS

We have now told the story of Passover...but wait! We're not quite done. There are still several symbols on our seder plate we haven't explained. Rabban Gamaliel would say that whoever didn't explain the shank bone, matzah and maror (bitter herbs) hasn't done Passover justice.

The **shank bone** represents the "pesach," the special lamb sacrifice made in the days of the Temple for the Passover holiday. During the final plague, the Israelites were instructed to smear lamb's blood on the lintel of their homes so the angel of death would pass over their homes. The sacrifice and now the shank bone are called pesach, from the Hebrew word meaning "to pass over," because God passed over the houses of the Israelites when inflicting plagues upon their Egyptian oppressors.

The **matzah** on our table reminds us that when the Israelites were finally freed from bondage, they rushed to leave Egypt before Pharaoh could change his mind. As they fled, the dough they made for bread did not have time to fully rise, so they ate flat matzah instead. During Passover, we also eat matzah and refrain from eating anything that is leavened or can rise.

The **bitter herbs** symbolize the bitterness of slavery, the life of hard labor the Israelites experienced.

During our Passover seder, we are reminded over and over again to tell this important story of freedom to each other and to those who will come after us. We do this to remember, to feel a connection to the story of the Israelites so we will never take our freedom for granted. Every generation is plagued with different challenges to freedom, and our story takes on new meanings throughout hundreds and hundreds of years. In the modern era, alongside the symbols of old, newer elements have been added to many seder plates to remind us of present-day struggles and triumphs.

So how was it that the **orange** found its place on the seder plate as a symbol of feminism, egalitarianism and those who are often marginalized?

The story has it that scholar Susannah Heschel, daughter of Abraham Joshua Heschel, a preeminent modern Jewish philosopher, was inspired by the abundant new customs expressing women's viewpoints and experiences and started placing an orange on the seder plate.

At an early point in the seder, she asked each person to take a segment of the orange, make the blessing over fruit and eat the segment in recognition of all those in our midst who feel marginalized in the Jewish community. She encouraged each guest to spit out the seeds in their orange segment to reject hatred and homophobia. The bright and vibrant orange suggests the fruitfulness for the whole community when everyone is a valued and respected member.

IN EVERY GENERATION

דִּינּוּ בְּכָל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לְרַאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ, כְּאִלוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם:
B'chol dor vador chayav adam lirot et-atzmo, k'ilu hu yatza mimitzrayim.

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."



THE SECOND GLASS OF WINE

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who redeemed us and our ancestors from slavery, enabling us to reach this night and eat matzah and bitter herbs. May we continue to reach future holidays in peace and happiness.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the second glass of wine!



Ritual hand-washing for the meal | *Rachtza* / רְחִצָּה

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.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to wash our hands.



Blessing over the meal & matzah | *Motzi Matzah* / מוֹצִיא מַצָּה

We mark the start of our meal with the *Motzi* blessing, perhaps familiar from Shabbat. Because we are using matzah instead of bread, we add a blessing celebrating this Passover holiday.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who made us holy by commanding us to eat matzah.

Distribute the top and middle matzah for everyone to eat.

Dipping the bitter herb in sweet *charoset* | *Maror* / מְרוֹר

In creating a holiday about the joy of freedom, we turn the story of bitter history into a sweet celebration. We recognize this by dipping our bitter herbs into the sweet *charoset*. As we taste the bitterness of the herb, we are grateful for the sweetness of our delicious *charoset*.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מְרוֹר:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who made us holy by commanding us to eat bitter herbs.



Eating a sandwich of matzah & bitter herb | *Koreich* / כּוֹרֵיךְ

When the Temple stood in Jerusalem more than a thousand years ago, the most important sacrifice was the pesach, or lamb sacrifice. The great sage Hillel would put the lamb meat in a sandwich made of matzah, along with some of the bitter herbs. While Jews no longer make sacrifices, we honor this custom by eating a sandwich of the remaining matzah and bitter herbs. Many will also include *charoset* in the sandwich to remind us again of the sweetness of freedom.

Eating the meal! | *Shulchan Oreich* / שְׁלַחַן עוֹרֵיךְ

Relax, eat and enjoy friends, family and guests! But remember, when we're done eating we've got a little more seder to go, including the final two cups of wine.

Saying the blessing after the meal and | *Bareich* / בְּרִיךְ inviting Elijah the Prophet

Refill your wine glass.

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.

We now say the blessing after the meal, thanking God for the food we have eaten. On Passover, we continue celebrating our joy of freedom by finishing this blessing with our third glass of wine:

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, whose goodness sustains the world. You are the origin of love and compassion, the source of sustenance for all. We praise God, source of sustenance for all.

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 spirits in our time. We praise you, God, who centers us. May the source of peace grant peace to us, to the house of Israel, 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:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the third glass of wine!



THE CUP OF ELIJAH

We now refill our wine glasses one last time and open the front door to invite the prophet Elijah to join our seder and drink from his glass of wine with us.

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 brought directly up to God on a chariot. Some believe Elijah will return to herald a new era of peace, so we set a place for Elijah, hopeful that he may join us and bring peace to the whole world.

אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתְּשֻׁבִי, אֱלִיָּהוּ, אֱלִיָּהוּ, אֱלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי.
בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ יָבוֹא אֵלֵינוּ, עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד, עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד.

*Eliyahu hanavi, Eliyahu hatishbi, Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu hagiladi.
Bimheirah v'yameinu, yavo eileinu, Im mashiach ben-David, Im mashiach ben-David.*

Elijah the Prophet, the returning, the man of Gilad: return to us speedily, in our days with the messiah, son of David.

This is the time set aside for singing. Some of us might sing traditional prayers from the Book of Psalms. Others take this moment for favorites like "Let My People Go" or "Chad Gadya." To celebrate our freedom, we might sing songs from the civil rights movement, or other songs of triumph over struggle. Or perhaps someone at the table has some parody lyrics about Passover to the tunes from a musical or a Beatles song! We're at least three glasses of wine into the night, so just roll with it!

THE FOURTH GLASS OF WINE

As we come to the end of the seder, we drink a final glass of wine. With this last cup, we give thanks for the experience of celebrating Passover together, for the traditions that remind us to be grateful for all we have, for celebrating with friends and family and seeking to make the world a better place, where all are free.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

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

We praise you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink the fourth and final glass of wine!



Ending the seder & thinking about the future | *Nirtzah* / נִרְצָה

We have come to the end of our seder. We hope to have the opportunity in the years to come to continue telling this story of freedom with our loved ones. We pray this coming year brings health and healing, joy and liberation, gratitude and wonder to all the people of the world.

And we say:

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם:

L'shana haba-ah biy'rushalayim!

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!



SONGS

“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”
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go

“Thus saith the Lord,” bold Moses said, “Let my people go”
“If not I’ll smite your firstborn dead, let my people go”
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 with Egypt’s spoils, let my people go”
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go

“When people stop this slavery, let my people go”
“Soon may all the earth be free, let my people go”
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go



“Chad Gadya”

Chad gadya, chad gadya
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the cat that ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the dog that bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the stick that beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the fire that burnt the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the water that quenched the fire
That burnt the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the ox that drank the water
That quenched the fire
That burnt the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the butcher that killed the ox
That drank the water
That quenched the fire
That burnt the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

Then came the Angel of Death
Who slayed the butcher that killed the ox
That drank the water
That quenched the fire
That burnt the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya

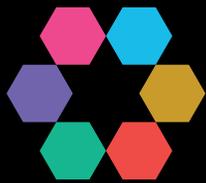
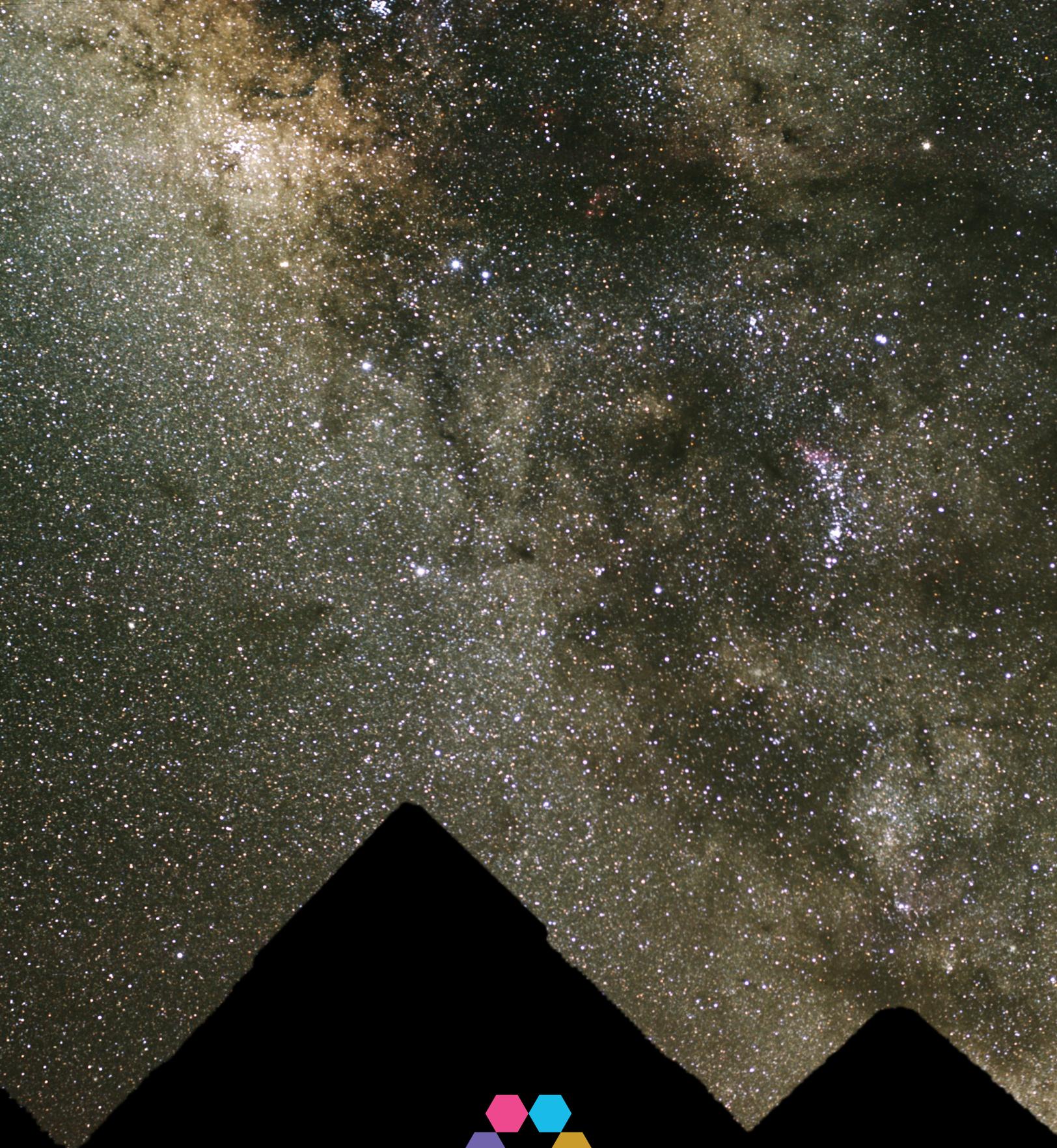
Then came the Holy One, Blessed Be He
Who destroyed the Angel of Death
Who slayed the butcher that killed the ox
That drank the water
That quenched the fire
That burnt the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two *zuzim*
Chad gadya, chad gadya
Chad gadya, chad gadya



חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא,

דְּזָבִין אֲבָא בְּתַרֵּי זִנְיֵי

חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.



JewishBoston