(23) Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

**Plutarch: Table Talk, II Proem, 629C-D**

Some of the preparations which are made for dinners and drinking-parties rank as necessities... such are the wine, the food, the cuisine, and of course the couches and tables. Others are diversions introduced for pleasure’s sake, and no essential function attaches to them; such are the music, spectacles, and any buffooning... With these latter, if they are present, the guests are pleased, but if they are absent, the guests do not very much desire them or criticize the party as being deficient. So it is with the conversation; some topics are accepted by the average run of men as the proper entertainment because they possess an attractive theme more suitable to the moment than pipe and lyre.... conversation on philosophical talk … and conversation with poetical dispositions of lovers...
Mishnah, Tractate Pesahim, Chapter 7

If two companies are eating in one room, these may turn their faces in one direction and those may turn their faces in another direction, with the boiler in the middle. When the servant rises to mix the wine, he must shut his mouth and turn his face away from the other company until he reaches his own company. But a bride may turn her face away and eat.

Homer, Odyssey, Book I, 1
Men-servants and pages were bustling about to wait upon them, some mixing wine with water in the mixing-bowls, some cleaning down the tables with wet sponges and laying them out again, and some cutting up great quantities of meat.

Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 6, Page 262
And just as Democritus was beginning to treat us all to a number of interminable stories, in came a troop of servants bringing in everything requisite for eating. Concerning whom Democritus, continuing his discourse, spoke as follows, “I have always, O my friends, marveled at the race of slaves, considering how abstemious they are, though placed in the middle of such numbers of dainties; for they pass them by, not only out of fear, but also because they are taught to do so…”

Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 10, Page 425
At all events, the office of oenoptae is a regular office among the Athenians; and it is mentioned by Eupolis, in his play called The Cities, in the following lines:

And men whom heretofore you’d not have thought
Fit even to make oenoptae of, we now
See made our generals. But oh, city, city!
How much your fortune does outrun your sense.

And these oenoptae superintended the arrangement of banquets, taking care that the guests should drink on equal terms. But it was an office of no great dignity, as Philinus the orator tells us, in his debate on the Croconidae. And he tells us, too, that the oenoptae were three in number, and that they also provided the guests with lamps and wicks. And some people called them "eyes;" but among the Ephesians, the youths who acted as cupbearers at the festival of Poseidon were called "bulls," as Amerias tells us. And the people of the Hellespont call the cupbearer ἐπεγχύτης, or the pourer out.

Homer: Odyssey, Book 3, 1
Nestor’s son Peisistratos at once offered his hand to each of them, and seated them on some soft sheepskins that were lying on the sands near his father and his brother Thrasymedes. Then he gave them their portions of the inward meats and poured wine for them into a golden cup, handing it to Athena first, and saluting her at the same time.

Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 3, Pages 100-101
But Lynceus the Samian, the friend of Theophrastus, was acquainted with the use of paunches when eaten with silphium sauce. And accordingly, writing an account of the Banquet of Ptolemaeus, he says: “A certain paunch having been brought round in vinegar and sauce.” … Hipparchus, who wrote the book called The Egyptian Iliad, tells us in the following words:

But above all I do delight in dishes
Of paunches and of tripe from gelded beasts…
Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 3, Pages 100-101

The lettuce was in great request as an article of food... Epicharinus says — A lettuce with its stalk peeled all the way up.

Strattis writes:
- On fifty feet, and leave their trace,
- Gnawing all herbs and vegetables;
- Leading the dances of the long-tailed satyrs
- Amid the petals of the verdant herbs,
- And of the juicy lettuces.
- And of the fragrant parsley.

Haggadah

It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarphon were reclining in B'nei Berak. They were discussing the exodus from Egypt all that night, until their students came and told them: "Our Masters! The time has come for reciting the morning Shema!"

Haggadah

On all nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!

Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 1, Page 29

After this we rose up and sat down again as each of us pleased; not waiting for a nomenclator to arrange us in order. Now that rooms were fitted up with couches for three, and with couches for four, and for seven, and for nine, and for other successive numbers, in the time of the ancients, we may prove from Antiphanes, who says:

I bring you, since you are but three,
To a room with equal couches.

And Phrynichus says:
One room had seven couches fine,
While another boasted nine.

And Eubulus says:
A. Place now a couch for seven.
B. Here it is.
A. And five Sicilian couches.
B. Well, what next
A. And five Sicilian pillows.

And Ampins says:
Will you not place a couch for three?

Anaxandrides:
A couch was spread,
And songs to please the aged man.
Open the supper rooms, and sweep the house,
And spread the couches fair, and light the fire;
Bring forth the cups, and fill with generous wine.
Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 1, Page 30
And Plato the philosopher, "Men now distinguish the couches and coverings with reference to what is put round the couch and what is put under it." And his name-sake, the comic poet, says:

There the well-dress'd guests recline
On couches rich with ivory feet;
And on their purple cushions dine,
Which rich Sardinian carpets meet.

Esther, Chapter 1
(6) The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones.

Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 1, Page 31
The Persians, according to the account of Heraclides, are the people who first introduced the system of having particular servants to prepare the couches, in order that they might always be elegantly arranged and well made.

P. Talmud, Tractate Pesahim, 68b
Rabbi Levi said: Since it is the way of slaves to eat while standing, here we eat reclining to show that we were released from bondage and are now free.

B. Talmud, Tractate Pesahim, 108a
It was stated: [For the eating of] the unleavened bread reclining is necessary; for the bitter herbs reclining is not necessary. [As for the drinking of] the wine, — It was stated in R. Nahman's name [that] reclining is necessary, and it was stated in R. Nahman's name that reclining is not necessary. Yet they do not disagree: one [ruling] refers to the first two cups, and the other ruling refers to the last two cups. Some explain it in one direction, others explain it in the other direction. [Thus:] some explain it in one direction: for the first two cups reclining is necessary, because it is at this point that freedom commences; for the last two cups reclining is necessary, [because] what has been has been. Others explain it in the contrary direction: on the contrary, the last two cups necessitate reclining, [because] it is precisely then that there is freedom; the first two cups do not necessitate reclining, [because] he is still reciting ‘we were slaves.’ Now that it was stated thus and it was stated thus, both [the first and the last ones] necessitate reclining. Lying on the back is not reclining; reclining on the right side is not reclining. Moreover he may put [his food] into the windpipe before the gullet, and thus endanger himself.
Symposium scene: banqueters playing the kottabos game while a girl plays the aulos. Attic red-figure bell-krater, ca. 420 BC. (National Archaeological Museum of Spain).

Tosephta, Tractate Berahot, Chapter 5

It happened [once] that Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel, Rebbi Yehudah and Rebbi Yossi we reclining in Akko [on Friday afternoon], and the day was over (i.e. it became dark and Shabbat began). Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel said to Rebbi Yossi, “Let us stop [eating because of] Shabbat.”

What is the order of [the couches in the room used for] reclining [during eating]? At the time when there are [only] two beds, the [most] senior [person] reclines on top of the first [bed] and the second one to him [in seniority reclines] below him (i.e. his head is at the first person’s feet). And at the time when there are three beds, the [most] senior [person] reclines on top of the middle [bed], the second one to him [in seniority reclines] above him, [and] the third one to him [in seniority] reclines below him. [If there are more than three people, then] they get ordered in this way (i.e. in groups of three) and on.
And in these last they mixed wine; and it is this last tripod that is the tripod of truth; and it is considered appropriate to Apollo, because of the truth of his prophetic art; and to Dionysus, because of the truth which people speak when drunk.

Judah and Hezekiah, the sons of R. Hiyya, once sat at table with Rabbi and uttered not a word. Whereupon he said: Give the young men plenty of strong wine, so that they may say something. When the wine took effect, they began by saying: The son of David cannot appear ere the two ruling houses in Israel shall have come to an end, viz., the Exilarchate, in Babylon and the Patriarchate in Palestine, for it is written, And he shall be for a Sanctuary, for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both houses of Israel. Thereupon he [Rabbi] exclaimed: You throw thorns in my eyes, my children! At this, R. Hiyya [his disciple] remarked: Master, be not angered, for the numerical value of the letters of yayin is seventy, and likewise the letters of sod: When yayin [wine] goes in, sod [secrets] comes out.

And Milon of Croton, as Theodorus of Hierapolis tells us in his book upon Games, ate twenty minae of meat, and an equal quantity of bread, and drank three choes of wine.

For they do say the first three cups one takes all tend to the honour of the heavenly gods.

Antiphanes tells us, in his Woman Hit by a Javelin:

I have a neighbour who sells wine, And he, whenever I arrive, being thirsty, Is the only man who knows the proper way in which to mix my wine; and makes it not Too full of water, nor too strong and heady: I recollect that once when I was drinking...

But you are not yet satisfied about your πάροινοι (being quarrelsome), and drunkards... However, Perseus, whose power was put down by the Romans, did not die in that way; for he did not imitate his father Philippus in anything; for he was not eager about women, nor was he fond of wine; but when at a feast he was not only moderate himself, but all his friends who were with him were so too, as Polybius relates, in his twenty-sixth book. But you, O Ulpianus, are a most immoderate drinker yourself (δρυθμοπότης), as Timon of Phlius calls it. For so he called those men who drink a great quantity of unmixed wine.

For so they speak and sing, “drink five or three, but not four.” For five have the sesquialter proportion, three cups of water being mixed in two of wine; three, the double proportion, two being mixed with one; four, the sesquiterce, three cups of water to one of wine, which is the epitrite proportion for those exercising their minds in the council-chamber or frowning over dialectics, when changes of speeches are expected,— a sober and mild mixture. But in regard to those proportions of two to one, that mixture gives the strength by which we are confused and made half drunk, “Exciting the chords of the soul never moved before.” For it does not admit of sobriety, nor does it induce the senselessness of pure wine. The most harmonious is the proportion of two to three, provoking sleep, generating the
forgetfulness of cares, and like that cornfield of Hesiod,” which mildly pacifieth children and heals injuries.

**Tosephta, Tractate Berahot, Chapter 4**

What is the order of a meal? Guests come in and sit down on top of benches and on top of soft seats until all [guests] come in. [After] all [guests] came in, and they (i.e. the servants) have given them [water to wash] hands, every one of them washes one hand. [When] they (i.e. the servants) poured them a cup [of wine], each one [of the guests] makes a Beracha (blessing) [for the wine] himself. [When] they (i.e. the servants) brought them appetizers each one [of the guests] makes a Beracha [for the appetizers] himself. [After the guests] have gotten up [from their temporary seats, moved to the main eating hall] and reclined [on sofas], they [i.e. the servants] gave them [water to wash their] hands [again]. Even though he already washed one hand, [still] he [has to] wash both of his hands [again]. [After] they (i.e. the servants) poured them a cup [of wine again], even though he already made a Beracha on the first [cup of wine], he makes [another] Beracha on the second [cup of wine]. [After] they (i.e. the servants) brought in front of them [more] appetizers, even though he [already] made a Beracha on the first [set of appetizers], he makes a [new] Beracha on the second [set of appetizers], but [this time] one [person] makes a Beracha for all of them. [A person] who comes [late] after three appetizers [have been served] does not have permission to enter [the dining hall]. Rebbi Shimon Ben Gamliel says, “There was a great custom in Jerusalem. They (i.e. house owners) would hang a towel above the door. While the towel is hanging guests can come in. [After] the towel has been removed guests are not permitted to come in [anymore]...

**Homer: Odyssey, Book I, 2**

A maid servant then brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread, and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side, and a man-servant brought them wine and poured it out for them.

**Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 1, Page 21**

Anacreon says: The feast which he mentions as taking place in the palace of Menelaus is of a peculiar character; for there he represents the guests as conversing during the banquet; and then they wash their hands and return to the board, and proceed to supper after...

**Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 2, Page 28**

And when we all had reach’d
Satiety of food and wine, the slaves
Bore off the still full tables; and some others
Brought us warm water for to wash our hands.
B. Talmud, Tractate Pesahim, 116a

“Though haroset is not a religious requirement.” Then if it is not a religious requirement, on what account does he bring it? — Said R. Ammi: On account of the kappa. “R. Elazar b. R. Tzadok said: it is a religious requirement.” Why is it a religious requirement? R. Levi said: In memory of the apple-tree. R. Yochanan said: In memory of the mortar. Abaye observed: Therefore one must make it moist and thicken it: make it moist, in memory of the apple-tree; and thicken it, in memory of the clay. It was taught in accordance with R. Yochanan: The spices are in memory of the straw — the haroset is a reminder of the mortar. R. Elazar b. R. Tzadok said: Thus did the grocers cry, ‘Come and buy ingredients for your religious requirements.’

Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists, Book 2, Pages 41-42

But Arnexias says that it is the almond… We may add, there is nothing which is a greater provocative of drinking than almonds when eaten before meals… Diodes asserts that almonds are nutritious and good for the stomach, and that they have a heating effect because they contain something like millet…

B. Talmud, Tractate Pesahim, 115a

It was related of Hillel that he used to wrap them together, for it is said, they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Numbers, Chapter 9

The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Luciani Samosatensis Opera, pp. 308-311, section 396-401

During these days the same honor should be bestowed upon all, the slaves and the free, the poor and the rich… nobody "should count his money… nobody should write on this festival… Presents consisting of clothes, domestic utensils and silverware should be given to all friends.

B. Talmud, Tractate Pesahim, 109a

Our Rabbis taught: A man is in duty bound to make his children and his household rejoice on a Festival, for it is said, And thou shalt rejoice it, thy feast, [thou and thy son, and thy daughter, etc.] Wherewith does he make them rejoice? With wine. R. Judah said: Men with what is suitable for them, and women with, what is suitable for them. ‘Men with what is suitable for them’: with wine. And women with what? R. Joseph recited: in Babylonia, with coloured garments; in the Land of Israel, with ironed lined garments.

Plutarch: Bacchyl. 9, 102 ff.

When the body is comfortable and at peace, then at last the soul, released from care and servitude can devote itself to its own pleasures, and feast on ideas, learning, inquiries, and speculation about unusual questions.
**Plutarch: Symposiacs, Book I, Question 1**

Besides the questions should be easy, the problems known, the interrogations plain, familiar, and not intricate and dark that they might neither vex the unlearned, nor fright them from the disquisition. For — as it is allowable to dissolve our entertainment into a dance, but if we force our guests to toss quoits or play at cudgels, we shall not only make our feast unpleasant, but hurtful and unnatural — thus light and easy disquisitions do pleasantly and profitably excite us, but we must forbear all contentions and (to use Democritus’s word) wrangling disputes, which perplex the proposers with intricate and inexplicable doubts, and trouble all the others that are present. Our discourse should be like our wine, common to all, and of which every one may equally partake; and they that propose hard problems seem no better fitted for society than Aesop’s fox and crane. For the fox vexed the crane with thin broth poured out upon a plain table, and laughed at her when he saw her, by reason of the narrowness of her bill and the thinness of the broth, incapable of partaking what he had prepared; and the crane, in requital, inviting the fox to supper, brought forth her dainties in a pot with a long and narrow neck, into which she could conveniently thrust her bill, whilst the fox could not reach one bit. Just so, when philosophers midst their cups dive into minute and logical disputes, they are very troublesome to those that cannot follow them through the same depths; and those that bring in idle songs, trifling disquisitions, common talk, and mechanical discourse destroy the very end of conversation and merry entertainments, and abuse Bacchus.

**Macrobius: Saturnalia, i, vii, 8, 17.**

During the Saturnalia, distinguished members of the aristocracy and other scholars assembled at the house of Vettius Praetextatus to celebrate the festive time [of Saturnalia] solemnly by a discourse befitting freemen. [The host explained] the origin of the cult and the cause of the festival (Stein, pp. 33-34)

**Plato: Symposium**

Agathon arose in order that he might take his place on the couch by Socrates, when suddenly a band of revellers entered, and spoiled the order of the banquet. Some one who was going out having left the door open, they had found their way in, and made themselves at home; great confusion ensued, and every one was compelled to drink large quantities of wine. Aristodemus said that Eryximachus, Phaedrus, and others went away — he himself fell asleep, and as the nights were long took a good rest: he was awakened towards daybreak by a crowing of cocks, and when he awoke, the others were either asleep, or had gone away; there remained only Socrates, Aristophanes, and Agathon, who were drinking out of a large goblet which they passed round, and Socrates was discoursing to them. Aristodemus was only half awake, and he did not hear the beginning of the discourse; the chief thing which he remembered was Socrates compelling the other two to acknowledge that the genius of comedy was the same with that of tragedy, and that the true artist in tragedy was an artist in comedy also. To this they were constrained to assent, being drowsy, and not quite following the argument. And first of all Aristophanes dropped off, then, when the day was already dawning, Agathon. Socrates, having laid them to sleep, rose to depart; Aristodemus, as his manner was, following him. At the Lyceum he took a bath, and passed the day as usual. In the evening he retired to rest at his own home.

**Quintillian: Insfinito Oratorio, l.c. iii, 7, 10-12**

Regarding things preceding a man’s birth there are his country . . . and his ancestors . . . (Patria et parentres) . . . It will be either creditable (to the object of a eulogy) not to have fallen short of the ancient fame [of his family] . . . or to have ennobled a humble origin by the glory of his achievements. Other topics to be drawn from the period preceding his birth will have reference to omens and prophecies foretelling his future greatness . . . At times weakness may contribute largely to our admiration . . . “
B. Talmud, Tractate Pesahim, 116b

Raba said: He must lift up the unleavened bread, and he must lift up the bitter herb, but he need not lift up the meat; moreover, it would appear as though he ate sacrifices without [the Temple].

Macrobius: Saurnalia, Book III, 18

Symmachus takes some nuts into his hands and asks Servius about the cause and origin of the variety of names given to them.

Symmachus says, "What is the Afikoman? Rav said: That they may not uproot from one gathering to another gathering. And Shmuel says: Such as Ordilayi for me and young pigeons for Abba. And R’ Chanina son of Shila and R’ Yochanan said: Such as dates, toasted wheat and walnuts.

Philo of Alexandria: On Banquets in The Contemplative Life

For some people, when they have filled themselves with strong drink, act as if they had drunk not wine but some arousing and maddening magical potion, and anything more grievous yet that can be imagined to distract the mind. They bellow and rave like wild dogs, attack and bite each other and chew off noses, ears, fingers, and some other parts of the body… For they suffer no less than what they deal out to others though they have no awareness of it, these madmen who dare to drink wine, as the comic poet says, not only for the injury of their neighbors but to their own as well. Consequently, those who but shortly before came to the banquet in good bodily form and in friendship leave soon after as foes, with bodies mutilated; some in need of advocates and judges, others of apothecaries and doctors and the help they bring. In this way they spend their whole lives ever homeless and heartless, enemies...
of their parents, their wives, and their children, enemies too of their native land, and hostile to their own selves. For a voluptuous and spendthrift life is a menace to all…

Some may perhaps approve the style of banqueting now fashionable everywhere, out of love for Italian sumptuousness and luxury, which both Greeks and barbarians have affected, making their arrangements for ostentation rather than for good cheer. Dining rooms with three and more couches made of tortoise shell or ivory or even more costly material, most of them inlaid with precious stones; coverlets wrought in genuine purple dye with gold interwoven, others in bright and varied colors to attract the eye; a multitude of drinking cups arranged according to each kind, pointed drinking horns…very elaborately tricked out for the heavier services, a proof of their hosts' wealth, as those who use them know, but in reality of their vulgarity.

Besides all this there are the varieties of sweet meat, dainties, and seasonings, slaved over by bakers and confectioners who are solicitous to please not only the sense of taste, which was a matter of necessity, but sight too through their elegant preparation…When they have become surfeited with both sight and smell, they urge [one another] to eat, with considerable praise for the preparation and the lavish expenditure of the host. Seven tables at least and more are brought in filled with everything that land, sea, rivers, and air produce, land animals, fish and birds, all choice and in prime condition, each table differing in mode of preparation and seasoning. In order that no natural species be unrepresented, the last tables brought in are loaded with fruits, in addition to those reserved for the revels and the so-called after–dinners or desserts. Then while some tables are removed empty through the insatiable appetite of those present, who gorge themselves like cormorants and eat so voraciously that they even consume the bones, other courses are mutilated and torn to pieces, and left half eaten. And when they finally give up, having crammed their bellies up to the gullet, but still unsatisfied in their lust, weary of eating, [they turn to the drink]. But why enlarge on these doings now condemned by many of the more moderate sort as unleashing the lusts whose reduction would be to our advantage? For one may well pray for what are most to be deprecated, hunger and thirst, than for the lavish abundance of food and drink found in festivities of this kind.

But since these widely known banquets are filled with such nonsense and stand self–convicted, given one's willingness to disregard conventional opinions and the widely circulated report that considers them great successes, I shall set in contrast with them the festival gatherings of those who have dedicated their own lives and themselves to knowledge and contemplation of the realities of nature, in accordance with the most sacred instructions of the prophet Moses.

When once assembled, garbed in white and radiant, but with the greatest solemnity, before reclining…they take their places in rows in orderly fashion, with eyes and hands raised up toward heaven, eyes because they were trained to gaze on things worthy of contemplation… Thus standing they pray to God that their feasting turn out to be well–pleasing and in accord with His wish…

The seating arrangement is so apportioned that the men sit apart on the right, and the women apart on the left. Perhaps it might be supposed that couches, even if not expensive ones, yet at least of a softer kind, would have been provided for people of noble birth and refinement and well practiced in philosophy. The fact is that they are plain beds of the most ordinary wood, covered with very cheap mats of native papyrus, raised slightly at the elbows that they may lean on them.

But when the banqueters have taken their places according to the arrangement that I have set forth and the attendants have taken their stand in good order ready for service, their president, after all are hushed in deep silence–here one might ask when is there not silence, but at this point there is silence even more than before, so that no one dares to utter a sound or breathe more forcefully than usual–in this silence, I say, he makes inquiry into some problem arising in the Holy Scriptures, or solves one
propounded by someone else. In so doing he is unconcerned with making a display, since he is not reaching out for a reputation for clever oratory, but—only longs to gain a more precise vision of certain matters, and having gained it not to begrudge it to those who, if not as quick-sighted as he, have at least a similar desire to learn. The interpretations of the Holy Scripture are made in accordance with the deeper meanings conveyed in allegory. For the whole of the Law seems to these people to resemble a living being with the literal commandments for its body, and for its soul the invisible meaning stored away in its words.

When it seems, then, that the president has spoken sufficiently and that, in regard to the respective goals of speaker and audience, both the discourse and the response to it were right on target, there are rounds of applause from all, as if rejoicing together in what was yet to follow.

Then the president rises and sings a hymn composed in honor of the Deity, either a new one of his own composition, or an old one by poets of an earlier age. For they have bequeathed many meters and melodies, iambic verse, hymns suited for processions, libations, and the altar, odes sung by the chorus when either stationary or dancing, well arranged metrically for its various evolutions. After him the others too sing in their places and in proper order while all the rest listen in deep silence, except when they need to chant the choral refrains, for then they all sing out, men and women alike.

**Clement of Alexandria: Paidagogos**

In feasts of reason that we have, let the wild celebrations of the holiday season have no part, or the senseless night–long parties that delight in wine drinking. The wild celebration ends up as a drunken stupor, with everyone freely confiding the troubles of his love affairs. And as for all–night drinking parties, they go hand–in–hand with the holiday celebration, and, in their wine–drinking, promote drunkenness and promiscuity. They are brazen celebrations that work deeds of shame. The exciting rhythm of flutes and harps, choruses and dances,

. . . In general, we must completely eliminate every such base sight or sound—in a word, everything immodest that strikes the senses (for this is an abuse of the sense)—if we would avoid pleasures that merely fascinate the eye or ear, and emasculate. Truly, the devious spells of syncopated tunes and of the plaintive rhythm of Carian music corrupt morals by their sensual and affected style, and insidiously inflame the passions....

It is fitting to bless the Maker of all things before we partake of food; so too, at a feast, when we enjoy His created gifts, it is only right that we sing psalms to Him. In fact, a psalm sung in unison is a blessing, and it is an act of self–restraint. . . . Even among the ancient Greeks, there was a song called the skolion which they used to sing after the manner of the Hebrew psalm at drinking parties and over their after–dinner cups. All sang together with one voice, and sometimes they passed these toasts of song along in turn; those more musical than the rest sang to the accompaniment of the lyre.

Yet, let no passionate love songs be permitted there; let our songs be hymns to God. . . . We may indeed retain chaste harmonies, but not so those tearful songs which are too florid in the overdelicate modulation of the voice they require. These last must be proscribed and repudiated by those who would retain virility of mind, for their sentimentality and ribaldry degenerate the soul.
And he should set his table nicely with lovely utensils, to the extent that he can. And he should prepare the place where he sits that he should be able to sit reclining, in the way of freedom. And my father, my savior, wrote that today, now that we do not normally recline, he should sit normally (i.e., upright), and he does not have to recline.

So wrote the Mordecai in the chapter, Arvei Pesahim, in the name of the RavYaH. And they have written that this is a minority opinion with regard to this matter. That is, that the view of all the decisors of law, is that forever reclining is required, even today.

Once, the slaying of the sheep was precious, but it is worthless now because of the life of the Lord; the death of the sheep was precious, but it is worthless now because of the salvation of the Lord; the blood of the sheep was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Spirit of the Lord; a speechless lamb was precious, but it is worthless now because of the spotless Son; the temple below was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Christ above…You have now heard the account of the model and what corresponds to it; listen also to the constitution of the mystery. What is the Passover? It gets its name from its characteristic: from suffer (patein) comes suffering (paschein). Learn therefore who is the suffering one, and who shares the suffering of the suffering one, and why the Lord is present on the earth to clothe himself with the suffering one, and carry him off to the heights of heaven.

“The mystery of the lamb which God ordered you to sacrifice as the Passover was truly a type of Christ, with whose Blood the believers, in proportion to the strength of their faith, anoint their homes, that is, them selves. You are all aware that Adam, the result of God’s creative act, was the abode of His inspiration. In the following fashion I can show that God’s precept concerning the paschal lamb was only temporary. God does not allow the paschal lamb to be sacrificed in any other place than where His name is invoked (that is, in the Temple at Jerusalem), for He knew that there would come a time, after Christ’s Passion, when the place in Jerusalem (where you sacrificed the paschal lamb) would be taken from you by your enemies, and then all sacrifices would be stopped. Moreover, that lamb which you were ordered to roast whole was a symbol of Christ’s Passion on the Cross. Indeed, the lamb, while being roasted, resembles the figure of the cross, for one spit transfixes it horizontally from the lower parts up to the head, and another pierces it across the back, and holds up its forelegs.”

Each living religion must change thus, if it is to continue to have relevance to the lives of those who accept it. But, although it is constantly changing, each religion must seem to be as unchanging as possible, for though we want our religions to be always relevant, we also want them to serve as our link to the past, the root of our sense of continuity.
This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Seder of Passover. This year [we are] here; next year in the land of Israel. This year [we are] slaves; next year [we will be] free people.