

Shelby's Seder

By Shelby Green



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
Kadesh	8
Urchatz	10
Karpas	13
YachatZ	14
Maggid - Beginning	15
-- Four Questions	21
-- Four Children	29
-- Exodus Story	34
-- Ten Plagues	37
-- Cup #2 & Dayenu	40
Rachtzah	45
Motzi-Matzah	46
Maror	48
Shulchan Oreich	49
Tzafun	51
Bareich	53
Hallel	56
Nirtzah	59
Conclusion	61
Commentary / Readings	62
Songs	64

Introduction

Passover For Secular And Humanistic Jews

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

The holiday of Passover is one of the most celebrated holidays in the Jewish calendar. Some believe that's because the holiday is primarily home-based and does not require membership or involvement in a synagogue or temple, although it can. The history of Passover, like most Jewish holidays, is multi-layered. It began with the celebration of spring, the rebirth of nature, and the birth of baby animals. The Exodus from Egypt was a later layer, which became the central and compelling story of the holiday. Although the story of the liberation of the Jews from Egypt is central in religious Judaism, remnants of the older nature holidays, both pastoral and agricultural, are easy to identify, such as the shank bone and the matzah.

Since the archaeological record is clear—there is no material evidence of the Exodus or corroborating documents of the story—Secular Humanistic Jews are left with the disturbing question: If the story isn't true, can we and do we want to continue celebrating the holiday? The themes of this holiday are universal. It is not difficult to identify with a story of liberation. There are many other reasons why we can and do continue celebrating Passover. Celebrating the holiday connects us to the Jewish people and our traditions. The theme of liberation and freedom is universal and timeless. Telling the entire story, both the myth and the history, only enriches our celebration of the creative imagination of our people at this time of year.

Rabbi Miriam Jerris from the Society for Humanistic Judaism, March 2020

Source: Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Introduction

The Humanistic Judaism Seder Plate

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

Roasted Shank Bone (Zeroah)

“Passover is the amalgamation of two ancient festivals—one called Pesach, the other Chag Hamatzot. Pesach was originally a shepherd festival, observed in the early spring when the sheep gave birth to their young. It was customary for each family to sacrifice a lamb to assure a healthy flock. The presence of the shank bone on our seder table recalls the primitive beginnings of the festival we now call Passover and impresses us with the antiquity of our holiday celebration.”

— *Rabbi Daniel Friedman, Haggadah for Passover*

Beet (Selek)

[Some substitute a roasted beet for the shank bone at vegan/vegetarian Seders.]

“The redness of the beet symbolizes the blood of the Passover sacrifice. Our tradition tells us that Moses was chosen because he showed compassion to a lamb. We will show compassion by substituting the beet for the lamb. Our compassion extends to our care and devotion to all people and creatures.”

— Barry Swan, Madrikh (Ceremonial Leader), *The Seder, Beth Haskalah*, Rochester, NY

Roasted Egg (Baytzah)

“Baytzah, the egg, is a universal symbol of birth, wholeness, and potentiality, as folk customs to this day amply attest. Curiously though, the egg on the seder plate always appears roasted. This is taken by some scholars to symbolize the other Temple sacrifices at Passover. Much more interesting, however, is the lesser known symbolic of the egg with mourning, which helps to account for the ritual, in some communities, of eating eggs directly following a burial ceremony.... This fascinating connection is almost certainly the origin of serving hard-boiled egg in

salt water prior to the rest of the festive meal.”

— Oraynu Congregation, *Roots and Branches*, Toronto, Ontario

Seeds (Z'raeem)

[Some substitute seeds for the egg at vegan/vegetarian Seders.]

“Baytsa is the seed of life. Each of us begins as a seed and grows into womanhood or manhood. The seed is our potential. It is the power of our evolutionary past and the gift of our human inheritance. But the seed is fragile.... Growing life needs warmth and love, and security. It needs guidance, hope, and vision. Birth is only the beginning. Human life needs the gentle care of others. Life needs the encouragement of family and friends, and community.”

— Barry Swan, Madrikh (Ceremonial Leader), *The Seder, Beth Haskalah*, Rochester, NY

Bitter Herbs (Maror)

“Maror is the bitterness of the bitter herb. Tradition says that this root is the reminder of the suffering of slavery. We force ourselves to taste pain so that we more readily value pleasure. Scholars inform us that our ancestors ate bitter herbs at the time of the spring festival. The sharpness of the taste reawakened their senses and made them feel as one with the revival of nature. Maror is the stimulus of life reminding us that struggle is better than boredom, that striving in the equal of serenity.”

— Rabbi Sherwin Wine, *The Humanist Haggadah*

Matzah

“Matzah is the bread of our freedom. Legend has it that when our ancestor fled Egypt they moved so quickly that the bread they baked did not have time to rise. Scholars tell us that in ancient Israel flat bread was baked from the unfermented grain of the spring harvest to celebrate the newness of the reborn earth. Matzah is the bread of dignity, preferring liberty to luxury, avoiding pretense. It is the bread of life, rejecting the cold slavery of winter, affirming the warm vitality of spring.”

— Rabbi Sherwin Wine, *The Humanist Haggadah*

Haroset

“Haroset is a mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine. Tradition tells us it is a reminder of the bricks and mortar our ancestors made as slaves in Egypt. The sweetness summons us never to forget the sweet taste of freedom. As we call to mind the sweetness in the shadow of bitterness, and pleasure in the shadow of pain, may we become more aware of the experience of opposites during our lifetime. Let us appreciate that life is full only when we experience the full range of human emotion, including its opposite polarities.”

— Rabbi Miriam Jerris, *Passover Haggadah*, Unpublished

Karpas

“Passover heralds the arrival of spring. Ancient Israelites perceived a natural connection between the rebirth of the land and the rebirth of their people. Our seder acknowledges this link with the karpas, a green vegetable... We dip the karpas in salt water, representing the tears that the Israelites shed as slaves in Egypt. In this way we combine a token of spring with the Exodus narrative.”

— Rabbi Jeffrey L. Falick, *A Humanistic Seder*

Orange (Tapooz)

“The orange is on the seder plate to remind us that the Seder is always growing and new symbols can be included in our celebration with evolving messages of their own. And to remind us that all people have a legitimate place in Jewish life, no less than an orange on a seder plate, regardless of gender or sexual identity.”

— Rabbi Peter Schweitzer, *The Liberated Haggadah*

Source: Society for Humanistic Judaism

Introduction

A Secular Humanistic Passover Blessing

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

This blessing can be recited as we light the candles to begin the Passover Seder and to celebrate the arrival of spring:

Blessed is the light in the world.

Blessed is the light within humanity.

Blessed is the light of Passover.

Barukh ha-or ba-olam

Barukh ha-or ba-adam

Barukh ha-ror ba-Pesakh

(If this blessing is different or new to you: Judaism is a constantly evolving conversation, practice, and identity. This text has been used by tens of thousands of Jews over the past fifty years.)

Source: Society for Humanistic Judaism

Kadesh

Humanistic blessing on wine

by Secular Synagogue

In joy and celebration, we come together at this seder.

Brukhim ha-adama ha-shemesh v'ha-geshem shehborim pre hagafen. Blessed are the earth, the sun, and the rains that bring forth the fruit of the wine.

Kadesh

First Cup Of Wine - The Cup of Freedom

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

**The wine of Passover is the wine of joy, the wine of love, the wine of celebration,
the wine of freedom:**

Freedom from bondage and freedom from oppression,

Freedom from hunger and freedom from want,

Freedom from hatred and freedom from fear,

Freedom to think and freedom to speak,

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn,

Freedom to love and freedom to share,

Freedom to hope and freedom to rejoice,

Soon, now, in our days, and forever.

Precious is the life within the world.

Precious in the life within us.

Praised are those who bring forth the fruit of the vine

L'chaim!

Source: The Liberated Haggadah, Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

Urchatz

Urchatz: Empowering the Silent

by T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

The beauty of Urchatz was revealed to me during a women's seder. Each participant washed the hands of another with care and *kavanah* (intentionality)—and without words. The sisterhood created in the sacred silence elevates communal consciousness. How will we utilize this state of purity? *V'ahavtah l're'echa kamoachah* - to love the other as oneself.

How will this ancient wisdom propel us forward to empower the silent? How will we elevate the hands of all those still in Mitzrayim?

--Jessica K. Shimberg, Spiritual Leader, The Little Minyan Kehilla, Columbus, OH; ALEPH Rabbinical Program Class of 2018

The first time I heard a trafficking survivor speak many years ago, she told the story of her parents trafficking her for sex from the time she was a young girl until she was an adult. I sat in horror, listening to her calm recollection of how both her mother and father trafficked her, sometimes leaving her for days at a time in a makeshift brothel when she was barely old enough to read and write.

Her story was my T'ruah – a decibel defying call to action to open doors, pull back curtains, and shout from the rooftops the pain and suffering of trafficked individuals in our midst.

The call guides my work at the National Council of Jewish Women, alongside incredible and passionate advocates around the country, to raise awareness about trafficking in the United States where children are bought and sold in every state, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And the call informs my work to create lasting social change through legislative advocacy – working with lawmakers to address the systemic issues that allow trafficking to exist, including lack of

education and opportunities, and passing legislation to reform the child welfare system which effectively serves as a supply chain to traffickers.

The sound of the shofar on Passover reminds me not only of one woman's unspeakable journey, but of my greater responsibility to ensure my call becomes a collective call to action for all of us in the Jewish community.

-- Jody Rabhan, Director of Washington Operations, National Council of Jewish Women

Source: The Other Side of the Sea: T'ruah's Haggadah on Fighting Modern Slavery

Urchatz

Hand Washing Coloring Page

by Haggadot



WASH YOUR HANDS

Source: Haggadot.com

Karpas

Secular Karpas

by Herbert Levine

Choose from among the spring vegetables on the Seder table and dip one in salt water.

The spring vegetable reminds us to pay attention to this season, the time in the northern hemisphere when we again see flowers blooming and hear birds chirping. The salt water in which we dip the vegetable recalls the salty tears our ancestors shed when they were enslaved as well the tears of those today who are oppressed or enslaved. The blessing we recite heightens our awareness and gratitude for this moment, when we are free to celebrate together.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה עוֹלָמְנוּ, יְיָ יְחִיד וְיָמִינוּ

בוֹרָא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

Ba-rookh a-ta o-la-may-noo, ya-cheed u-m'yoo-chad, bo-ray p'ree ha-a-da-ma.

Blessed are you, unique world of ours, for producing the fruit of the earth.

Some households serve a salad of seasonal vegetables at this point, to take the edge off people's hunger and thus to allow greater ease for telling and discussing the Passover story.

Source: Herbert Levine

Yachatz

Breaking the Matzah

by Machar Congregation

Leader: We have drunk the wine and tasted the special foods of the Passover celebration. They symbolize our attachment to the traditions of our culture, to freedom, and to life. To remind us of these values as we go back out into the world, at the end of our festival meal, we shall return to have a final taste of matzah - our symbol of suffering and liberation, of renewal in nature and humanity.

I am breaking this matzah into two pieces. One half I will return to the table.

[Leader breaks a matzah, sets down half, and holds up half as the afikoman.]

The other half I will wrap in a napkin and save until the end of the meal. This piece is called the 'Afikoman'

Without it the seder cannot end, so I must make sure that it does not get lost. Of course, I am very forgetful, so I may need help finding it if I do misplace it. In fact, I manage to lose it every year - it ends up seemingly "hidden" (tsaphun). So just figure that I'll be asking all you younger folks to help me find it pretty soon.

Source: Machar

Maggid - Beginning

Why We Celebrate

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

The story we recall tonight is the product of Israelite imagination. It does not describe actual events.

There are aspects that are somewhat disturbing. Some parts of the narrative even suggest that Pharaoh is not completely responsible for his own behavior. Just when it seems that he might relent, the Israelites' God actually "hardens his heart!"

In any case, both Pharaoh and the God of the Israelites are responsible for much torment. To our modern sensibilities, neither of them comes out looking very good.

Yet if we strip away these and other problematic elements, we are left with a theme that continues to inspire: the thirst for freedom.

How many peoples of the earth have suffered under the taskmaster's lash? How many continue to live in misery?

The slavery and redemption described in our legend may not depict actual events, but they do portray real human shortcomings. They remind us that at their worst, people exploit each other with little regard for their shared humanity.

Our legend also portrays real human heroism. It reminds us that, like Moses or the midwives, Shifra and Pu'ah, when people are at their best they are capable of performing great deeds of valor inspired by empathy and loving kindness.

The history of the Jews has frequently revealed the worst in people. As a tiny nation, Jews were vulnerable to countless cruelties. When it was possible, they fled in search of safer homes. But it was not always possible.

Their history of suffering came to an awful climax in the twentieth century when they fell victim to a horrifying genocide. Yet today, for the first time in millennia, Jewish communities are flourishing throughout the world.

Does this not call for a special responsibility?

Sadly, we do not find that adversity leads inevitably to an elevated ethic of compassion. Sometimes pain creates so much bitterness that those who were once oppressed now become the oppressors. We must make every effort to overcome this tendency.

Perhaps our Seder can help us to do just that.

Let us strive to translate its core idea into reality. Let our celebration of freedom encourage us to double and re-double our efforts to ease the lot of those who have yet to taste true freedom.

Unfortunately, there is no difficulty finding such people. They may be found in every nation of the world, including our own. They are children who go hungry each day. They are women who are enslaved to human traffickers. They are men who labor ceaselessly for inhumane wages. They are countless. They are legion.

Our path to Tikkun Olam — repair of the world — begins when we each recognize the power of our individual contributions.

No one person can change the world. To do so we must stand together. Once we begin to do our share, we will understand how what each of us does can ripple forward until it joins with the efforts of others to form great waves of change. It requires no supernatural miracles. It requires only that we respond to the best part of our humanity.

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Rabbi Jeffrey L. Falick
Birmingham Temple Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

Source: Rabbi Jeffrey L. Falick

Maggid - Beginning

A Modern Maggid

by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick

This is a supplement prepared by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick, a secular humanistic rabbi, addressing the modern archeological discoveries about the exodus and origins of the Israelites. It blends the ancient story with the newly uncovered information to help keep the seder relevant even for those who do not regard the Torah as a history book.

Leader: The great scientist Carl Sagan wrote: Just when we've finally understood something [that] scientists are talking about, they tell us it isn't any longer true. And even if it is, there's a slew of new things - things we never heard of, things difficult to believe, things with disquieting implications - that they claim to have discovered recently. Scientists can be perceived as toying with us....

Sagan was writing about physics, but he just as well might have been referring to historical archeology. Less than 100 years ago, scholars still believed that the basics of our Exodus tale were true in most details. But then they started digging. And soon it became clear that the story we had told ourselves for millennia was not true in its details.

Together: That's when they made an astonishing discovery: There had been no mass Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites were natives of the Land of Israel. They were Canaanites themselves!

Leader: Our ancestors were Canaanites living in their own land. But they were not free and Egypt was not innocent. For while they might not have been slaves **IN** Egypt, we discovered that they were slaves **TO** Egypt.

What history revealed was a story every bit as wondrous as the myth of Moses and

the Exodus. It is a narrative of Egyptian conquest of the Land of Israel and how the Pharaoh Ahmose and his descendants established a crippling system of corvée labor among the peasants of the land.

Together: It is the story of kings of Canaan who bowed to the Pharaohs. They forced their own people to abandon family fields and to work their royal lands.

Reader: From their midst arose bands of rebels who led a peasant revolt and soon Israel was freed from the yoke of the Egyptians. Archeology shows that tribes and towns began to form, bringing together the disparate rebels. In a long, complicated and gradual process they became known as the Israelites. They did not conquer the land from abroad, but they fought fiercely to unite their brothers and sisters so that they might thrive in their homeland.

Together: Here's another question on a night of questions. Why did people who were native to the Land of Israel tell a story in which they were outsiders?

Reader: Exoduses from Egypt to Israel and back were common occurrences. The Nile provided a more constant source of water than Israel's rains. This ongoing dependence was a kind of servitude, too. In short, Egypt dominated everything in the entire region for generations.

Perhaps the real story was too complicated and perhaps, like us, the Israelites needed a clear and simple narrative in order to appreciate the significance of freedom and to celebrate their special attachment to a land that was always claimed and conquered by others.

Together: The details are buried in history, but history gives wings to legends and legends yield heroes like Moses.

Reader: Over hundreds and hundreds of years, the story of this successful rebellion and the freedom it brought transformed into the tale of one great man, dedicated to justice and liberation for his people. Like the rebels of history, he challenged a Pharaoh and brought freedom to his people. And he came to

represent the hundreds or perhaps thousands who fought to be free...

Together: It is his story - now our story - that we tell tonight.

Rabbi Jeffrey L. Falick, Revised for Pesach, 2011/5771

<http://www.TheAtheistRabbi.com>

Source: Written by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick, Miami Beach, FL

-- Four Questions

Arba Qushyot - Four Questions (English & Transliteration)

by Machar Congregation

Mah nishtanah ha-lailah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-leilot? mi-kol ha-leilot?

Why is this night different from all other nights?

She-b-khol ha-leilot 'anu 'okhlin hamets u-matsah, hamets u-matsah, ha-lailah ha-zeh ha-lailah ha-zeh kulo matsah?

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

She-b-khol ha-leilot 'anu 'okhlin sh"ar y'raqot, sh"ar y'raqot, ha-lailah ha-zeh, ha-lailah ha-zeh maror, maror?

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

She-b-khol ha-leilot 'ein 'anu matbilin 'aphilu pa'am 'ehat, 'aphilu pa'am 'ehat, ha-lailah ha-zeh ha-lailah ha-zeh sh'tei ph'amim?

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

She-b-khol ha-leilot 'anu 'okhlin bein yoshvin u-vein m'subin, bein yoshvin u-vein m'subin, ha-lailah ha-zeh, ha-lailah ha-zeh kulanu m'subin?

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

Leader:

As we continue our seder, we will answer these four questions about what makes this night different from all other nights.

Source: Machar

-- Four Questions

Our Four Questions

by Open



Our Four Questions

- **What is freedom to you?**
- **What makes you feel free?**
- **What questions do you have about Passover?**
- **Who is your freedom hero?**

 **ANSWER BELOW**

THE OPEN TEMPLE 

What is freedom to you?

What makes you feel free?

What questions do you have about Passover?

Who is your freedom hero?

Source: The Open Temple

-- Four Questions

Magid

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

MAGGID - STORY

These questions are important. But before I answer them, let me tell you the story of Jewish hope.

Our ancestors lived in the land of Israel. But their children have wandered the earth to look for freedom and dignity. Our roots are in Israel. But our branches travel the surface of the globe.

Some of our ancestors traveled to Egypt. It was a time of famine and they were hungry. The king of Egypt welcomed them and gave them food and shelter. In later years, an unfriendly king became the Pharaoh of Egypt. He made them slaves and burdened them with heavy work. But they resisted despair. Choosing hope, they fled from Egypt. They returned to Israel and created a free nation. Passover celebrates their will to live.

Our ancestors also traveled to America. The rulers of Europe were often cruel and hateful to the Jews. They drove them from land to land and filled their lives with terror. Our mothers and fathers did not despair. Having heard of a free land across the sea, they pursued their dream. They endured the danger of long voyages and unknown places before they reached their destination. Their exodus from persecution was an epic drama. Never before in the history of our people had so many traveled so far to find liberty. Because of their foresight, we are here tonight to celebrate our freedom in a free land.

We cannot forget the bold rebirth of the state of Israel. What began as a vision of dreamers became a reality of practical men and women. Some came to avoid hatred. Others came to build love and unity. They traveled from the four corners of

the earth seeking what no other land could give them; the power of roots and the dignity of belonging.

The search for freedom is also the will to live. The exodus from Egypt is one of many victories. In every century we have chosen to survive. Passover celebrates this undying resolution that unites our past with our present and our present with our future.

Source: Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine

-- Four Questions

4 questions & answers

by Alida Liberman

FOUR QUESTIONS

Traditionally, the youngest person present asks:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

1. On all other nights we eat either bread or matsah. Why, on this night, do we eat only matsah?
2. On all other nights we eat herbs of any kind. Why, on this night, do we eat only bitter herbs?
3. On all other nights, we do not dip our herbs even once. Why, on this night, do we dip them twice?
4. On all other nights, we eat either sitting or leaning. Why, on this night, do we eat while leaning?

A different guest readers each ANSWER:

1. MATZAH:

Matzah is the symbol of our affliction and our freedom. Legend has it that when Moses and his followers fled Egypt, they moved so quickly that the bread they baked did not have time to rise. However, scholars have noted that long before the Jews celebrated Passover, farmers of the Middle East celebrated Khag Hamatsot, the festival of unleavened bread, at this time of year. This was a festival where unleavened bread was made from the new grain harvest that took place at this time of the year. The old fermented dough was thrown out so that last year's grain would not be mixed with this year's. Therefore, the new season began with

the eating of unleavened bread--matsah. Later on, the Jewish people incorporated this agricultural festival into the celebration of freedom and renewal we now call Passover. Let us all eat a piece of matzah.

2. BITTER HERBS

Tradition says that this root is to remind us of the time of our slavery. We force ourselves to taste pain so that we may more readily value pleasure. Scholars inform us that bitter herbs were eaten at the Spring festival in ancient times. The sharpness of the taste awakened the senses and made the people feel at one with nature's revival. Thus, the horseradish is the stimulus of life, reminding us that struggle is better than the complacent acceptance of injustice. Let us all eat bitter herbs.

3. DIPPING

The first time, the salty taste reminds us of the tears we cried when we were slaves. The second time, the salt water and the green help us to remember the ocean and green plants and the Earth, from which we get air and water and food that enable us to live. Let us all dip the parsley in salt water twice.

4. RECLINING

This question goes back to ancient times in Rome, when it was the custom for rich people to eat while lying on a couch leaning on one elbow as slaves and servants fed them. The Jewish people thought of this relaxed type of eating as a sign of freedom and prosperity, so they would lean to one side eating at the Seder on Passover, the festival of freedom. Today, we who are free eat while sitting up, even at Passover, but the question remains in the service as a reminder of how it was when our people longed for freedom.

MORE QUESTIONS:

Reader: We have answered the four traditional questions, but there are still more

questions to be answered. There are other special foods on our Seder plate: a sweet condiment (kharoset), a roasted shank bone (z'ro-ah), and a roasted egg (baytsa). Why are they here?

A different guest reads each answer:

Charoset: Apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine are combined to make this sweet condiment. It is the color of clay or mortar. It reminds us of the bricks and mortar that the Israelites are said to have made when they built the Pharaohs' palaces and cities. At the same time, the taste of kharoset is sweet, and it reminds us of the sweetness of freedom. Let us now all eat kharoset on a piece of matsah.

Shank bone: The bone represents the lamb that was the special Paschal sacrifice on the eve of the exodus from Egypt, and annually, on the afternoon before Passover, in the Holy Temple.

Egg: The egg represents life. Each of us begins as an egg and grows to adulthood. The egg reminds us of our evolutionary past and the gifts of human inheritance. But the egg is fragile. It represents potential that can be destroyed. Left alone, it would perish. Growing life needs warmth and love and security, guidance, hope, and vision. To achieve their full potential, human beings need the support and encouragement of family and community. The egg symbolizes the fragility and interdependence of life.

Source: A Humanist Modern Version of Haggadah, Eszter Hargittai

-- Four Children

Four More Questions

by Jonah Moos

ANOTHER SET OF ANSWERS

Traditionally the Torah speaks of the four types of sons to describe the four types of Jews. Tonight we will speak of four different people using this ritual to share their spirituality: (1) the Traditionalist, who is active, knowledgeable and involved in his or her Judaism, (2) the Humanist or Secular Jew, who has a sense of the Jewish community that drives his or her social activism, (3) the Buddhist, whose heritage is at least partly Jewish, but who seeks enlightenment through other paths, (4) the Friend, a non-Jewish person interested enough to join us this evening. Each of these represents attitudes and questions concerning the nature of this ritual and the nature of being a Jew in today's world.

Traditionalist: Why do we find a need for this non-traditional Seder? We need a Seder that articulates the Divine in Creation, in Nature, in Love and in both traditional Judaism and Eastern Philosophies. Although our theologies may differ, we are all sharing a universal experience that leads to an increased awareness of Ayn Sof in our lives. One of the messages of Jewish history is that we are a chosen people when we choose Hashem. What has been unsaid, is that we are special because everyone is a special child of God. This non-traditional Seder seeks to include everyone in the Telling of the liberation from Egypt. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord, and shall be my people; and I will dwell within your midst. Zechariah 2:11

Humanist: Why are we having a Seder at all? Jewish tradition speaks of working for tikkun olam, the healing of the world. Jews have often been at the forefront of social change movements. It is time we recognize that our Jewish heritage can motivate us toward inner work that may result in increased social justice. As Jews,

we can be leaders in recognizing and sharing the process of healing the pain of the world. The Passover story is the story of our ongoing struggle for liberation and this ritual is a celebration of past liberation struggles of Jews and of all people. The ritual is a renewal of our commitment to being part of the ongoing process of liberation from the many internal and external Pharaohs who would oppress us.

Buddhist: What does the Seder mean to you? To be fully who we are, we must claim all parts of ourselves. Only when we quiet our minds, and recognize and acknowledge our internal oppression can we truly work to end it. The Dalai Lama says that the first step in changing the world is trying to improve ourselves, which “brings change within yourself. That will help change your family. From there it just gets bigger and bigger. Everything we do has some effect, some impact.” We live in a world of ideas, and when ideas are shared they spread. When others incorporate peaceful and compassionate ideas into their own lives and belief systems, those ideas become much stronger. This Seder is about sharing and reinforcing the essential truths that comes from all spiritual paths. Every human being desires freedom from suffering. Having learned that it is possible to escape from suffering, we are called to participate in the healing and transformation of all humanity. This message is essential to humanity’s growth and development. Differing cultures and backgrounds necessitate many paths to guide people to enlightenment.

Friend: Where do I fit into this festival? The story of Passover is the story of an ongoing struggle of liberation. In various ways, we are all committed to moving towards freedom and enlightenment. As non-Jewish people joining in the celebration of a Jewish holiday of freedom, we look at our own heritage and our struggle for freedom. We see our shared oppression as women, as men, as people of color, as _____, or as members of any other oppressed group. We hear the call to work for freedom for everyone.

Source: Haggadah for Jews and Buddhists

-- Four Children

Four Children

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

The Passover Seder has a series of 'fours' in its text. There are four cups of wine, four questions, and a discussion about four types of children. People throughout the ages have pondered - who are the four children? Are they among us? Are they within us? This reading about the four children is different from many others.

Our version deals with the continuing struggle in the Middle East between Israel and her Arab neighbors.

The Angry Child asks, "Why should I compromise?"

And we answer that we choose the route of compromise because the alternative is the mutual destruction, both moral and physical, of our two people. If we fail to compromise we will lose a vision of the future for our children.

The Naive Child asks, "Why can't we just love each other?"

And we answer that neither of us can live as if history has not happened. Unfortunately, too much blood has already been shed on both sides. It takes time to build trust.

The Frightened Child asks, "How can I be safe?"

And we answer that we are both afraid. Neither of us will be safe until the other is safe.

The Wise Child asks, "Why don't we share the land in peace?"

We will hope for, and work toward, peace in the Middle East.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

-- Four Children

Fifth Child

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

On this night, we also remember a fifth child. This is the child of the Holocaust who did not survive to ask, "Why was the night of Passover, 1943, different from all other Passover nights?" And so, we ask for that child.

Pesakh 1943 is a historic date in modern Jewish history. At that time began the revolt against the Nazis who had come into the Ghetto of Warsaw to complete the deportation of the remaining Jews. Few conflicts in history can compare with the impossibly unequal battle of the Warsaw Ghetto. On one side was the tremendous power of the German Army and the Gestapo. On the other was the remnant of Warsaw's starving Jews - 40,000 civilians led by the Jewish Fighting Organization, several hundred poorly armed young men and women. Confined in a small area within the Ghetto, they were unable to maneuver beyond a few city blocks.

Nevertheless, the Jews fought back for 42 days. A shot on Nalevki Street at dawn of April 20, 1943, the first day of Pesakh, was the signal for the revolt. The fighting units, concealed in nearby bunkers, attics and cellars, began firing at Nazi patrols. The Germans retreated. On that day Mordecai Anielewitch, the Commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization, wrote: "The dream of my life has come true. I have had the good fortune to witness Jewish defense in the Ghetto in all its greatness and glory."

The Jewish fighters knew in their hearts that it was an impossible struggle, that the odds were too great. But they hoped against hope and kept on fighting. As the days passed, the situation grew more and more desperate. One by one the defense positions were wiped out. On May 15th the leadership of the Jewish resistance perished in the bunker at 18 Mila Street. No one surrendered.

But for weeks thereafter small groups battled the Nazis from behind rubble and wreckage. And although the Germans were certain that not one Jew would escape from the Ghetto, several hundred did. They succeeded in making their way through the underground sewers and eventually joined Partisan bands in the woods and forests. Similar acts of resistance took place in Minsk, Vilna, Bialystock, and in cities and towns in Poland. Many of the escaped Partisans later testified at the war trials of the Nazi leaders.

The uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto will be a shining light in our history as a fight that was waged for the honor and dignity of our people. We were slaves in Egypt...and slaves in the death camps of fascism. We have much to remember.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

-- Exodus Story

Entering Mitzrayim

by Elke Reva Sudin



Source: Original

-- Exodus Story

Secular Maggid

by Herbert Levine

THE SLAVES GET REPARATIONS

The Egyptians concluded that all these terrible things were the consequence of not letting the Hebrews go, as Moses and Aaron had demanded. Under a lot of popular pressure, the Pharaoh capitulated, telling Moses and Aaron that the Hebrews could finally leave Egypt. The Hebrew slaves knew that they deserved to be paid for their years of unpaid labor, so they went throughout the cities of Egypt asking for their back pay.

Your son is dead, your cattle are dead, your fields are barren. Why? Because you treated us like dirt and the land too.

You've dug it all up and forced us to build your massive garrisons and storehouses. No more. These plagues are your punishment for what you've done to us and to the land.

All my life and my parents' lives and my grandparents' lives we've worked for you under armed guard -- without pay.

Now you can't wait for us to go, you say we have to be gone by morning.

Well, we're not leaving here without what's coming to us.

Give us the gold and silver you've got in your house and we'll be even.

The Egyptians paid them off, hoping never to see them again.

THE EGYPTIANS ARE DEFEATED

But seven days later, Pharaoh changed his mind and commanded his cavalry to chase after the Hebrews. Pharaoh and the army encountered them on the shores of the sea, where fierce winds disturbed the normal tides. The Israelites saw their chance and took it.

The sea is in front of us and Pharaoh's war chariots are behind us!

What are we supposed to do now?

There's no time to go around.

We'll just have to wade into the water.

Maybe it will be OK.

Yes, it will be.

Follow me!

They marched into the sea while the winds pushed the waters aside, allowing them to walk through on dry land. But when the Pharaoh and his army rode after them, the winds reversed the tide, drowning the Egyptians, leaving Egypt leaderless and in chaos.

Source: Herbert Levine

-- Ten Plagues

Ten Plagues

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

It saddens us that any struggle for freedom involves suffering. Generally, we drink wine to rejoice. Therefore, for each plague we take out a drop of wine from our cup. This way we do not rejoice over the suffering of others. The plagues that, we are told, afflicted the Egyptians were:

(Take a drop of wine out of your cup for each plague)

ALL:

1- blood

2- frogs

3- vermin

4- beasts

5- boils

6- cattle disease

7- locusts

8- hail

9- darkness

10- slaying of first born

Our world today is still greatly troubled. For these plagues, let us repeat the same ceremony.

(Take a drop of wine out of your cup for each plague)

ALL:

1- war

2- illiteracy

3- hunger

4- crime

5- bigotry

6- injustice

7- inequality

8- tyranny

9- poverty

10- ignorance

Many people perished during the plagues and the suffering was great. Pharaoh remained obstinate. However, with the tenth plague, the death of the first born, a great cry went up throughout Egypt. On that night, the Hebrews marked their door posts with the blood of the paschal lamb so the Angel of Death would 'pass over' their homes. Thus, the name Passover for this holiday. Pharaoh finally ordered Moses to take the Jewish people out of Egypt.

After the slaves hurriedly left, the Pharaoh had a change of heart and the Egyptian army pursued them. Legend has it that when Moses and his people came to the Red Sea, the waters parted to allow them to cross. The Egyptians followed and were engulfed when the waters returned. Thus, the Exodus from Egypt was complete.

Whether the waters actually parted overlooks the inner meaning of this event; when the Hebrews reached the edge of the desert and found the courage to continue, the Sea of Obstacles parted and they walked toward freedom.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

-- Cup #2 & Dayenu

Second Cup

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

(raise second cup of wine)

The fate of every Jew is bound up with the fate of the Jewish people and the destiny of the Jewish people cannot be separated from the destiny of all humanity. Let us drink this cup of wine to symbolize our pledge to break the bonds of slavery for all who are not free.

L'CHAIM!

(Drink the second cup of wine)

At this point in our festivity, let us reflect upon the significance of Passover. Passover celebrates freedom. Can we be free while others are not? If there are people anywhere who are oppressed, then we cannot celebrate Passover with a clear conscience.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
Injustice to any people is a threat to justice to ALL people.
I will not remain silent in the face of injustice."
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

-- Cup #2 & Dayenu

Dayenu

by Secular Synagogue

At the seder we say/sing that:

If we had been brought out of Egypt, Dayenu

If we had received Torah, Dayenu

If we had received Manna, Dayenu

Etc.

Dayenu means “it would have been enough.” The idea is to be grateful for what one has; to count our blessings. Think of dayenu as a template for gratitude.

But think, too, about how actually it is to enough to be satisfied when there is still suffering and oppression. Some say “lo dayenu,” meaning, “it is not enough.”

When we are free and others are not, lo dayenu

We work to find the balance between being grateful for what is right with our lives and with the world, and also striving for more that fulfills us and more that increases justice in the world.

From Marti Keller:

DAH YAY NU “ It would have been enough.”

Everyone Join in Song (we will just sing the Chorus)

EE-LOO HO-TSI AH-NOO

HO-TSI AH-NOO MEE-MITS-RAY-YEEM

HO-TSI AH-NOO MEE MITS-RA-YEEM

DAH YAY-NOO.

DAH-DAH YAY-NOO, DAH DAH YAY-NOO

DAH DAH YAY-NOO, DAH=YAY NOO DAH YAY NOO

Dayenu- the recognition of and giving of blessings of life, no matter what trials. No matter what we have been given to work with.

It is after the telling of the parting of the Sea of Reeds and the Egyptian army has been turned back, after Miriam, Moses' sister, dances as she crosses over the shallow river bed that the Dayenu is sung. We are told that the Dayenu is a blessing is for all that led to the deliverance of the Jewish people. The traditional Dayenu has 15 verses, shaped and modified over the centuries:15 different thanks and praises.

Dayenu. Dayenu. Dayenu.

One rabbi has said that it is a Zen Koan in the midst of a bible story. Even before we are freed, we are given enough, we are given what we need. In the story of the Exodus, even before we are given the tablets of laws, we are given enough, we are given what we need. Even before we cross into the Promised Land, even if we never reach it, we are given what we need.

The story of the Exodus, the Passover myth, the Dayenu blessings, remind us of the difference between freedom—being released from captivity or slavery from being physically bound or imprisoned—and true liberation from all the emotional and social oppressions that keep us captive. The kind of liberation that finally frees us from just surviving, the most superficial safety, and allows for the kind of salvation and redemption that in freeing us, frees the whole world...

As one Passover Hagadaah urges us- we can sing Dah Yay Nu to celebrate each step we take toward liberation as if it were enough and then start on the next step.

We can say today, though, these gifts are not enough unless we apply these lessons to our daily lives. The freedom struggle continues and there are many wrongs we must right before we are fully satisfied. *

Full liberation for all.

Passover Haggadah Congregation Kol Chaim 1999

Source: Rabbi Denise Handlarski

-- Cup #2 & Dayenu

Humanist Dayenu

by Machar Congregation

Just as the food of our Passover seder nourishes our bodies, our sharing and our reflections at this seder uplift our spirits. Let us celebrate the bounty of our lives by singing our version of that old favorite "DAYENU."

DAYENU

["Dayenu" means "Enough for us."]

`Im yesh la-nu herute-nu (3x)

dayenu.

Chorus:

Day, day-enu, day, day-enu, day, day-enu, dayenu, dayenu. (repeat)

`Im yesh la-nu simhate-nu (3x)

dayenu.

Chorus

`Im yesh la-nu tiqva-te-nu (3x)

daye-nu.

Chorus

If we have our freedom, it is enough for us.

If we have our happy occasion (our seder), it is enough for us.

If we have our hope, it is enough for us.

Source: Machar Congregation

Rachtzah

Secular Rachtzah

by Haggadot

Once again, we pass around a clean bowl of water to pour over our fingers and a towel for drying. This time we make a blessing.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה עוֹלָמְנוּ, יְהוָה יְחִיד וּמְיֻחָד,

אֲשֶׁר לִמַּד אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֹתָנוּ

עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

Blessed are you, unique world of ours,

for teaching our ancestors and us

to make a sacred custom of washing our hands before meals.

Source: Adapted from A Secular Seder by Herbert J. Levine

Motzi-Matzah

Matsah - Unleavened Bread

by Machar Congregation

[Matsah held up for all to see.]

MATSAH - Why do we eat matsah?

Matsah is the symbol of our affliction and our freedom. Legend has it that when Moses and his followers fled Egypt, they moved so quickly that the bread they baked did not have time to rise.

However, scholars have noted that long before the Jews celebrated Passover, Middle Eastern farmers celebrated a spring festival of unleavened bread. This was a festival where unleavened bread was made from the fresh barley grain newly harvested at this time of the year.

The old fermented dough was thrown out so that last year's grain would not be mixed with this year's. Therefore, the new season began with the eating of unleavened bread - matsah. Later on, the Jewish people incorporated this agricultural festival into the celebration of freedom and renewal we now call Passover.

Leader:

Let us now say a blessing for the matsah.

A BLESSING FOR THE UNLEAVENED BREAD

NOTSI' MATSAH- LET US BRING FORTH MATSAH

Leader:

Notsi' matsah-lehem min ha-`arets
- k'dei she-nistapeq v'-nit-kalkelkula-nu.

Everyone:

**Let us bring forth matsah - food from the land -
so we all may be satisfied and sustained.**

Leader:

Let us all now eat a piece of matsah.

Source: Machar Congregation

Maror

Maror - The Bitter Herb

by Machar Congregation

[Maror held up for all to see.]

MAROR--Why do we eat maror?

Tradition says that this bitter herb is to remind us of the time of our slavery. We force ourselves to taste pain so that we may more readily value pleasure.

Scholars inform us that bitter herbs were eaten at spring festivals in ancient times. The sharpness of the taste awakened the senses and made the people feel at one with nature's revival. Thus, maror is the stimulus of life, reminding us that struggle is better than the complacent acceptance of injustice.

Leader:

As a blessing for the maror, let us all sing this song about striving to be fully human.

Then we will all take a taste of horseradish on a piece of matsah.

LIH'YOT 'ISH - TO BE FULLY HUMAN (Mishnah, Pirquei `Avot 2.6)

Ba-maqomshe-`ein'anashim, hishtaddel lih'yot `ish.

Where people are less than human, strive to be fully human.

Source: Machar Congregation

Shulchan Oreich

Orange

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

You will not find an orange included in any ancient Haggadah. It is a brand new tradition and it demonstrates just how quickly new traditions can spread.

Its origins lie in a fable that some university students invented for a feminist Haggadah in the 1980s. It tells the story of a girl who asks a rabbi about the placeir Judaism for a lesbian. The angry rabbi retorts, "There's as much room for a lesbian in Judaism as there is for a crust of bread on the Seder plate."

When a prominent professor of Jewish studies came across the students' Haggadah, it gave her an idea for a new ritual. Placing bread on her Seder plate was out of the question. This, she believed, who suggest that people who were different violated Judaism. But maybe another symbol might do the trick. She selected the orange, noting that "it suggests the fruitfulness for all Jews when lesbians and gay men are contributing and active members of Jewish life."

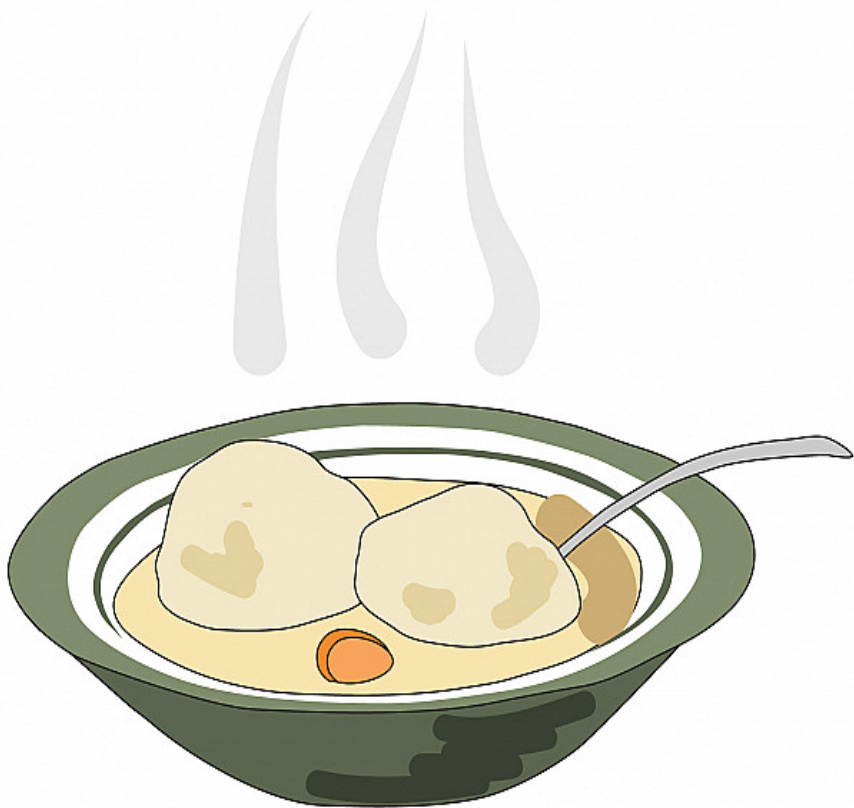
Today thousands of Jews around the world place an orange on their Seder plate. It serves as a proud statement of inclusivity.

Source: Rabbi Jeff Falick

Shulchan Oreich

Let's Eat!

by Haggadot



Source: Original Illustration from Haggadot.com

Tzafun

Children and the Afikoman

by Noemie Rosner



Refugee and French Jewish orphans celebrate Passover together in 1947.

Source: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Tzafun

Search for Afikomen

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

The Afikomen is the last piece of matza to be eaten at the Seder. It is part of the middle matza that has been hidden at the beginning of the Seder. The Afikomen must be eaten before the Seder can be completed.

Traditionally, the children try to find it and are then in a good position to bargain with the leader to get it back. This symbolizes the right of children to be heard and to be involved in family decisions and of their importance in our future.

Although everyone will eat a last piece of matzah, the search for the afikomen will be different because of the number of children present.

Song: Hiney Mah Tov

Hiney mah tov

U-mah-na-tim

She-vet a-khim-gam-ya-khad

Behold how good and how pleasing for brothers (people) to sit together in unity.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

Bareich

Miriam's Cup by Miriam Jerris

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

The legends of our Rabbinic sages teach us that a miraculous well of healing waters accompanied the children of Israel throughout their journey in the desert, providing them with water. This well was given to Miriam, the prophetess, to honor her bravery and devotion to the Jewish people. According to the legend, both Miriam and her well provided comfort and gave our forbearers the faith and confidence to overcome the hardships of the Exodus. We fill Miriam's cup with water to honor her contribution to the Jewish people. Like Miriam, Jewish women in all generations have been essential for the continuity of our people. Women passed down songs and stories, rituals and recipes, from mother to daughter, from generation to generation. Let us each fill the cup of Miriam with water from our own glasses, so that our children may continue to draw from the strength and wisdom of our heritage.

We place Miriam's cup on our Seder table to honor the important and often unrecognized role of Jewish women in our tradition and history, to tell their stories that have been too sparingly told.

Source: Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Bareich

Third Cup

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

Let us drink the third cup of wine to the heroism of the Jewish fighters who fought in the ghettos, the forests, on the war fronts together with the righteous gentiles and all of decent humanity to stop the curse of fascism from engulfing the earth. Let us be true to their memory by being ever vigilant to the cause of peace and freedom in our land and throughout the world.

L'CHAIM!

In the sacred memory of the twelve million people who died in the holocaust we light this candle. And we light it also for the future...our future in a world of peace, justice and freedom.

(Light Candle)

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

Bareich

Gratitude for the meal

by Secular Synagogue

The Bareich section of the seder is a reminder to pause to be grateful for the meal we have eaten. Sometimes people speed through blessings to check the box of bareich but let's take a special moment to be mindful.

We are grateful for the earth that provides beauty, sustenance, and abundance.

We are grateful for the farmers, the grocer store workers, all those who work to ensure food arrives at our table.

We are grateful for those who prepared our food.

We are grateful for those who share our meal and our seder.

We are grateful for those who work to ensure food access and security for all.

We are grateful for our food, nourishing us in body and soul.

Hallel

Elijah the Prophet

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

On the Seder night, we open the door for Elijah the Prophet, and we place a cup of wine on the table especially for him.

Our hopes have long been centered around Elijah since legends suggest that he will herald the time of complete human freedom. But he will come only when people have prepared the way for him. This simply means that we, the all, are Elijah. We must liberate ourselves from prejudice and injustice. We must truly listen to each other for better understanding. We need to remember our goal of creating a world where all people will be free, just as we were liberated from slavery in ancient Egypt.

Song: Eliyahu Ha'Navi

E-lee-ah-hu hah-nah-vee

E-lee-ah-hu hah-tish-bee

E-lee-ah-hu A-lee-ah-hu

E-lee-ah-hu ha-gil-a-dee

Bim-hay-rah B'yah-may-nu

Yah-voh a-lay-nu

Eem mah-she-ach ben-David

Eem-mah-she-ach ben-David

E-lee-ah-hu hah-nah-vee

E-lee-ah-hu hah-tish-bee

E-lee-ah-hu A-lee-ah-hu

E-lee-ah-hu ha-gil-a-dee

Translation: Elijah the Prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the Gileadite, Come to us

quickly and in our day.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

Hallel

Fourth Cup Of Wine

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

FOURTH CUP OF WINE

(The Cup of Responsibility, *The Liberated Haggadah*, Rabbi Peter Schweitzer)

Tonight we are free, while so many remain enslaved.

Let us not stand idly by.

Let us work to bring them freedom too.

Tonight we are free, while so many remain embittered.

Let us not stand idly by.

Let us work to bring them gladness too.

For freedom does not come by chance.

It is born of earnest struggle.

It is the gift of life, which we must now bring to others.

Precious is the life within the world.

Precious in the life within us.

Praised are those who bring forth the fruit of the vine

L'chaim!

Nirtzah

Land of Milk and Honey

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

For centuries, at the Seder's conclusion, Jews repeated the phrase "next year in Jerusalem". They longed for their homeland. It would be comforting to end this story in the land of milk and honey. But, in fact, there will be no land of milk and honey until all groups can put aside their differences and come together in peace.

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

Nirtzah

Nirtsah - Fulfillment

by Machar Congregation

Leader: *[Announces the name of the child or children who found the `afikoman.]*

Let us continue our seder by eating one last little piece of matsah to leave us with the taste of freedom's struggles.

[Everyone eat a last piece of matsah.]

Now, let us conclude our seder.

Everyone:

We have recalled struggles against slavery and injustice.

We have sung of freedom and peace.

We revisited times of persecution and times of fulfillment.

Only half a century ago, Nazis committed the crimes of the Holocaust.

Today, as Jews in the United States, we are more free than at any other time.

Yet Jewish history shows that life is ever-changing,

and we must learn how to survive under all conditions.

When we are persecuted, we must struggle for our own freedom.

The more freedom we attain,

the more we must help others attain freedom.

This is the lesson of Passover. This is why we celebrate the Festival of Freedom.

Source: Machar Congregation

Conclusion

Declaration of Revolutionary Love

by Shalom Bond

We pledge to rise up in Revolutionary Love.

We declare our love for all who are in harm's way, including refugees, immigrants, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, LGBTQIA people, Black people, Latinx, the indigenous, the disabled, and the poor. We stand with millions of people around the globe rising up to end violence against women and girls (cis, transgender and gender non-conforming) who are often the most vulnerable within marginalized communities. We vow to see one another as brothers and sisters and fight for a world where every person can flourish.

We declare love even for our opponents. We vow to oppose all executive orders and policies that threaten the rights and dignity of any person. We call upon our elected officials to join us, and we are prepared to engage in moral resistance throughout this administration. We will fight not with violence or vitriol, but by challenging the cultures and institutions that promote hate. In so doing, we will challenge our opponents through the ethic of love.

We declare love for ourselves. We will practice the dignity and care in our homes that we want for all of us. We will protect our capacity for joy. We will nurture our bodies and spirits; we will rise and dance. We will honor our mothers and ancestors whose bodies, breath, and blood call us to a life of courage. In their name, we choose to see this darkness not as the darkness of the tomb - but of the womb. We will breathe and push through the pain of this era to birth a new future.

Source: Revolutionary Love Project, <http://www.revolutionarylove.net/>

A Historical Perspective

by Society for Humanistic Judaism

When earlier we recalled the story of the Exodus, we acknowledged it as a work of fiction. Yet only one hundred years ago, most scholars still believed that the tale was true in many of its details.

Then they started digging ... literally ... with shovels and pails. It eventually became clear that the story we had told ourselves for millennia did not take place. There had been no mass flight from Egypt, no conquest of the land of Israel, otherwise known as Canaan. The Israelites were natives of the land; they were Canaanites themselves!

So how did the story come to be?

In the late second millennium B.C.E., Egypt dominated Canaan. The pharaohs demanded regular tribute from vassal kings who in turn exploited their own peasant populations.

According to some scholars, in the thirteenth century B.C.E. the region experienced significant upheavals and power shifts. Taking advantage of these changes, many peasants rebelled, throwing off the yoke of their vassal kings. Archeological remains reveal that some fled to and cleared Israel's central highlands, where tribes and towns began to form. In a long, complicated and gradual process they became known as the Israelites. Did this contribute to inspiring our story?

If so, the Exodus tale may have served as an allegory about liberation from Egypt's ongoing domination and exploitation of Canaan's populace. The narrative may also reflect other ancient regional instabilities. Famines and droughts provoked repeated migrations. The Torah's stories about Abraham and Sara's

journey to Canaan and their grandchildren's descent to Egypt may disclose memories of these population shifts.

Other historians suggest an alternative possibility. They propose that the Exodus story was influenced by the experience of one tribe, the Levites, that may have come to Israel from Egypt. Many Levite names, including Moses and Aaron, are Egyptian in origin. The Levites were cultic experts and possessed no territory. Were they the outsiders who circulated the original Exodus tale?

The details are buried in history, but history gives wings to legends and legends yield heroes like Moses. Over hundreds of years, our story emerged with its account of one great man, dedicated to justice and to the liberation of his people. He challenged Pharaoh and led the Israelites to freedom. For millennia he has inspired many others who have been downtrodden or enslaved to bring about their own deliverance. And that's why we told it tonight!

For more on these ideas, see S. David Sperling, *The Original Torah: The Political Intent of the Bible's Writers* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); and Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Exodus* [New York: HarperOne, 2017].

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Rabbi Jeffrey L. Falick, Birmingham Temple Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

Source: Rabbi Jeffrey Falick

Songs

We Shall Overcome

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

We shall overcome,

We shall overcome,

We shall overcome

Some day.

Oh, deep in my heart

I do believe

We shall overcome,

Some day!

We shall live in peace,

We shall live in peace

We shall live in peace

Some day.

Deep in my heart

I do believe

We shall live in peace

Someday!

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada

Songs

Bashana Haba'ah

by Congress of Secular Jewish Organization

*Bashanah haba-ah / Neshev al ha-mir-peset / Ven-is-por tse-porim no-de-dot.
Ye-lodim be-khufsa / Ye sa-ha-ku to-feset / Beyn ha-bayit le veyn ha-sadot.*

Od-tireh od-tireh / Kamah-tov-ye-yey / Bashanah bashanah ha-ba-ah (repeat stanza)

Soon the day will arrive / When we will be together / And no longer will we live in fear.

And the children will smile / Without wondering whether / On that dark day new clouds will appear.

Wait and see, wait and see / What a world there can be / If we share, if we care, you and me (repeat stanza)

We have dreamed, we have died / To make a bright tomorrow / And their vision remains in our hearts.

Now the torch must be passed / With hope and not in sorrow / And a promise to make a new start.

Od-tireh od-tireh / Kamah-tov ye-yey / Bashana bashana haba-ah (repeat stanza)

Source: The Jewish Secular Community Passover Hagada