

*Mativ
Asurim*

*holiday
mailer*

ליל פסח של
5783 2023



TOWARDS FREEDOM

*A Pesach Seder With and
For Incarcerated People*



A NOTE ABOUT THIS HAGADDAH

This *Hagaddah* was originally written and compiled by Chaplain Orev Reena Katz haKohenet, for the first COVID-19 pandemic seder in March 2020 / Nissan 5780. It was distributed in the federal prisons of southern Ontario, on the traditional territories of the Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee, HuronWendat, Mohawk, Odawa, and Mississauga of New Credit in Williams, Treaty 57 and 13 territories.

It was lovingly added to and adapted by Sarit Cantor last year, in 2022 / 5782 and by Sarit Cantor, Jordana Rosenfeld and Cece Berkovic this year, in 2023 / 5783, on behalf of Matir Asurim. While the pandemic is ongoing, much has changed since the time this *Hagaddah* was first brought into being, just as we each have been changed by the pandemic and by our own journeys toward healing, repair and liberation.

Whether you will have an opportunity to take part in a *seder* (Passover ritual meal) with others, or whether you will be reading this on your own, our hope is that this *Hagaddah* is a thread that connects each one of us this Passover. This *Hagaddah* has been sent to over 60 Jewish community members in more than 30 prisons across Turtle Island (USA and Canada). Each one of us holding this book is connected through the words we read on these pages, the care and *kavannah* (intention) that went into its creation, and through our collective desire for freedom for all.

While Jews across the globe will be celebrating Passover and remembering what it means to be free, Matir Asurim is turning towards each one of you, knowing that you hold such tremendous Passover wisdom and such powerful Torah about the struggles of freedom and liberation. We dedicate our *seder* to you, to wherever these words find you in this moment of your transformation, and to wherever these words may carry you.

We are looking forward to connecting with you more, and, together, embodying the Jewish value and visioning a world where all are free.

With care, Sarit, Jordana, Cece, and all of us at the Matir Asurim: Jewish Prisoner Care Network

WHAT IS PESACH?

Pesach, also called Passover, is a major holiday that occurs every Spring celebrating the Biblical story of the Jewish people's liberation from Egyptian. The holiday is a celebration of freedom, as well as a powerful reminder that freedom and slavery, liberation and oppression, are both always present and always possible.

HOW DO PEOPLE OBSERVE PESACH?

Pesach lasts eight days and is often observed through attending or hosting a ritual meal called a seder and by altering our diet so that we may acknowledge and spiritually participate in our ancestors' journey through oppression, fear, and uncertainty to freedom.

Pesach traditionally calls for a special diet. To commemorate the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate when they left Egypt, many Jews don't eat—or even retain in their possession—any *chametz* from midday of the day before Passover until the conclusion of the holiday. *Chametz* means leavened grain—any food or drink that contains even a trace of wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt, or their derivatives, and which wasn't guarded from leavening or fermentation. This includes bread, cake, cookies, cereal, pasta, and most alcoholic beverages.



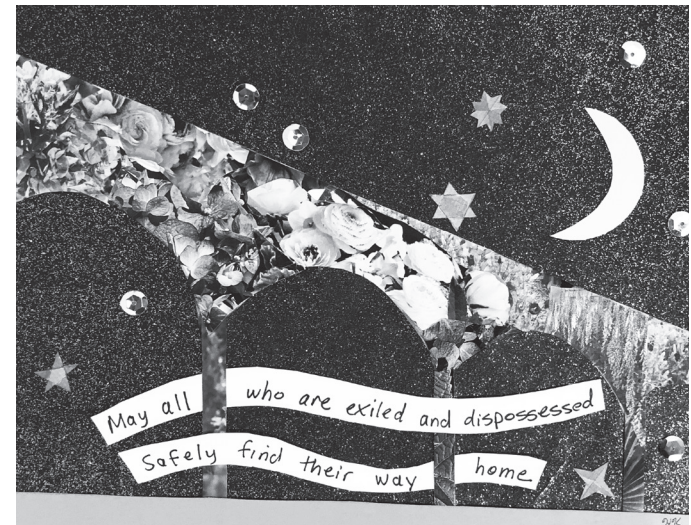
Photo by Aaron Rotenberg

WHAT IS A SEDER

A *seder* is a festival meal held on each of the first two nights of *Pesach*. *Seder* means order in Hebrew, and, as we will discuss in a few pages, there is a prescribed order to the meal that includes readings and meditations on *Pesach*'s themes, blessings, food-based rituals, and a re-telling of the story of the Jews' exodus from Egypt. The seder meal is one way that we fulfill the instruction that every generation regard ourselves as if we, personally, were liberated from bondage along with our ancestors.

HOW TO USE THIS HAGADDAH?

A *Hagaddah* is a guidebook that is used throughout the Passover *seder*. Often, the text is read aloud by those attending the *seder* and the described rituals are performed together at the table. The *Hagaddah* is designed to provoke questions, to get us to think in new ways, to lure us into the stories through song and collective ritual. Although preparing traditional foods and gathering with others can be a helpful way to ground yourself in the spiritual meanings of the holiday, you can still celebrate *Pesach* if you are alone and/or have limited control over the food available to you.



Artwork by Nicole Kaufman

AN INTRODUCTION TO PESACH

Laynie Solomon

There's a lot that happens on Passover, and *haggadot* are full of so many different teachings—it can be overwhelming sometimes to know exactly what to do to fulfill your “obligations” during the *seder*. So, what are the core practices of the *seder* that should be prioritized? The *Mishnah* (the earliest text that details Jewish practices) explains the minimal obligations of the *seder* in the following way:

Rabban Gamliel would say: Anyone who did not mention these three things on Passover has not fulfilled their obligation: The Pesach (the lamb sacrificed on Passover), matzah, and maror (bitter herbs). Once they mention these three things, they can explain them in the following ways:

- **The Pesach lamb** is brought because G!d passed over (*pasach*, which is where the word “pesach” comes from) the houses of our ancestors in Mitzrayim, where we were enslaved, as it is stated: “That you shall say: It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Paschal offering for He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Mitzrayim, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses” (Exodus 12:27).
- The reason for **matzah** is because our ancestors were redeemed from Mitzrayim, as it is stated: “And they baked the dough that they took out of Mitzrayim as cakes of matzot, for it was not leavened, as they were thrust out of Mitzrayim and could not delay, and they had not prepared any other food.
- The reason for **maror** is because our ancestors’ lives were embittered in Mitzrayim, as it is stated: “And they embittered their lives with hard service, in mortar and in brick; in all manner of service in the field, all the service that they made them serve was with rigor” (Exodus 1:14).

[The mishnah continues] In each and every generation a person must view himself as though he personally left Mitzrayim, as it is stated: “And you shall tell your child on that day, saying: It is because of this which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Mitzrayim” (Exodus 13:8).

In every generation, each person must say: “This which the Lord did for me,” and not: This which the Lord did for my ancestors. Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, glorify, extol, exalt, honor, bless, revere, and laud the One who performed for our forefathers and for us all these miracles: G!d took us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to a Festival, from darkness to a great light, and from enslavement to redemption. And we will say before G!d: Halleluya.

BELOW ARE THE FIVE CORE PIECES OF THE SEDER, ALONG WITH SOME TIPS FOR HOW YOU MIGHT FULFILL THEM.

1. Eating Matzah

Before eating *matzah*, you can say the following two blessings:

- *baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz (Blessed are you, G!d, Royal of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth)*
- *baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam asher kidshanu be’mitzvotav vetzivanu al achilat matzah (Blessed are you, G!d, Royal of the Universe, who has sanctified us through commandments and commanded us to eat matzah)*

2. Telling the story of the Exodus (“magid”)

What does it mean to tell the story? The Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the very influential medieval Sefaradi halakhist and philosopher) offers the following instructions:

During the seder, you should do things differently so that children will see, ask, and say “Why is this different from all other nights?” And you should say to them, “Such and such happened, and such and such was [explaining the story of Passover]. If you don’t have a child with you, you should do things differently and other people around you should ask each other, “Why is this night different?” even if they are all sages and already know the story. If you are alone, you should ask yourself, “Why is this night different?”

You could follow Rambam’s instructions and create a conversation with others—or with yourself—and tell the story of the Exodus. Or, you might read the mishnah above out loud to yourself or with friends. You might ask, “What is the story of Passover? Why is it important to me?”

3. Drinking four cups of wine or grape juice

4. Eating *Maror* (bitter herbs)

You can use romaine lettuce, horseradish, endives—some sort of bitter vegetable that you have access to. Before eating the *maror*, you can say the following blessing:

- *baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu be'mitzvotav vetzivanu al achilat maror (Blessed are you, G!d, Royal of the Universe, who has sanctified us through commandments and commanded us to eat bitter herbs).*

5. Reciting Psalms of praise (“*hallel*”)

If you have access to the liturgy of Hallel (found in a *siddur*), you might recite that in Hebrew or English, to yourself or with a friend. If not, you might look at the mishnah above, and read through the descriptions for G!d—is there a song that you know that expresses some of this praise?



There is a practice that has been shared by several rabbis (Rabbi Aharon Bernard Davids of Rotterdam, Holland and Rabbi Shimon Dasberg of Gronigen, Holland) who were forced during the *Shoah* (Holocaust) to eat bread during *Pesach*, because if they had not eaten bread they would not have any food. If one is forced to eat bread on Passover, they might share the following *kavanah* (intention):

*Before eating Chametz say the following with intent & devotion:
Our Father in Heaven! It is known to You that we desire to fulfill Your will and observe the Passover holiday by eating Matzah and safeguarding against Chametz. But our hearts are pained at the captivity which prevents us, and we find ourselves in danger of our lives. We are hereby ready to fulfill Your commandments “And you shall live by them (the commandments)” and not die by them, and to observe the caution of “guard yourself and watch your soul/life very much.” Therefore our prayer to You is that You keep us alive, and sustain us, and redeem us speedily, so that we may observe Your laws and fulfill Your will and serve You with a full heart. Amen!*

SEDER סדר: ORDER

Seder literally means order, from the Hebrew לסדר / l'sader, to arrange, and there is a set order to the proceedings:



- Kadesh** – A Toast to Freedom
- Urchatz** – Washing Our Hands
- Karpas** – Dipping Into Spring
- Yachatz** – Contemplating our Brokenness
- Maggid** – Telling & Retelling the Story
- Rachtzah** – Washing Our Hands before the Meal
- Motzei Matzah** – Blessing Our Bread of Affliction
- Marror** – Tasting What is Bitter
- Korech** – Hillel Sandwich
- Shulchan Orech** – Festive Meal
- Tzafun** – Revealing What is Hidden
- Barech** – Offering Gratitude
- Hallel** – Songs of Praise
- Nirtzah** – Acceptance



Many sections of this Hagaddah are taken from excerpts of the Love and Rage Hagaddah, as well as the Velveteen Rabbi Hagaddah. All of the alternative blessings for the cups of wine were written by Sarit, and we encourage you to write and recite your own blessings as feels resonant throughout the book. Many of the prayers and texts in here are prayers that have been uttered for thousands of years, by Jews reflecting on their survival, their resilience, their dreams of a free and just world. You may notice that this Hagaddah is incomplete. There are some sections missing, and there are some sections added. Just as no journey to freedom is ever fully complete, we invite you to bring yourself into this book with us. Engage as you wish, add your own notes, thoughts, and prayers; may each of our Passover journeys be woven together to collectively fill in the gaps.

On These Territories

We offer thanks to You, Creator, Hashem, Adonai, Shekhinah—our G!d of many names for bringing us to this precious, good and spacious land—*al eretz chemdah, tovah, urchavah*. The prisons on Turtle Island stand on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Peoples. People who have been tending land, tending to relationships, holding ceremony and ritual, connecting with one another through sacred practices long before settlers ever arrived here, and who have been leading struggles for liberation and freedom for generations. Though these lands provided redemption to our Jewish ancestors, many of whom made Exodus from oppression and genocide, our presence here created bondage for the Indigenous people whose stewardship and respect had kept it for millennia.

As we celebrate Pesach and eat our traditional bread of affliction, may we allow ourselves to continue to just be with the multitudes and extremes of the past few years. May we be with our solitude, fear and isolation. May we be with the ways of our ancestors who also hid in seclusion to reach freedom. May we commit to coming into wholeness with our fractured histories, repairing the damage in good relationship to land and people, and may we move towards liberation from the vantage point of this ongoing plague and the many shapes of plagues to come.

Opening Prayer

Long ago at this season, our people set out on a journey.
On such a night as this, Israel went from degradation to joy.
We give thanks for the liberation of days gone by.
And we pray for all who are still bound.
Eternal G!d, may all who hunger come to rejoice in a new Pesach.
Let all the human family sit at Your table, drink the wine of deliverance, eat the bread of freedom:
Soon, in our days
freedom from oppression and freedom from want
freedom from fear and freedom to speak
freedom to learn and freedom to share
freedom to rejoice
Amen.



Blessed is the match consumed in kindling the flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret fastness of the heart.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling the flame.

– Hannah Szenes, 1921-1944

KADESH: A TOAST TO FREEDOM

The whole point of the *Seder* is to ask questions. This is your time to ask about things that confuse you, things you don't understand, or even things you don't agree with. There really is no such thing as a stupid question, especially on Passover.

Questions are not only welcome during the course of the *Seder* but are vital to the ceremony. Our obligation at the *Seder* involves traveling from slavery to freedom, prodding ourselves from apathy to action, encouraging the transformation of silence into speech, and providing a space where all different levels of belief and tradition can co-exist safely. Because leaving **מצרים** *Mitzrayim*—the narrow places, the places that oppress us—is a personal as well as a communal passage, your thoughts are welcome and encouraged. You might want to have a pen and paper beside you as you go through this Haggadah to take note of thoughts or feelings that emerge.

We remember that questioning itself is a sign of freedom, and we still have our ability to question, even during this era of rising fascism, ongoing racism, and war in so many forms. The simplest question can have many answers, sometimes complex or contradictory ones, just as life itself is fraught with complexity and contradictions. To see everything in duality: clean or dirty, healthy or sick, good or bad, *Matzah* or *maror*, Jewish or Muslim, Jewish or “Gentile”, is to be enslaved to simplicity. Sometimes, a question has no answer, as is so throughout these years of unravel, turmoil, devastation and heartbreak. Why? Why now?



WHAT IS **ישראל** ISRAEL? WHERE IS **מצרים** MITZRAYIM?

How narrow is our struggle when we need to face it alone?

When found in the liturgy (religious text) **ישראל** Yisrael does not refer to the modern nation/state of Israel, rather it derives from the blessing given to Ya'akov (Jacob) by a stranger with whom he wrestles all night. When the stranger is finally pinned, Ya'akov asks him for a blessing. The stranger says, “Your name will no longer be Ya'akov but **ישראל** Yisrael for you have wrestled with G!d and triumphed.”

Similarly, we use the word **מצרים** Mitzrayim, instead of ‘Egypt’. Mitzrayim comes from the root **צר** Tzar, meaning narrow or constricted. It can refer to the geography of the Nile valley, but also to a metaphorical state of confinement.

This year, we are all together in **צר**, amidst the ongoing constrictions and negotiations that COVID-19 continues to impose on us, along with the heightened state of war, far-right supremacy, hatred and fear that have ensued, largely catalysed by the pandemic. We are in **צר** every time we believe the lie of separateness, every time we are led to believe that our liberation is a personal endeavour. We are in **צר** when we forget that to survive is to need one another, when we forget that the strongest trees know how to bend. Reading this *Hagaddah*, you are invited to explore the wisdom of survival from our Jewish ancestors—the knowing of the vast shadows they encountered on their journey from slavery to freedom. This is the **צר** that connects all of humanity across and beyond time.

The Pesach story is also the story of the birth of the Jewish people, and **מצרים** ‘Mitzrayim’ is the narrow passage we moved through in our birthing as a people. Leaving **מצרים** mitzrayim also means birthing ourselves into something entirely unrecognizable.

THE SEDER PLATE

The entire story of the *Haggadah* is contained in the *Seder* plate; everything on it symbolizes an aspect of Exodus. Hold the plate up and reflect on each item.

זרוא Zeroah, a roasted bone, which evokes the offering made at the Temple in ancient times.

ביצה Beitzah, a boiled egg, symbolizing the circle of life and death.

מרור Maror, a bitter herb, reminding us of the bitterness of enslavement.

חרסת Charoset, a mixture of fruit, nuts, wine and spices, representing the mortar our ancestors used to build the structures of Mitzrayim.

כרפס Karpas, a green vegetable, symbolizing hope and renewal.

זיתון Zatoun (Arabic), a green olive, symbolizing peace and justice in Israel and Palestine.

חזרת Chazeret, the bitter herb for the “sandwich” we will eat later, following the custom established by Hillel the Elder, as a reminder that our ancestors “ate *Matzah* and bitter herbs together.”



Many of us who will be using this *Hagaaddah*, may not have access to a *seder* plate, or to the ritual items that are called for in this book.

Our spiritual resources are held in ancient wells of creativity and depth. While prisons may limit the physical availability of many Passover ritual objects, below are suggestions for how to create a seder plate within a prison. This is an invitation to connect with these objects in accessible and tangible ways. If you do not have a seder plate, you may consider creating a sacred space with these objects.

זרוא Zeroah: place something that represents sacrifice on your plate. Consider what it means to let go, in order to transform. The *zeroah* can be any object that holds memories of letting go, grief; an offering to that which is sacred in the name of healing and protection.

ביצה Beitzah: Traditionally an egg is used, but any object that represents rebirth and the cycles of life and death can be used. You may wish to cut out a circle from a piece of paper. On one side, write down the four elements: water, earth, air and fire. On the other side, write down a way that you are connecting to each element in this moment. Place the filled-out circle on your plate.

מרור Maror: Traditionally, a piece of horseradish is placed onto the seder plate. Sometimes, romaine lettuce is used when horseradish is not available. *Maror* invites us to connect with our tears. Our tears invite us to connect with our grief. Our grief invites us to connect with what it is that we truly love. Place an object on the plate that reminds you of what it is that you are fighting for in your own journey for personal and collective liberation. (Did you know, that if you do not have something bitter to taste, you can simply imagine a bitter sensation filling your mouth and touching your tastebuds and your body will respond as if it is consuming something bitter! Bitterness is a very powerful sensation! And it is actually very good for our digestion!)

חרסת Charoset: *Charoset* represents our building blocks. The material that our ancestors used that enabled us to survive impossible conditions. Place something on your plate that gives you hope, that sustains you through the hard times, that brings you a little bit of sweetness. You may wish to cut out a triangle from a piece of paper. On one side, make a list of the things in your life that build you up and hold you together.

Matzah: *Matzah* is used ritually throughout the *seder*. There are traditionally three pieces of *Matzah* in the middle of the table. *Matzah* is known as the Bread of Affliction. It is a hard, rough, and fragile bread. Consider your rough edges, the places where you feel could break at any moment. These are the places that need our love. If you do not have *Matzah*, a cracker will do. If you do not have a cracker, on a piece of paper, write out your rough edges, the wounds that need tended to in your liberation journey. You can hold onto this paper, and send love to those parts of yourself, every time *Matzah* is used during the ritual.

Wine: Traditionally we bless and drink four cups of wine over the course of the *seder*. Wine is a sacred substance that connects us to G!d and to the divine. Since prisons do not allow wine or alcohol, you might want to consider blessing water (another deeply sacred, life-sustaining substance). With each cup of “wine” that we bless, you might consider thinking about the sacred, life-sustaining substances that move through the earth, connecting us to one another across and beyond time and space.

THE FIRST CUP: SURVIVAL

reflecting on resilience & how we make it through our own צר, our own narrowness, both internal and imposed, day to day

We make our Seder holy with the first out of four cups of wine. Why four? Some say that it unifies the four corners of the world. Others say it marks the four times that God promises liberation to the Jewish people in the Torah. At a time where we have been especially scattered and separated, a moment where the reality of generations of injustice and oppression on Turtle Island has been laid bare, this Pesach, like every Pesach we yearn for liberation. As we make our passover Seder holy in whatever way we are able to this year, we fill our hunger for a better world and promise to play our part in making it reality.

– Adapted from the *Bend the Arc Jewish Action Liberation Haggadah 2021*

Any of the following blessings can be used for the wine or feel free to write and recite your own blessing for survival.

Brucha Yah Shechinah eloheinu Malkat ha’olam borayt p’ri ha- gafen.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, fem.

Blessed is the Source that fills all creation and brings forth the fruit of the vine.

traditional English translation



Blessed are you Shekhinah, who reminds me that I am at once both bound & free; contained & spilling out. May this blessing uplift my survival as a devotion to liminality & multitudes. May this blessing surround me, protect me with the depths of your infinite care.

brakha/blessing of survival written by Sarit

URHATZ: WASHING OUR HANDS

The word *urchatz* (washing) is from the root-word in Aramaic that means “trust”. What trust do we need to build to make our own liberation stories possible? How can we trust ourselves, our communities and the communities we are in partnership with? What do we need to let go of, to wash away, in order to take that next step towards freedom?

– Adapted from the *Bend the Arc Jewish Action Liberation Haggadah 2021*

We are humans relearning to wash our hands.

Washing our hands is an act of love

Washing our hands is an act of care

Washing our hands is an act that puts the hypervigilant body at ease

Washing our hands helps us return to ourselves by washing away what does not serve.

Wash your hands

like you are washing the only teacup left that your great grandmother carried across the ocean, like you are washing the hair of a beloved who is dying, like you are washing the feet of Grace Lee Boggs, Beyonce, Jesus, your auntie, Audre Lorde, Mary Oliver—you get the picture.

Like this water is poured from a jug your best friend just carried for three miles from the spring they had to climb a mountain to reach.

Like water is a precious resource

made from time and miracle

– excerpt from a COVID-19 prayer written by Dori Midnight



This is an important reminder of the many ways, both large & small that we can care for one another & keep each other safe. May we remember this practice as sacred, as we take care of ourselves, of those in our houses and on our ranges, of the staff and families of staff around us. Wash your hands with the *kavannah* (intention) of keeping safe and healthy.

KARPAS: DIPPING INTO SPRING

We dip a spring vegetable into salt-water—the spring vegetable reminding us of potential and promise and the salt water reminding us of the tears and the pain along the way. This is an invitation to hold complexity—a reminder that change is possible even in what seems like endless darkness. As you dip the green vegetable into the salt water, affirm for yourself the potential for justice even as we hold the tears of oppression.

Take some greens and dip them in the salt water, and say:

בְּרוּכָה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלַכַּת הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרְאֵת פְּרִי הָאָדָמָה.

Brucha Yah Shechina, Eloheinu Malkat ha'olam, borayt p'ri ha'adamah.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, fem.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא
פְּרִי הָאָדָמָה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adamah.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, masc.

Blessed is the One, who sustains all life, and brings forth fruits from the earth.

traditional English translation

YACHATZ: CONTEMPLATING OUR BROKENNESS

Take the three *Matzot* at the centre of the table and break the middle *Matzah* in 2 pieces. Place the smaller piece of *Matzah* between the two whole *Matzot*. This small piece is called the **לחם העוני** *lechem ha'oni*, the bread of affliction. Place the larger half, known as the *Afikomen*, in a large cloth or napkin, and set it aside.

Let us bless our cracked surfaces and sharp edges, unafraid to see our brittleness and brave enough to see our beauty. Reaching for wholeness, let us piece together the parts of ourselves we have found, and honor all that is still hidden.

The breaking of the matzah reflects the words of the Chassidic Kotzker Rebbe: *There is nothing more whole than a broken heart.*

If your own suffering does not serve to unite you with the suffering of others, if your own imprisonment does not join you with others in prison, if you in your smallness remain alone, then your pain will have been for naught.

– adapted from *the Love & Rage Hagaddah*

“We are all broken by something. We have all hurt someone and have been hurt. We all share the condition of brokenness even if our brokenness is not equivalent. ...The ways in which I have been hurt—and have hurt others—are different from [how others] have suffered and caused suffering. But our shared brokenness connected us....

There is a strength, a power even, in understanding brokenness, because embracing our brokenness creates a need and desire for mercy, and perhaps a corresponding need to show mercy. When you experience mercy, you learn things that are hard to learn otherwise. You see things you can't otherwise see; you hear things you can't otherwise hear. You begin to recognize the humanity that resides in each of us.”

– Bryan Stevenson

adapted from *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*

HA LACHMA ANYA

Uncover the *Matzot* and lift the Seder Plate. Spend time in witness of this incredible Bread of Affliction.

This is the Bread of Affliction that our ancestors ate in **מצרים** *Mitzrayim*. All who are hungry, let them come and eat. All who are in need, let them come and celebrate Pesach with us. Now we are here; next year may we be in the arms of our liberation. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free people.

לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אֲבֹהֵתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא
דְּמִצְרַיִם. כּוֹל דִּכְפִין יֵיתִי וְיִיכֹל, כּוֹל דְּצָרִיד
יֵיתִי וְיִפְסַת. הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְיִשְׂרָאֵל.
הַשְׁתָּא עַבְרִי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.

Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b'arad'Mitzrayim. Kol dichfin yeitei v'yechol. Kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach. Hashata hacha lashanah haba'ahb'ara d'Yisrael. Hashata avdei lashanah haba'ah b'nei chorin.

Ashkenazi pronunciation

Ha lahma anya. Dee achaloo ab'hathana be-ar-a de-misrayeem. Kol dichfeen yethei wi-ye-chol. Kol dis-reef ye-thei wi-yifsach. Hasha-ta hacha. Le-shana ha-ba-a be-ar-a de-yisrael. Hasha-ta hacha abdei. Leshana ha-ba-a be-ar-a de-yisrael benei horeen.

Iraqi pronunciation

This is one of the oldest passages in the *Haggadah*. It is written in Aramaic, and existed when the Temple was still standing, prior to 70 B.C.E.

THE SECOND CUP: HOPE

reflecting on what keeps us healthy and strong



Any of the following blessings can be used for the wine or feel free to write and recite your own blessing of hope.

Brucha Yah Shechinah eloheinu Malkat ha'olam borayt p'ri ha- gafen.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, fem.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu Melech ha'olam boreh p'ri ha-gafen.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, masc.

Blessed is the Source that fills all creation and brings forth the fruit of the vine.

traditional English translation

Blessed are you G!d, G!ddess, creator, you of many names, who returns me to myself in my sorrow & grief; who shows me the power of return; who shows me over & over that there is always a way out of *Mitzrayim*.

brakha/ blessing of hope written by Sarit

Passover cup by Hana Geber, Jewish Museum, New York

MAGGID: TELLING OUR STORY

Memory is not a static deposit; we continually re-remember; re-tell and re-cast the Jewish past in light of changing communal experience and changing communal values. We are commanded to tell the Exodus story as though each of us were personally liberated from Egypt. Hasidic tradition holds that not only did God speak the universe into being in the time before time, but God continues to speak us into existence, even now. In our re-telling, we are bringing our collective experiences, our struggles, our joys, our visions, hopes, hesitations, pains, griefs, and luscious imaginations with us along our journeys to freedom. We are following the footsteps of our ancestors & speaking ourselves into a collective expanse of possibility.

– Adapted from *the Velveteen Rabbi Hagaddah*

Once upon a time our people went into *galut* (Hebrew), or *golis* (Yiddish) – גלות exile – in מצרים Mitzrayim. During a famine, our ancestor Jacob and his family fled there where food was plentiful. Through a complicated set of plot twists, his son Joseph had risen to high position in Pharaoh's court, and our people were well-respected and well-regarded, secure in the power structure of the time.

Generations passed and our people remained in מצרים Mitzrayim. As rulers came and went, a new Pharaoh ascended to the throne. He felt threatened by the strangers in his people's midst, and ordered our people enslaved.

In fear of rebellion, Pharaoh decreed that all newborn Hebrew boy-children be killed. Two midwives named Shifrah and Puah defied his orders, claiming that “the Hebrew women are so hardy, they give birth before we arrive!” Through their courage, a boy survived.

Fearing for his safety, his family placed him in a basket and he floated down the Nile. He was found and adopted, by Pharaoh's

daughter, who named him Moshe because *min ha-mayim m'shitihu*, (from the water she drew him forth). She hired his mother Yocheved as his wet-nurse. Thus he survived to adulthood and was raised as Prince of Egypt.

Although a child of privilege, as Moshe grew he became aware of the slaves who worked in the brickyards of his father. When he saw an overseer mistreat a slave, he struck the overseer and killed him. Fearing retribution, he set out across the Sinai alone.

God spoke to him from a burning bush, which though it flamed was not consumed. The Voice called him to lead the Hebrew people to freedom. Moses argued with God, pleading inadequacy, but God disagreed. Some-times our responsibilities choose us.

Moses returned to מצרים Mitzrayim and went to Pharaoh to argue the injustice of slavery. He gave Pharaoh a mandate with resounds through history: Let my people go. Pharaoh refused, and Moses warned him that Mighty God would strike the Egyptian people. These threats were not idle: ten terrible plagues were unleashed upon the Egyptians. Only when his nation lay in ruins did Pharaoh agree to our liberation.

Fearful that Pharaoh would change his mind, our people fled, not waiting for their bread dough to rise. Our people did not leave מצרים Mitzrayim alone; a “mixed multitude” went with them. From this we learn that liberation is not for us alone, but for all the people of the earth.

Pharaoh's army followed us to the Sea of Reeds. We plunged into the waters. Only when we had gone as far as we could did the waters part for us. We mourn, even now, that Pharaoh's army drowned: our liberation is bittersweet because people died in our pursuit – Pharaoh's entire army that followed them into the sea. The waters that parted for us closed back on Pharaoh's army and not one of them remained.

To this day we relive our liberation that we may not become complacent, that we may always rejoice in our freedom. On the night before they were to leave מצרים Mitzrayim, the Israelites were told to slaughter a lamb and paint their doorposts with its blood, a sign to the destroying angel not to take the first born in those homes. Today we no longer sacrifice an animal, but we do remember that night of terror and hope. That night a people huddled in their homes awaiting the morning, perhaps they thought: “Will the promise to punish the slave masters be fulfilled, or will morning come and leave us exposed, having marked ourselves as rebellious slaves?”

The פסח Pesach, lamb shank on our seder plate, is a reminder that freedom begins when we mark our doors, when we take the risk of speaking up, not yet knowing if others will join us.

– Adapted from *the Velveteen Rabbi Hagaddah*

LET US BE CHILDREN

Traditionally, the Hagaddah tells the story of four children. Each child represents a different reaction in the face of change and when faced with the unknown. There have been countless interpretations and adaptations and ways of understanding the four children over the generations as we grapple with our individual relationships with liberation. Which of the children do you relate with? What parts of you are loudest when faced with the need to change? The following is an interpretation of the four children based on a form by *Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi*.

The Torah speaks of Four Children: One a *lamden (Sharp Student)*, one a *chossid (Highly Intelligent)*, one a *tamim (Good One)* and one *she-ayn lo shum s'fekut u b'eyot (One Who Does Not Doubt or Question.)*

The *lamden* asks, “What are the testimonies, the statutes and the laws which יהוה our G!d has commanded you?” (Deut 6:20) You shall answer this child according to their capacity, their sharpness of wit.

The *chossid* asks, “[What is] this service to you?” (Exodus 12: 26).

For them, make an effort to reign in their longings, for they also want to be a part of the integrity and perfection that comes with meaningful rituals. If you are loving to this child, they will understand *devekut / cleaving*, and they will get a taste of what it means to feel close to G!d.

The *tamim* asks, “What is this?” (Exodus 13:14) To them, you shall bear witness from your own experience, that השם is assisting you with ‘a strong hand’, to take you out of bondage, and to take them with you out of מצרים Mitzrayim.

To the *she-ayn lo shum s'fekut u b'eyot*, you will feed them some *maror / horseradish*, so they can feel their experiences from the body, rather than the mind – and so that compassion will be instilled in their heart.

These children live in all of us on Pesach. Let us be in conversation with them. Let us remember together what it meant to hide from a plague, to protect ourselves to the best of our ability. We all have these four faces of our humanity. May we hold them all with compassion. May we look deep into their eyes. May we liberate our suffering here on this night. May we embody all 4 siblings who ask from different places in the self. May our wisdom, our skeptic, our simplicity and our shyness come out and be held.

THE SEA NEVER PARTED

April N. Baskin, Joyous Justice

Passover is *steeped* in meaning, peoplehood, and visions for liberation. As a Black and Cherokee Jewish woman whose ancestors endured and ultimately survived enslavement, there are many, many layers of meaning to the Passover story for me. It has become fairly common in the United States to connect the Black struggle for liberation and the Jewish narrative of achieving freedom from bondage in the Torah. Whether or not the biblical story really happened, it's a core part of Jewish collective identity.

But a few years back, I had a big epiphany: For Black folks in America, the sea never parted. We are still in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt or “the narrow place”). While the narratives between Jews and Black folks enslaved in American chattel slavery are often compared, there is a crucial difference: they were never able to escape their enslavers and oppressors nor the systems of enslavement and oppression that held them hostage. So as we enter the Passover season this year, we must acknowledge this reality.

Now, I'm not saying there are no parallels between the stories. Pharaoh finally gave the Israelites permission to leave after the ten plagues, but changed his mind as they were fleeing. The oppressor similarly changed their mind in the States, too. But a key difference here is that the Jews were able to get away from their oppressors, both spiritually and physically. The sea parted, and the Israelites were able to enter, and then the sea closed and created a barrier from their oppressors. They weren't able to grab them and take them back. There was protection. Not only were they set free, but they were then guided by a divinely designated leader. They had access to a new future and a new potential homeland, *and* they had 40 years to wander. Some historical and contemporary rabbinic leaders discuss those 40 years in the wilderness as being critical for the healing for the Jewish people. While surely it was no paradise, I can see it being deeply necessary as someone who has endured significant trauma in my own life and has benefited immensely from trauma-informed healing communities.

American folks of African-heritage have no such equivalent. When we have voter suppression, the prison industrial complex, Jim Crow, and police killings (and unfortunately I could keep going), we see the signs everywhere. We were never given an option to get away from our oppressors, receive any kind of reparations, have our own land and sovereignty (this is all in the context of stolen Native land), or go back to our homelands. What would it have looked like for the Israelites if they had to stay in Egypt after being freed and live next door to the people who used to be their oppressors?

At Joyous Justice, we love to amplify joy and happiness in the work in racial justice. AND, what allows us to do that sincerely and powerfully is being honest about the bad. In order to move through to joy, happiness, peace, *insert positive vibrational state here*, we can't be in denial. Traditionally, we tell the story of Jewish enslavement and liberation from "the narrow place." If we get *really* clear about the fact that, for many Black folks and other People of Color in America, the sea never parted and they remain in Mitzrayim, in narrow, oppressive space(s), then we have the capacity to heal and move closer to our collective liberation, what might be the *true* Messianic Age. *It's on us* to keep learning and healing and taking action that will liberate *us all*.

Reflection/discussion questions:

1. How does the epiphany that the sea never parted for Black Americans land with you?
2. Why is it important to recognize, process, and move through the ugliness and the bad in order to access joy or whatever positive state we wish to embody?

April N. Baskin is the Founding Director of Joyous Justice, a multiracial community-powered social justice and spiritual transformation organization that seeds and leads systemic change and healing for the Jewish community and beyond. This essay is an adapted version of the episode "The Sea Never Parted" from the podcast she co-hosts with Tracie Guy-Decker called "Jews Talk Racial Justice."

EGYPT INSIDE

This I confess:

I have taken Egypt with me.
I've kept myself a slave to grief and loss,
Fear and anger and shame.
I have set myself up as taskmaster,
Driving myself beyond the limits
Of reasonable time and common sense.
I've seen miracles from heaven,
Signs and wonders in my own life,
Yet I've taken Egypt with me,
Still waiting for the heavens to speak.
G-d of redemption,
With Your loving and guiding hand leaving Egypt is easy.
Leaving Egypt behind is a struggle.
In Your wisdom You have given me this choice:
To live in a tyranny of my own making,
Or to set my heart free to love You,
To love Your people,
And to love myself.
G-d of freedom,
Help me to leave Egypt behind,
To hear Your voice,
To accept Your guidance,
And to see the miracles in each new day.
Blessed are You, G-d of wonder,
You set Your people on the road to redemption.

– Alden Solovy, *This Grateful Heart:
Psalms and Prayers for a New Day*

FAITH, FEAR, AND THE STORY OF NACHSHON AND THE RED SEA

Stacey Zisook Robinson, Z"l

The story of Nachshon is my favorite midrash. Nachshon was a slave with all the other Israelites who found redemption at the hand of God. He was Let Go, with a capital L and a capital G, brought out with a Mighty Hand. He packed and didn't let the dough rise and ran, breathless and scared and grateful, away from the land of Pharaohs and pyramids and slavery. Nachshon ran into freedom.

And then he got to the sea. He and some 600,000 other un-slaved people, stopped cold by the Red Sea. It was huge and liquid and deep. They couldn't see the other side. It was so big they couldn't see any sides. Just wetness from here to forever.

And behind him, when he and the 600,000 others dared to peek, were Pharaoh and his army of men and horses and chariots, carrying spears and swords and assorted sharp, pointy things. Even at a distance, the sharp, pointy things loomed quite large in the eyes of Nachshon and his recently freed landsmen. They were caught between the original rock and a hard place—or, I guess, between water and sharp, pointy things. At that point, I don't think anyone involved cared much about getting the metaphor exactly right; what they cared about was getting out from that perilous middle—and fast.

Moses went to have a chat with God, and just like that, he got an answer—a Divine Instant Message. All the Children of Israel needed to do was walk forward into the sea, that big, wet, deep forever sea. God would provide a way. "Trust Me," God seemed to say, "I got you this far, didn't I? I wouldn't let you fall now!"

Nachshon and the 600,000 stood at the shivery edge of that sea, staring at that infinite horizon in front and the pointy, roiling chaos of death and slavery behind them. They stood, planted—and let's face it: not just planted, but rooted in their fear and mistrust and doubt. They may have felt reassured

by the image of God as a pillar of smoke or fire—impressive pyrotechnics, to be sure—but the soldiers and the sea were so there, present and much more real.

Then, in the midst of that fear and doubt, something changed. Nachshon—recently freed, trapped between death by water and death by bleeding—did the miraculous. He put one foot in front of the other and walked into the sea. The 600,000 held their collective breath, watching the scene unfold before them as Nachshon did what they could not: He decided to have faith. And though the water covered first his ankles, then his knees, then his chest, then kept rising, until he was almost swallowed whole, Nachshon kept walking, kept believing. And just when it seemed that he was a fool for his faith, that he would surely drown in that infinite sea, another miracle: The waters parted.

The sea split and Nachshon, so recently in over his head, walked on dry land. The 600,000 breathed again, in one relieved whoosh of air, and they found their own faith and followed Nachshon into the dry sea to across to the other side. And then the journey truly began.

I pray to have faith enough to walk into my own sea—of doubt and fear and darkness. I want to walk and feel the waters part, to be released from the tangled web of thought that holds me immobile and disconnected. I have learned, again and again, without fail: When I take that step, when I find the faith to put one foot in front of the other and to trust, as Nachshon did, I am carried forward. I am freed from my self-imposed bondage. I am enough, and I can walk again on dry land to freedom.

THE TEN PLAGUES

For each plague flick or pour a drop of wine onto the plate.

“...The Holy One sat in judgment over the Egyptians and drowned them in the sea. In that instant, the ministering angels wished to sing before the Holy One, but G!d rebuked them, saying “Those I have created with my own hands are drowning in the sea, and you utter song in my presence?”

Babylonian Talmud. Sanhedrin 39b

The idea of justice embodied in our story is direct and unquestioned—punishment for punishment, murdered children for murdered children, suffering for suffering. The people of מצרים Mitzrayim suffered because of their own leader, who is in part set-up by an angry G-d eager to demonstrate his own superiority. In our story, all of this was necessary for freedom. Jews have been troubled by this for generations and generations, and so, before we drink to our liberation, we mark how the suffering diminishes our joy by taking a drop of wine out of our cup of joy for each of the ten plagues visited on the people of מצרים Mitzrayim.

Dam.....Blood

Tzfardeyah.....Frogs

Kinim.....Lice

Arov.....Wild Beasts

Dever.....Blight

Shichin.....Boils

Barad.....Hail

Arbeh.....Locusts

Choshech.....Endless Night

Makat B'chorot.....Slaying of the First-Born

The Pharaoh of the Pesach story is not just a cruel king who happened to live in a certain country. The Pharaoh that our ancestors pictured, each and every year, for century after century was for them every tyrant, every cruel and heartless ruler who ever enslaved the people of his or another country.

As we packed our bags that last night in מצרים Mitzrayim, the darkness was pierced with screams. Our doorposts were protected by a sign of blood. But from the windows of the Egyptians rose a slow stench: the death of their firstborn.

Ya Shechina, soften our hearts and the hearts of our enemies. Help us to dream new paths to freedom.

DAYENU

Dayenu is a prayer we sing, literally translating to, “enough”. Throughout this chant, we list the many actions G-d took on our behalf: bringing us out of Egypt, carrying us through the desert, giving us the Torah, among many other miracles.

Dayenu is the song of our gratitude. A Jewish philosopher was once asked, “what is the opposite of hopelessness?” And he said, “Dayenu,” the ability to be thankful for what we have received, for what we are.

When there is so little control in our lives, it can feel hard to reckon with what it means for something to have been enough. What does this mean, “It would have been enough”? Surely no one of these would indeed have been enough for us. Dayenu intends to celebrate each step toward freedom as if it were enough, then to start out on the next step. Dayenu its teaching us to take the impossible feat of freedom and break it up into small, tangible steps. It means that if we reject each step because it is not our whole liberation, we will never be able to achieve the whole liberation. It means to sing each verse as if it were the whole song—and then sing the next verse.

Had God:

Brought us out of Egypt and not divided the sea for us	<i>Dayenu</i>
Divided the sea and not permitted us to cross on dry land	<i>Dayenu</i>
Permitted us to cross on dry land and not sustained us for forty years in the desert	<i>Dayenu</i>
Sustained us for forty years in the desert and not fed us with manna	<i>Dayenu</i>
Fed us with manna and not given us the Sabbath	<i>Dayenu</i>
Given us the Sabbath and not brought us to Mount Sinai	<i>Dayenu</i>
Brought us to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah	<i>Dayenu</i>
Given us the Torah and not led us into the land of Israel	<i>Dayenu</i>
Led us into the land of Israel and not built for us the Temple	<i>Dayenu</i>
Built for us the Temple and not sent us prophets of truth	<i>Dayenu</i>
Sent us prophets of truth and not made us a holy people	<i>Dayenu</i>
For all these, alone and together, we say	<i>Dayenu!</i>

What does enough mean to you?

What does it mean for you in your journey in healing and transformation?

What does enough mean in this moment?

MOTZI MATZAH: BLESSING OUR BREAD OF AFFLICTION

The Jews left מצרים Mitzrayim in great haste, so quickly that they did not have time to let their bread dough rise. They cooked unleavened cakes of bread, and quickly followed Moses towards the wilderness.

בָּרַךְ אֹתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

Baruch atah Adonai, eloheinu Melech ha-olam
ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Blessed are You, Compassionate One, who has
given us the blessing of eating this Matzah.

MAROR: TASTING WHAT IS BITTER

There is nothing so immediate than our tongues. We speak, we open, we bless. This powerful taste reminds our bodies of what slavery felt like. It's shocking blast stimulates our senses, and reminds us that we continue to struggle as our ancestors did: towards freedom of spirit, of body and mind. There is so much bitterness, everyday. We don't need a reminder of how difficult life is; especially on the inside. But, isn't it amazing to have a moment to commune through taste with the bitterness that taught our ancestors how to survive the unimaginable?

בָּרַךְ אֹתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam,
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu al achilat maror

Blessed are You, Sovereign of the Universe, who has shown
us paths to holiness, and invites us to eat the bitter herb.

SHULCHAN ORECH: FESTIVE MEAL

*Even without access to special Passover meals provided by your institution or experience making or eating traditional Jewish foods, we hope this recipe from one of our incarcerated friends, **Bryan G.** from Washington State, for prison-style matzoh ball soup brings you a little extra warmth and care this holiday.*

MATZOH BALL SOUP

NEEDED MATERIALS:

hot pot and a bowl or 2 bowls and a microwave

INGREDIENTS:

- Water
- A stack of matzoh crackers - typically 4 to 8 (saltines or any other basic cracker can work)
- Salt to taste
- Garlic powder to taste
- 1 oz Powdered egg mix (raw eggs or cornbread mix can work)
- Chicken bullion (10 oz precooked packaged chicken breast can work)

OPTIONAL INGREDIENTS:

- Raw celery and carrots if you have access
- Fried rice seasoning if you have to use chicken breast for the stock
- Onion powder

DIRECTIONS:

Note: The amount of each ingredient is subjective because each state sells different sizes of items. Everything I do is by taste or eyeballing it.

1. Make the chicken soup broth by either mixing chicken bullion or pouring one or two 10 oz packages of precooked chicken into about 2/3 of a bowl of water or a hot pot. If using a hot pot, turn it on and let sit for upwards of 6 hours. If using a bowl of water, heat the water and

chicken to a boil using a microwave. Maintain the boil for 2 or 3 periods of 6 minutes. You can start this process early in the day by repeatedly heating the broth to stay warm. The chicken needs to stay warm in the broth for several hours to fully secrete its flavor into the broth.

2. Crush crackers into dust or as close to dust as you like. A few jagged chunks won't kill you. Add a pinch or two of salt, and add a dash or a pinch of garlic powder. If you have onion powder, add a pinch of it here. Give the crackers a light mixing.
3. Mix powdered eggs or several raw eggs in a bowl to create a binder. If your facility offers you no Passover-friendly items and you are forced to eat Chametz on Passover, you can use other binders if they're available. My facility has cornbread mix. Obviously not ideal, but if you have no unleavened product at all and would like to partake in the spirit of Passover, products that bind when heated can be watered down and used instead.
4. Mix the binding substance into the crackers and knead the crackers until the binder is evenly distributed and "soaked in" - about 3 to 5 minutes.
5. Form the mix into tiny balls roughly 1.5 inches in diameter.
6. Cook 1 or 2 matzoh balls at a time in the microwave for periods of 20 seconds until the egg cooks and binds together. You'll see the matzoh ball grow in size and become slightly firm. Roughly 40 seconds to 1 minute per matzoh ball.
7. 1 hour before serving and after the broth has sat for several hours, put some carrots and celery into the broth and heat to a boil. After boiling for about 4 minutes, remove the carrots and celery from the mixture if you like. You may remove the chicken at this time if you'd like.

8. If you used cooked chicken breast, add a pinch or two of fried rice seasoning to the broth and mix at this time. Also, add salt to the broth to taste.
9. Before serving, place the matzoh balls into the broth and let soak for about 10 minutes to soften their texture. You can either remove the chicken to put the matzoh balls in or leave the chicken in if you'd like to serve the dish with chicken.
10. Heat one final time for about 4 minutes and serve.

THE THIRD CUP: HONESTY

reflecting on our goals, hopes and ambitions

The third cup represents redemption as the seas split and the Jews begin to see the other side toward freedom. This is a season of change, and our whole world is changing alongside it. How might we re-frame our dreams and aspirations? What is still possible, and what needs a rejig? In this time of renewal, we need to be really honest about limitations and capacities. What are yours?



Passover cup by Hana Geber,
Jewish Museum, New York

בְּרוּכָה זֵה שְׁכִינָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלַכַת הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרְאֵת פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Brucha Yah Shechinah eloheinu Malkat ha'olam borayt p'ri ha- gafen.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, fem.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא
פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu Melech ha'olam boreh p'ri ha-gafen.

Ashkenazi pronunciation, masc.

Blessed is the Source that fills all creation and brings forth the fruit of the vine.

traditional English translation

Blessed are you Divine Intervener, who helps me to feel attuned to my boundaries and my intuition with ease, b'emet.

brakha/ blessing of honesty written by Sarit

THE FOURTH CUP: POSSIBILITY

reflecting on our positive options, our wisdom and creating space to imagine



Take a moment and ask yourself, in the face of the immense harshness, inhumanity and disconnection that comes from life inside prisons, are there ways that you can allow room for that which is sacred to flow through you and around you? Can you bring divinity close? What happens when we do not let our imaginations fall prey to the violence of our conditions? What space can be made for possibility, then?

The fourth cup invites us into a space beyond Mitzrayim. Pay attention to your breath here. Let your shoulders drop. Feel your belly and your spine. Consider narrowness, that turns to fear, that turns to contractedness, that turns to vulnerability, that turns to grief, that turns to courage, that turns to connection, that turns to movement, that turns to heartbeats, that turns to breath, that turns to spaciousness. Consider those who walk beside you; those you can see and those you cannot; those who were and who still are. Consider that every time you find home, it has changed and so have you. Consider possibility.

Brucha Yah Shechinah eloheinu Malkat ha'olam borayt p'ri ha- gafen.

Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu Melech ha'olam boreh p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed is the Source that fills all creation and brings forth the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are you, Knower of Truths, who asks me to name my wildest dreams & shows me all the places they are already alive within me.

TZAFUN: REVEALING WHAT IS HIDDEN

The Seder cannot officially end until we taste the *Afikomen*. This year, our bites of freedom harken to a future time when mass suffering is eased, and humanity, connection and care is close. In this way, the *Afikomen* will help us conclude both the ritual, and help us imagine what it means to become whole again. Restore that hidden piece of *Matzah* you tucked away, and eat it for dessert.

You are the wisdom of this time. You are living in the resilience of isolation, and the knowledge of how to survive in unimaginable circumstances. Take that wisdom, and use it for good. Make our ancestors proud as you stand on their shoulders. You CAN be with the waves of uncertainty, of change, of fear and find a grounded-ness, a flexibility, a laugh, a giggle.

Next year, may we be together in celebration, next year may all humanity be interconnected in justice and freedom.

BARECH: OFFERING GRATITUDE

DON'T HESITATE

Mary Oliver

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happened better than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

YIZKOR

Yizkor is a memorial prayer said for the deceased. In Jewish practice, mourning is both an individual and collective experience. With the *Yizkor* prayer, we come together as a community, across time and space and we use our prayer to grieve.

In Hebrew, the word *Yizkor* means, “God will remember”, and in this prayer we call on God to remember the souls of our relatives, friends, comrades, and community members who have passed on. When we pray *Yizkor*, we renew and strengthen the connection between us and our loved ones, honoring their beloved spirits.

Traditionally, we say the *Yizkor* prayer on the eighth day of Pesach. The Pesach holiday asks us to consider our cyclical journeys between narrowness and expanse, between oppression and freedom. Saying this prayer on Pesach reminds us that our liberation requires us to remember where we come from, to honor those whose lives and legacies we rest upon. Honoring ancestors is not always simple—many of the people we have loved and lost are complex people, with complex relationships, tinged with sorrow, pain, heartbreak. Many of the people whose memories we honor left this world too soon, were touched by the violence of dominance and empire. Be gentle with yourselves when you say this prayer. Remember that you are not alone, Jews stretched out across Turtle Island (North America) are saying this prayer with you, in our grief, in our pain, in our struggles as we continue to circle towards freedom together.



In addition to saying the *Yizkor* prayer, it is customary to light a *yahrtzeit candle*, a special candle that burns for the length of an entire day, to memorialize our departed loved ones. Included on the next page is a drawing of a *yahrtzeit* candle which you can write the names of those you wish to remember or draw on to dedicate it to those no longer with us.

YIZKOR PRAYER

RECITED FOR MEN*

יִזְכּוֹר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אָבָא מוֹרֵי (פלוגי בר פֿלונית) שְׁהַלְקָה לְעוֹלָמוֹ, בְּעֵבוֹר
שְׁבִלֵי נֶדֶר אֶתֶן צְדָקָה בְּעֵדוֹ. בְּשֹׁכֵר זֶה הִנְהָא נִפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה א
בְּצִוּוֹר הַחַיִּים עִם נִשְׁמַת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רַחֵל וְלֵאָה,
וְעַם שְׂאֵר צְדִיקִים וְצְדִיקָנוֹת שְׁבָגוּ עֵדוֹ, וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן:

RECITED FOR WOMEN*

יִזְכּוֹר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי (פלוגית בת פֿלונית) שְׁהַלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ,
בְּעֵבוֹר שְׁבִלֵי נֶדֶר אֶתֶן צְדָקָה בְּעֵדָהּ. בְּשֹׁכֵר זֶה הִנְהָא נִפְשָׁהּ
צְרוּרָה א בְּצִוּוֹר הַחַיִּים עִם נִשְׁמַת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה
רַחֵל וְלֵאָה, וְעַם שְׂאֵר צְדִיקִים וְצְדִיקָנוֹת שְׁבָגוּ עֵדוֹ, וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן:

TRANSLATION

May G-d remember the soul of
my father/my mother, my teacher
(mention the person's name here
along with the name of their parents)
who has gone to their [supernal]
world, because I will—without
obligating myself with a vow—work
towards justice for their sake. In this
merit, may their soul be bound up
in the bond of life with the souls of
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah,
Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and with
the other righteous ones who are in
paradise; and let us say, Amen.



*gender limitations in the Hebrew language can create barriers for many trans and non-binary Jews who wish to pray and who do not see themselves or their loved ones represented in the available language. Presently, we could not find a more inclusive option for this prayer. We sit with you in the complexity of this. We hold our collective multitudes with care. May all of our queer, trans, non-binary loved ones who have passed on feel uplifted and blessed in remembrance, in prayer and in love.