

# The Haggadah Vita



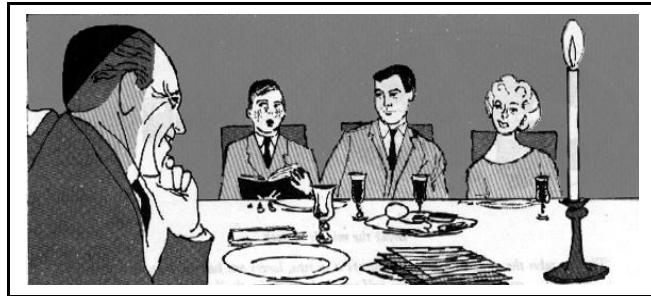
I knew that the Golden Age was all about me,  
and it was we who had been blind to it,  
but that it had never passed away  
from the world.

*A.E., Candle of Vision*

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## About the Haggadah

The *Haggadah Vita* is for life, for love, for my Self. I grew up with the traditional, Maxwell House version (you might recognize the pictures).



After enduring a score of conservative seders and then leading nearly two dozen more myself, I've come to know the basic challenge of the seder: that sooner than later people will clamor for dinner. Maybe that's why in ancient times they used to eat *first*.<sup>1</sup> However, since people nowadays rarely focus after dinner, I've designed this seder to be do-able in under two hours, all— except for a bunch of songs and the *afikomen*— before dinner. And that includes plenty of time for discussion.

To give people something to *nosh* on, I've moved the ritual food up sooner. I've added a veggie platter and the traditional egg to *Karpas* and a wild greens pesto to *Korech*. And I've moved post-dinner highlights up to before the meal as well, including opening the door for Elijah. Besides, it seemed hypocritical to open the door for him and not to strangers when we say *Ha Lachma*, so I combined the two sections.

I've removed a lot of material too, starting with the fine print my grand-aunts and uncles used to fast-forward through in Hebrew anyway. Most importantly, I've kept my big mouth *shut*. Rather than make people recite my idea of what Passover means, I've kept the seder itself as “skeletal” as possible, leaving it up to participants to ask about what interests them. This way each seder retains the traditional elements while being fresh and relevant each year, responding to the needs and desires of those present. It's the same reason why Jesus taught in parables, why the Tarot is in pictures, and why life and dreams teach through experience.

As I see it, Passover has five levels: the ritual itself; its traditional historical interpretation; its seasonal, pagan, and mythological aspects; its political implications (social justice, etc); and the personal, philosophical, and theological questions involved. I'm most interested in the personal, philosophical issues: are we slaves or are we free? What is God? And why are we here? Others want to focus on politics and social change. If we spend too much time in either area, however, we miss a lot of the ritual, including some beautiful & fun songs that we only sing once or twice a year. These activities are just as important, for every facet of Passover supports and gives meaning to the others. With this haggadah I've tried to strike a balance between them.

After the sanctification, the seder moves from its historical and seasonal to its political and personal aspects, moving deeper through layers of meaning. It cycles from reading to blessing to song in order to keep things lively. The energy is meant to build in waves, finally dipping into tragedy with the plagues and then reaching highest just before dinner with *Dayenu*. The seder's also designed to move along as efficiently as possible, letting people prepare for blessings, for example, while something else is going on.

As nice as all this sounds in theory, the fact is that I use this haggadah as a “resource book,” skipping around in it to suit the unique flow of the evening. If you're using this haggadah to lead your own seder, be prepared to juggle or skip sections depending on time and energy.

Two of the most magical and endearing parts of the seder are the Hebrew songs and blessings. Luckily we can sing them just as they are, for they sure *sound* good in Hebrew and most people have no idea what they're saying anyway (which is probably for the best). Consequently, we're free to translate them any way we please.

Even in English, I feel that each of us is free to define terms like “God” for themselves. So I have left in a few controversial words and passages that people may want to wrestle with.

Thanks to the many haggadot I've drawn from and to my family, who planted the *zera* or seed of *pesach* in my heart. *Que zera, zera!*

## Welcome

This is the *mitzvah* of the Passover seder. *Mitzvah* means “commandment” and *seder* means “order.” Passover is about freedom, yet the Passover seder is a ritual: in it, we do as we’re told. We are *commanded* to celebrate it in a certain way. What gives?

They say that the commandments are “ways to make us free.” How can this be? This is a tough question to answer. Who made up these orders? Who makes up our lives, the things we have no choice about? The fundamental question here is “are we slaves or are we free?”<sup>2</sup>

*Israel* means “wrestles with God,” and tonight we practice asking questions. Why is this night different from all other nights? We carry that curiosity into the rest of our lives, for *man* means “thinker.”<sup>3</sup>

What are your four questions?... Why is it *different*? Life, I mean; why is it different from what I expected?<sup>4</sup>

The Passover seder is a participatory event. *Haggadah* means “telling,” and some of my answers to FAQs can be found in the Appendix. But what you make of tonight’s ritual is up to you. There will be plenty of room for stories and discussion.

Feel free to glance through or even write in this booklet. It’s yours to keep. During the seder, we’ll typically go around the table, taking turns reading and leading blessings and singing songs together. We might skip around a bit and probably won’t include everything (after all, that’s what *Passover* means). If there’s anything in particular you’d like to see or make happen, perhaps something from your experience that I’ve left out, just let me know. And everything is optional.

*“But I’ve never been to a seder. I’m not even Jewish!”*

What makes someone Jewish? The Last Supper was a Passover seder, and many Christian traditions originate from it (breaking bread and drinking wine is one example). Much of Passover itself *pre-dates* Judaism, and Judaism itself has evolved tremendously.

The fact is, we do what *works*. I do some Jewish things, some “Christian” things, and some “Pagan” things because they are beautiful, useful, and fun. I pick and choose, for “the chosen people” means the ones who have chosen God.

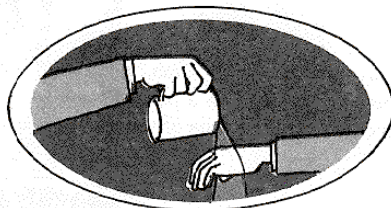
This seder, then, is for everybody. If you don’t like something, change it. If you’re Jewish, complain! (I do welcome feedback). If you don’t know the songs, you can always listen, tap, clap, bang on something or hum along.

Above all, the Bible says, “you shall rejoice in your festival.” Have fun. It’s The LAW.

Pray in whatever way you find easiest;  
for the easiest way is the best.

Emmet Fox

## Urhatz, Where we begin



*In preparation for the seder, please wash your hands and face, letting the water wash away the cares of the day, leaving everything have and have become.*

*Here is a traditional blessing, transliterated in both masculine and feminine form, respectively. Remember, you can always translate, change or replace the prayer as you wish. Feminine Hebrew alternatives to Adonai (literally, "lord" or "master") include Shechina (the female counterpart or aspect of God, somewhat like the Holy Ghost), Ruach (meaning "breath" or "Spirit"), Shadai ("breast"), and Yah (as in Hallelujah or "praise Jah").*

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל־נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.**

BARUCH ATAH ADONAI, ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM, ASHER KID-SHANU B'MITZ-VO-TAV,  
V'TZI-VANU AL NETILAT YA-DA-IM.

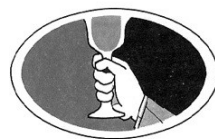
BRUCHA AT YA SHECHINA, ELATAYNU MALCHAT HA-OLAM, ASHER KID-SHATNU B'MITZ-VO-TAYHA,  
V'TZI-VATNU AL NETILAT YA-DA-IM.

Blessed art Thou, Creator of the Universe, who sanctifies us with a life of sacredness by teaching us to wash our hands.

## Kadesh, Introductions

*Pour the first glass of wine or juice. Let's share our names, our religious or cultural background, and a word for what you want Passover to mean to you. When everyone's ready, we raise our glasses and say:*

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.**



BRUCHA SHADAI H'ADAMA, ELATAYNU MALCHAT HA-OLAM,  
BORAYT P'RI HA-GAFEN.

**We praise the Soul of the Earth  
Who brings forth the fruit of the vine.**

*Drink up!*

*Once introductions are done, turn down the lights.*

Let us catch our breaths from slavery, from anxiety, from the need to do anything. We are here. We have shown up. We are together. This is enough.

Pause for a few breaths, then light the candles and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצּוֹתָיו וְצַנְט  
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.

BARUCH ATAH ADONAI, ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM,  
ASHER KID-SHANU B'MITZ-VO-TAV, V'TZI-VANU L'HADLIK NER SHE'L YOM TOV.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ  
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּי וְהַחַיִּי וְהַחַיִּי לְזַמַּן  
הַזֶּה.

BARUCH ATAH ADONAI, ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM, SHEH-HEH-HEYANU, V'KIYEMANU, V'HIGIYANU, LAZMAN HAZEH.

Blessed is the light that shines through us.

Praised is the heart and the breath that sustains me,  
the untold miracles that bring me to this season.

5769

I was Jewish when I wrote this  
Forgive me if I do complain  
But when I woke up this morning  
I found out I'm not off work today

An hour before sunset  
there were people running everywhere  
my *matzagna* was disgusting  
You know I didn't even care

Two thousand zero zero is the *goyeshe* count of time  
But tonight we're gonna party like it's 5769

I was hungry when I wrote this  
So sue me if I go too fast  
But after the harosetz  
I go home to do my income tax

Without the *afikomen*  
We'll be all stuck here another day  
Before I let that happen  
I'll steal that pouch away

Two thousand zero zero is the *goyeshe* count of time  
But tonight we're gonna party like it's 5769

# *Haggadah, The Telling*

Haggadah/telling: not read but told  
The word is only written down to preserve the tale in times of forgetfulness or exile...  
Haggadah/telling needs a setting aside of time  
To prepare and dwell within the story until it emerges  
A child of the teller's life spirit.

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

*Let's share our story of the Exodus.*

## *Pharaoh Pharaoh*

Pharaoh, Pharaoh  
O baby, let my people go. Unh!  
Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah (Repeat)

A burning bush told Moses just the other day  
That he should go to the Pharaoh and say  
It's time to let the slaves be free;  
Listen to God if you won't listen to me!

Moses and the slaves went to the Red Sea  
With Pharaoh's best army coming after quickly.  
Moses took his rod and stuck it in the sand  
And all those slaves walked on dry land!

That's the story of the stubborn goat  
Pharaoh should have known that chariots don't float  
The answer is simple; it's easy to find:  
When it's time to free the slaves, you had better mind!

Steve Brodsky and Mah Tovu

And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs. And the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into thy house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs.

Exodus 7:27-8

## *Mitrayim's Nile*

Just lean to the left and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip  
That started back in ancient times, while under Pharaoh's whip. While under Pharaoh's whip.

First Pharaoh started getting tough, the Jews were harshly bossed.  
If not for the courage of the midwives two, our people would be lost. Our people would be lost.

We cried to God, please rescue us, conditions here are vile.  
Our backs are wrecked and we ain't had sex in such an awful while. It really cramps our style.

So God said Moses take your staff, my magic you will know.  
To Pharaoh you will plead your case, to let my people go. To let my people go.

But Moses was a scaredy-cat, he *thaid* he couldn't *thpeak*.  
God said your lips don't need the snips, it's cause your heart is weak. It's cause your heart is weak.

Though Aaron stood by Moses' side his Pharaoh's heart was stone.  
The plagues are what we must endure before we can go home. Before we can go home.

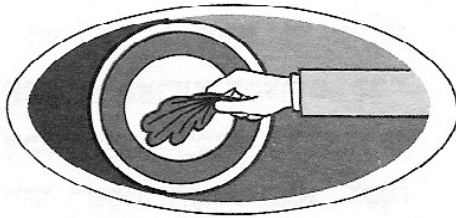
The frogs, the lice, and even boils, could not make Pharaoh bend  
God made it so he could not see that Moses was his friend. That Moses was his friend.

One day he broke when his own son the angel took away  
Said OK Jews you'd better cruise; I'll kill you if you stay. I'll kill you if you stay.

And so they skipped on baking bread but loaded up with stuff  
And shlepped it through the wilderness until they'd had enough. Until they'd had enough.

So join us here each year my friends, and do it Jewish style,  
And speak of ruts in which we putzed,

HERE AT MITZRAYIM'S NILE!<sup>5</sup>



## Karpas

*We dip some greens in the salt water and before eating them say:*

**בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מַלְךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.**

BRUCHA AT YA SHECHINA, ELATAYNU MALCHAT HA-OLAM, BORAYT P'RI HA-ADAMAH.

**Thank you O Source of Life, who brings forth the fruit of the Earth.**

*An egg may be dipped in salt water and eaten (there are also veggies to nosh on).*

*Betzayt Israel miMitravim*

*A call and response song led by the Rebbe (not printed herein).<sup>6</sup>*

The wheel of the law turns without pause  
After the rain, good weather in the blink of an eye.  
The universe throws off its muddy clothes.  
For ten thousand miles the landscape spreads out like a beautiful brocade.  
Light breezes, smiling flowers.  
High in the tree, among the sparkling leaves, all the birds sing at once.  
People and animals rise up reborn.  
What could be more natural?



After sorrow comes joy.

Ho Chi Minh

To our distant ancestors, Spring was a time of miracles. Seeing the new life springing from what had seemed dead earth, one could believe anything... It's no wonder that modern versions of the festival are tied up so strongly in miracles.

Rel Davis

It is strange that people will talk of miracles, revelations, inspiration, and the like as things past, while love remains.

Henry David Thoreau

♈ Spring is the season of opening, when the earth opens to receive seed, when the sprouts unfurl their leaves and flowers blossom. This is the time of Aries, the ram, the first astrological sign of the year. And April is named after Aphrodite, or Venus, the goddess of love.

*What signs of Spring are people experiencing?*

## Spring Fever

My beloved spoke, and said to me:  
"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
For lo, the winter has past,  
The rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
The time of singing is come,  
And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land;  
The fig tree puts forth her green fruit,  
and the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."<sup>7</sup>

*Song of Songs 2:10-13*

Rabbi Akiba said, "All the writings are holy, but the *Song of Songs* is the holy of holies."<sup>8</sup>

## Elijah-Yahatz-Motzi Matzah

*Pour the second cup of wine. Then pass Elijah's cup. Each pours a little of their cup into Elijah's and it is placed at the empty seat.*

When strangers reside in your land, you shall not wrong them...  
You shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33-4<sup>9</sup>

Before he died, the prophet Elijah declared that he would return once each generation in the guise of any poor or oppressed person, coming to people's doors to see how he would be treated. By the treatment offered this poor person, he would know whether the population had reached a level of humanity making them capable of participating in the dawn of the Messianic age.<sup>10</sup>

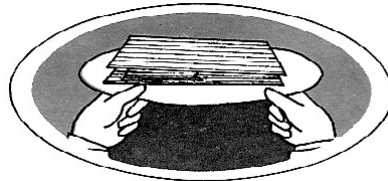
*A child opens the front door.*



*Eliyahu hanavi*

E-LI-YA-HU HA-NA-VI. ELIYAHU HA-TISH-BI  
E-LI-YA-HU E-LI-YA-HU E-LI-YA-HU HA-GI-LA-DI  
BIM-HEY-RA V-YA-MEY-NU YA-VO A-LEY-NU  
IM MO-SHI-ACH BEN DA-VID  
IM MO-SHI-ACH BEN DA-VID

*Ha Lachma*



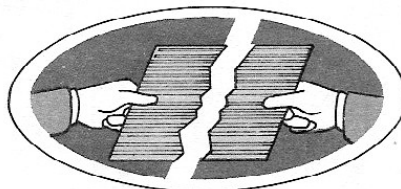
*Uncover the matzah plate. Lift the plate and say:*

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all those who are hungry, come and eat; let all who are in need, come and celebrate the holiday with us. Today we celebrate here, but next year we hope to celebrate it in Israel. This year we are slaves; next year may we be free.

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנָא דִּי אֲכָלוּ  
אֲבִהֲתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל-  
דְּכַפִּין יִיתֵי יְיָבֵל. כָּל-דְּצָרִיךְ  
יִיתֵי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָּא הָכָא. לְשָׁנָה  
הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָּא  
עֲבָדֵי. לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין:

HA LACHMA, HA LACHMA ANYA  
DEE A-CHA-LU, A-CHA-LU A-VA-HA-TA-NA  
B'ARA, B'ARA, D'MITZRAYIM.(x2)  
KOL DICHFIN YAY-TAY V'YAYCHUL;  
KOL DITZRICH YAY-TAY V'YIFSACH.  
HA-SHATA, HACHA, L'SHANA HA-BA'AH, B'ARA D'YISRAEL.  
HA-SHATA, AVDAY, L'SHANAH HA-BA'AH  
B'NAY CHORIN.(x2)

*The door may now be closed.*



*Break the middle matzah in two. Put aside the larger portion of the middle matzah as the "afikomen." Distribute the top matzah in one direction and the smaller part of the middle one in the other. Then sing:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל־אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

BARUCH ATAH ADONAI ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM,  
HA-MOTZI LECHEM MIN HA-ARETZ.

BARUCH ATAH ADONAI ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM, ASHER KIDSHANU B'MITZVO-TAV, V'TZIVANU AL A-CHILAT MATZAH.

**Praised be the Power that fashions bread from the Earth.**

**Blessed is the Spirit of Sharing in which we remember  
and eat *matzah*.**

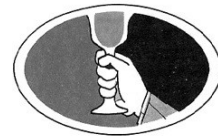
*Pass the "pushke."*

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, and he will turn the hearts of the parents to the children and the hearts of the children to the parents before the coming of the great and awesome Day of God.

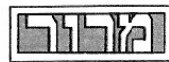
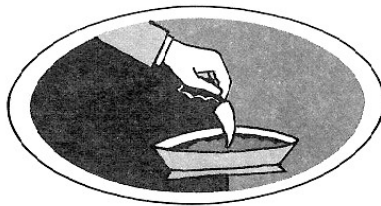
Malachi 3:23-4

*Bless and drink the second cup:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.



BRUCHA SHADAI H'ADAMA, ELATAYNU MALCHAT HA-OLAM,  
BORAYT P'RI HA-GAFEN.



## *Maror*

"I will pass through the land of Egypt," I and not an angel; "And I will smite every first-born in the land of Egypt," I and not a seraph; "And I will carry out judgments against all the gods of Egypt," I and not a messenger. "I, the Lord."<sup>11</sup>

*Come all ye Painful*

OH COME ALL YE PAINFUL  
COME LET US MAROR HIM

COME LET US MAROR HIM  
PILE ON SOME MORE

In times of freedom we must not forget the bitterness of slavery and in oppression, we must keep the hope of freedom alive.

Rabbi Hillel

*The Rebbe dishes out the horseradish and/or bitter herbs,  
according to each's good fortune for the year. Then we sing:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

BARUCH ATAH ADONAI ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM ASHER KIDSHANU B'MITZVO-TAV, V'TZIVANU AL A-CHILAT MAROR.

**Blessed is Life for being so flavorful.**

## Questions

### *Ma nishtana*

MAH NISHTANAH HALAILAH HAZEH,  
MIKOL HALEILOT? MIKOL HALEILOT?

SHEB'CHOL HALEILOT, ANU OCHLIN,  
CHAMEITS UMATSAH, CHAMEITS UMATSAH,  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH KULO MATSA.  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH KULO MATSA.

SHEB'CHOL HALEILOT, ANU OCHLIN,  
SH'AR Y'RAKOT, SH'AR Y'RAKOT,  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH KULO MAROR.  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH KULO MAROR.

SHEB'CHOL HALEILOT, ANU MATBILIN,  
AFILU PA'AM ACHAT, AFILU PA'AM ACHAT.  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH SH'TEI P'AMIM,  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH SH'TEI P'AMIM.

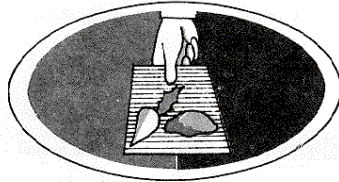
SH'B'CHOL HALEILOT, ANU OCHLIN,  
BEIN YOSHVIN UVEIN M'SUBIN,  
BEIN YOSHVIN UVEIN M'SUBIN,  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH, KULANU M'SUBIN.  
HALAYLAH HAZEH, HALAYLAH HAZEH, KULANU M'SUBIN.

*The youngest or least experienced asks:*

Why is it only on Passover night  
we never know how to do anything right?  
We don't eat our meals in the regular ways  
the ways that we do on all other days.  
On all other nights we may certainly eat  
all kinds of good high carb bready treats...  
Yes, on all other nights we eat all kinds of bread  
but tonight of all nights we munch matzah instead.  
On all other nights you would never consider  
eating an herb that was totally bitter.  
On all other nights you would probably flip  
if anyone asked you how often you dip.  
We dip once... maybe not; we don't ask your advice.

So why on this night do we have to dip twice?  
 On all other nights we can sit as we please:  
 on our heads, on our elbows, our backs or our knees.  
 On all other nights most sit upright while dining  
 so why on this night must we all be reclining?

adapted from *Uncle Eli's Haggadah*



## Korech, The World's First Sandwich

When Israel stood at the edge of the sea, each one said, "I will not be the first to enter." While they stood there, Nachshon ben Amminadav leapt into the sea. Only then did the others follow.

They plunged into the waters, going further and further, until it seemed the waters must cover their heads. Only when they had gone as far as they could through their own efforts did the waters part for them.

*Midrash Mechilta*<sup>12</sup>

It is said that during the plague of darkness, 80% of the slaves died because they did not deserve to be redeemed.<sup>13</sup>

*Distribute the bottom of the three matzah. Take the bitter with the sweet on it and eat. No blessing required!*

*Just a tad of charoset*

Just a tad of charoset helps the bitter herbs go down  
 The bitter herbs go down, the bitter herbs go down  
 Just a tad of charoset helps the bitter herbs go down  
 In the most delightful way!

## Maggid

*Pour the third cup.*



**In every generation** each of us is bound to regard ourselves as if we had personally gone forth from Egypt. As it is said, "You shall tell your child on that day, 'this is on account of what the Eternal did for me when I went forth from *Mitzrayim*.'" Thus it was not our ancestors alone, whom The Holy One redeemed but also us with them, so that we would reach the place that God swore unto our ancestors.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
 בּוֹרֵא, פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

BRUCHA SHADAI H'ADAMA, ELATAYNU MALCHAT HA-OLAM, BORAYT P'RI HA-GAFEN.

## Avadim Hayinu

AVADIM HAYINU, HAYINU  
ATA B'NAI CHORIN, B'NAI CHORIN  
AVADIM HAYINU  
ATA, ATA, B'NAI CHORIN, B'NAI CHORIN  
AVADIM HAYINU  
ATA ATA B'NAI CHORIN, B'NAI CHORIN

We were slaves in Egypt, and the Eternal brought us forth with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. If the Most High had not delivered us from bondage, who knows where we'd be now? Therefore, even if we were all Phd's in Ancient History, it would still be our duty each year to recount the tale of our departure from Egypt, and whoever learns humility from this is praiseworthy.

## V'hi sheamdah

וְהוּא שְׁמֵרָה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ. שְׁלֵא אֶתְד  
בְּלֶבֶד עֵמֶד עָלֵינוּ לְבִלְיֹתָנוּ. אֵלֵא שְׁבִכָל דּוֹר  
וְדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכִלּוֹתָנוּ. וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ  
הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם :

V'HI SHEAMDA, V'HI SHEAMDA, LAVOTAYNU V'LANU (x2)  
SHELO ECHAD BILVAD  
AMAD ALAYNU L'HALOTAYNU. ELA, SHEBECHOL DOR VADOR  
OMDIM ALAYNU L'CHALOTAYNU. V'HAKADOSH BARUCH HU  
MATZILENU MIYADAM.

It is She that sustains us. For not once, twice, or even three times have we stood face to face with annihilation. In every generation something threatens to destroy us, and every time Divine Providence delivers us from its grasp.

*Let us share family stories of loss and deliverance.*

## Past, Present, and Future

*Pour the fourth cup.*

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.  
But the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13:13

God led us out of Egypt "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm."<sup>1</sup> This recalls that the first to rebel against Pharaoh were the midwives. Shifra and Puah, who were possibly Egyptian, were ordered to kill all males born to Israelites. They not only disobeyed but sustained the infants as well. This is history's first recorded case of civil disobedience in defense of a moral cause.<sup>14</sup>

Our rabbis taught that when the Egyptians were drowning in the sea, the heavenly host broke out in songs of jubilation. God silenced them and said, "My creatures are perishing, and you sing praises?" (*Talmud Bavli*, Sanhedrin 39b).

---

<sup>1</sup> symbolized by the *zroa* (bone). Vegetarians might opt for the closely related word *zera*, meaning seed, which also sends forth a strong, outstretched "arm."

For coming out of *mitzrayim* is a birth– a birth of consciousness, a birth of humanhood; From the narrows to the spacious, from ‘not enough’ to ‘plenty,’ from belonging to a people to belonging to *all* people; through the contractions of our pharaoh heart, through the opening of the deep sea birth canal, with God for a Midwife.

Haggadah by Meryam

*And so we recall the plagues, removing a drop from our glass for each.*

DAM	BLOOD
TZ FARDEYAH	FROGS
KINIM	LICE
AROV	BEASTS
DEVER	CATTLE DISEASE
SH'CHIN	BOILS
BARAD	HAIL
ARBEH	LOCUSTS
CHOSHECH	DARKNESS
MAKAT B'CHOROT	SLAYING OF THE FIRST BORN

To testify to God's presence in the world is to insist on shifting our focus from pain to hope, and to dedicate our energies to transforming this world and ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

*Let us share our hopes for the future (just speak them out), as we softly sing*

*O'seh Shalom*

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְמָוִי הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם  
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

O'SEH SHALOM BIMRUMAV, HU YA-SE SHALOM ALAYNU  
V'AL KOL YISRAEL, V'IMRU, IMRU AMEN.

May the One who holds the heavenly dance  
help us to hear the music in our own lives.<sup>16</sup>

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
בוֹרֵא, פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.



BRUCHA SHADAI H'ADAMA, ELATAYNU MALCHAT HA-OLAM, BORAYT P'RI HA-GAFEN.

*(S)he Has Done Great Things*

When God brought us back to Zion,  
It seemed like a dream.  
Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
Our tongues with song.  
The nations said:  
God has done great things for them.

God *has* done great things for us.  
Restore us once again, O God, as  
Streams revive the desert.  
Then those who sow in tears shall  
Reap in joy. Then  
Those who go forth weeping,

Bearing their seeds,  
Shall come home with shouts of joy  
Bearing their sheaves.

Psalm 126

## ***Dayenu: Enough Already!***

*Reader:*

Had Adonai brought us out of Egypt and not divided the sea for us...  
Had God given us the Sabbath and not brought us to Mount Sinai...  
Had God given us the Torah and not led us into the land of Israel...  
For all these, alone and together, we say...

*Group:*

DAYENU!  
DAYENU!  
DAYENU!  
DAYENU!

ILU HOTZI, HOTZI ANU  
HOTZI ANU MI MITZRAYIM  
HOTZI ANU MI MITZRAYIM,  
DAYENU!

DAY-DAYENU, DAY-DAYENU, DAY-DAYENU  
DAYENU, DAYENU, DAYENU  
DAY-DAYENU, DAY-DAYENU, DAY-DAYENU  
DAYENU, DAYENU!

ILU NATAN, NATAN LANU  
NATAN LANU ET HA TORAH  
NATAN LANU ET HA TORAH  
DAYENU!

(CHORUS)

ILU NATAN, NATAN LANU  
NATAN LANU ET HA SHABBAT  
NATAN LANU ET HA SHABBAT  
DAYENU!

(CHORUS)

## ***Shulchan Orech: Dinner is Served!***



# Barech, Grace after the Meal

Pass the fifth cup, Elijah's cup, the cup of the stranger. May all who wish partake of it.

## Birkat Hamazon

zan um' - far - neis la - kol u - met - tiv la - kol u - mei -  
 hin ma - zon l' - hol b'ti - yo - tav a - sher... ba - rah. Ba -  
 ruh a - tah... a - do - nai ha - zan et ha - kol.  
 Uv' - nei y' - ru - sha - la - yim ir ha - ko - desh bim - hei - ra b' - ya -  
 mei - nu... Ba - ruh a - tah A - do - nai...  
 Bo - nech b' - ra - ha - mav y' - ru - sha - la - yim. A - mein.  
 B' - yom hag ha - ma - tzot... ha - zeh... zob -  
 Leader Group Leader Group Leader

BIRKAT HAMAZON  
 Ra - bo - tai n' - va - reih Y' - hi shem a - do - nai mi - vo - rah mei - a -  
 tah v' - ad o - lam. Bir - shut ma - ra - nan v' - ra - ba - nan v' - ra - bo - tai n' - va -  
 reih e - lo - hei - nu she - a - hal - nu mi - she - lo. Ba -  
 ruh e - lo - hei - nu she - a - hal - nu mi - she - lo... uv' - ru - vo ha - yi -  
 nu. Ba - ruh hu u - va - ruh sh' - mo. Ba -  
 ruh a - tah... a - do - nai e - lo - hei - nu me - leh ha - o - lam ha -  
 Leader Group Leader Group Leader Group

## Tzafun

It's time for the Afikomenafta! Since no one can leave until everyone has eaten from the hidden piece, whoever finds the afikomen may demand a reward. Once the afikomen is recovered:

L'shana Ha'ba'a

## לשנה הבאה בירושלים

L'SHANAH HA-BA-AH B-YIRUSH-A-LA-YIM!

## Hallel, Nirtzah: More Singing!

Adir Hu

(verses 2-4  
begin here)

1. A - dir hu a - dir hu yiv -  
neh vei - to b' - ka - rov bim - hei - rah  
bim - hei - rah b' - ya - mei - nu b' - ka - rov  
Eil b' - nei eil b' - nei b'nei veit - ha b' - ka - rov.

1. A-DIR HU, A-DIR HU, *chorus*
2. Ba-hur hu, ga-dol hu, da-gul hu ...
3. PO-DEH HU, TSA-DIK HU, KA-DOSH HU, *chorus*

*chorus:* YIV-NEY VAY-TO B'KAA-ROV  
BIM-HAY-RAH, BIM-HAY-RAH, B'YA-MAY-NU B'KAA-ROV  
EL B'NAY, EL B'NAY, B'NAY VAYT-HA B'KAA-ROV <sup>17</sup>

## Adir Bimlucha (Ki Lo Nae)

Like Adir Hu, an acrostic (not included herein).

## Take me out to the Promised Land

To the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game"

Take me out to the promised land  
Free me from slavery  
Bake me some matzah in great haste  
Don't worry 'bout flavor; give no thought to taste  
Oh it's rush, rush, rush to the Red Sea  
If we don't cross it's a shame  
For it's one, two, ten plagues you're out  
In the *Pesach* game!

## Echad Mi Yodeah

ECHAD MI YODEAH

Yemenite

The musical score is written in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The melody is simple and repetitive, with a focus on the vowel sounds of the Hebrew words.

E - ḥad mi yo - dei - ah? E - ḥad a -  
ni yo - dei - ah. E - ḥad e - lo - hei - nu, e -  
lo - hei - nu, e - lo - hei - nu, e - lo - hei - nu, e -  
lo - hei - nu she - ba - sha - ma - yim  
u - va - a - retz, she - ba - sha - ma - yim u - va - a - retz.

1. ECHAD, MI YODEA? ECHAD, ANI YODEA (CHORUS)
2. SHNAYIM, MI YODEA? SHNAYIM, ANI YODEA.  
SHNAY LUCHOT HA-BRIT (CHORUS)
3. SHLOSHA, MI YODEA? SHNA-IM, ANI YODEA.  
SHLOSHA AVOT, SHNAY LUCHOT HA-BRIT (CHORUS)
4. ARBA-A, MI YODEA? ARBA-A, ANI YODEA.  
AR-BA I-MA-OT, SHLOSHA AVOT, SHNAY LUCHOT HA-BRIT (CHORUS)
5. CHAMAYSHA, MI YODEA? CHAMAYSHA, ANI YODEA.  
CHAMAYSH CHUMSHAI TORAH...
6. SHISHA, MI YODEA? SHISHA, ANI YODEA. SHISHA SIDRAY MISHNA...
7. SHIVA...SHIVA YEMAY SHAVTA...
8. SHMONA... SHMONA YEMAY MILA...
9. TAYSHA... TAYSHA YARHAY LAYDA...
10. ASARA... ASARA DIBRAYA...
11. ACHAD ASAR... ACHAD ASAR KOCHBAYA...
12. SHNAYIM ASAR... SHNAYIM ASAR SHIVTAYA...
13. SHLOSHA ASAR... SHLOSHA ASAR MADAYA...

chorus: ECHAD  
ELOHAYNU (x5)  
SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA-A-RETZ.

## Bullfrog on the Bank

*The third verse of a folk traditional*

"Pharaoh's daughter on the bank  
Baby Moses in the pool" (x3)  
She hauled him out with a telephone pole  
And sent him off to school! Singing,

Tra la la, la la,  
La la lala la" (x3)  
She hauled him out with a telephone pole  
And sent him off to school!

## *The Haggadah Vita Theme Song*

*To the tune of Hava Nagila:*

HAG-GA-DAH VITA, HAG-GA-DAH VITA, HAG-GA-DAH VITA, V'RA-MA-NA  
HAG-GA-DAH VITA, HAG-GA-DAH VITA, HAG-GA-DAH VITA, V'SIMECHA

HAG-GA-DAH L'VITA, HAG GADYA B'VITA  
HAA-GEN-A-DASZENA V'SIMECHA

HAG-GA-DAH L'VITA, HAG GADYA B'VITA  
HAA-GENA-DASZENA V'SIMECHA

*repeat*

## *Wade in the Water*

Wade in the water  
Wade in the water, children  
wade in the water  
God's gonna trouble the water

Who's that yonder dressed in red  
Wade in the water  
Must be the Children that Moses led  
And God's gonna trouble the water

*refrain*

Who's that yonder dressed in white  
Wade in the water  
Must be the Children of the Israelites  
God's gonna trouble the water

*refrain*

Who's that yonder dressed in blue  
Wade in the water  
Must be the children coming through  
And God's gonna trouble the water

*refrain*

## *Let My People Go*

When Israel was upon the can  
let my people go!  
It pressed so hard it could not stand  
let my people go!  
Go down matzah, boiled egg, and horseradish  
Pepto Bismol,  
let my people go!

*Chad gadya*

*Chad gadya, chad gadya.*

One little kid my father bought for two zuzim.

*Chad gadya, chad gadya.*

Then came the cat and ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*

Then came the dog and bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*

Then came the stick and beat the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*

Then came the fire and burned the stick that beat the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*.

Then came the water and quenched the fire that burned the stick that beat the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*.

Then came the ox and drank the water that quenched the fire that burned the stick that beat the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*

Then came the butcher and slew the ox that drank the water that quenched the fire that burned the stick that beat the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*

Then came the angel of death and killed the butcher that slew the ox that drank the water that quenched the fire that burned the stick that beat the dog that bit the ca that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim, *chorus*

Then came the Holy One blessed be God!  
And destroyed the Angel of death that killed the butcher that slew the ox that drank the water that quenched the fire that burned the stick that beat the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid my father bought for two zuzim.

*Chad gadya, chad gadya*

Thanks for coming. See you next year!

# Whom does the Grail serve?



## A Few Questions & Answers

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### 1. *What is that image on the cover, and why is it there?*

This is the riveting Maxwell House rendition of *Chad gadya* (see page 19). This song appears on the very last page of that haggadah and most others (*haggadah* roughly means “storybook”).

There are lots of folk songs and tales like *Chad gadya*; “The Farmer in the Dell” is one example. They all describe the Great Chain of Being, i.e., the food chain, or in a larger sense, The System.

Einstein said that the most important question we have to answer is, “is the universe friendly?” How can this dog eat dog (or cat) world make any sense? Does all the pain, suffering, tragedy and injustice really turn out for the best?

One of God’s many names is *Yah*, as in *halleluyah* (i.e., “praise Jah”). When we tell our *haggadah*, the story of our lives, it’s easy to leave God out. When we find God in everything, in *Chad gadya*, we find peace. *Shalom Yah’Il!*

### 2. *Why do we tell the same story year after year? Don’t we know it already?*

A man must not swallow more beliefs than he can digest.

Havelock Ellis

Every seder is a little different. There’s always more to learn and a lot of the same old things to enjoy. Think of Spring. Is it the same each year? Even if so, do we ever get ‘past’ it? Like eating, hopefully the coming of Spring delightful every time. The seder is an eating ritual for this reason and because this way we literally *embody* the ideas, and grow.

They say “any tale told twice is fiction.” It means that the story is not the same every year. It changes because *we’ve* changed. We see it differently. And our story changes too; we see *ourselves* differently.

At the seder, we must be telling our own story, our own experience. Telling the story of others is not enough.<sup>18</sup>

We come together each year to share the story of our own blossoming with others. And our relationships deepen as our community takes root.

### 3. *What is Passover really about? Is it really a pagan holiday?*

It doesn’t take much inspection to see that the Passover story doesn’t really make much *sense*. For instance, if the Egyptians were trying to keep the Jewish population down, why kill the males, not the females (Ex 1)? One possibility is to avoid the birth of a prophesized leader. Sound familiar (Matthew 2)?

When we look into Passover’s origins, the truth always seems to evade us. Like life, it’s never quite what we think it is. Luckily it’s not a matter of whether the story is true but whether it’s *useful*. “Tradition is always tinged with expediency.”<sup>19</sup>

When I dig into the meaning of Passover, I find many layers. We’re supposed to be celebrating a historical event, yet even Jewish scholars admit that Passover stems from two earlier, pre-Jewish festivals woven into one. One of these is the barley harvest. Barley is first grain of the season to be harvested (Ex 9:31-2) and probably the first grain *ever* cultivated. Bakers know that barley has no gluten, so it’s really only suitable for flatbread. Could this be the simple, “real” reason why we eat unleavened bread on Passover?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Passover always begins, on the first full moon after Spring Equinox, halfway through the month of *Nisan* in the Jewish lunar calendar. Easter is always on the first Sunday *after* that full moon. The fact that these holidays shift around on the calendar is why they’re called “movable feasts” (not because they move your bowels). The old name for *Nisan*, *Abib*, means “young head of grain.” It’s not clear where the Hebrew word *matzah* comes from, but it *is* clear that the Greek word *matsa* means “barley bread” (Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 86-9).

In other words, if I go back far enough I find that they ate flatbread because they had no choice. It reminds me of a story I heard about another family tradition...

Every Christmas, mother would cut off the small end of the pot roast before she put it in the oven. Her daughter asked her why, and mom thought it had something to do with having enough or else putting some aside for God or maybe for the poor. Since mom wasn't sure, they asked grandma.

"I don't know," Grandma said. "That's just what my momma did." Luckily great-grandma was still alive, so they asked her.

"Oh *that*, child?" she said. "I did that because the oven was too small."<sup>1</sup>

Why do I eat matzah or celebrate Passover at all? Because I've always done it that way? Because I want to be Jewish, and that's what God or Rabbi Shlomo says Jews should do?

The word for Passover in Hebrew is *pesach*, which literally means "to skip," and another thing that happens at this time of year is that sheep give birth to lambs. Skipping is what lambs do (think of counting sheep), and on *Pesach* we are supposed to eat a new-born lamb. Note that Jesus, sacrificed on *Pesach*, is called the "paschal lamb" (1 Cor 5:7).<sup>2</sup>

Wait, there's more. We're supposed to eat the paschal sacrifice without breaking any bones. Now the way the Romans usually tested to see if crucified people were dead (and thus ready to take down) was by breaking their legs. But in Jesus' case they merely pierced his side, thereby fulfilling the requirement of the Paschal Lamb— *and* procuring a blood donation for The Holy Grail (Psalms 34:20, John 19:36).

However, WHO CARES? This is all trivia. Why should I celebrate Easter? Because I owe Jesus a favor?

Meaning is not to be found in history— or science, for that matter. If I am looking for the truth of the origins of certain practices so that I can have a reason for doing them, chances are that I'm looking for something given, something I have no choice over, some rock that I can build my tradition on. But in the choice lies the freedom, and in the freedom, the responsibility.

Meaning, motivation, *mitzvot*: these don't come from God, Nature, or History. What we choose to do makes us religious, not what we have to do. Joseph Campbell taught that myth is more true than history; in other words, the value lies not in the facts but in their interpretation. Choices are what make life into ritual, into art, and what matters is what we make of today. And who decides this? *Who* cares? Look to what you can't know, to what no one can tell you, to find meaning, to find God.

Freedom is what Passover is all about. And that is, truly, all we have.

#### 4. *Why do we usually eat parsley?*

{page 6}

Pagan Europe considered parsley a magic plant associated with the dead and capable of laying restless spirits. It was used as a garnish for meat to mollify the spirit of the butchered animal. Even the spoken name of parsley was thought an effective protection against vengeful ghosts, which is why it often occurs in charms and the choruses of folk songs... in Christian tradition, parsley must not be planted on any day but Good Friday...<sup>20</sup>

One thing parsley will certainly mollify is your stomach. It is traditional in Roman appetizers, Italian *antipasto* ("before pasta"), and Swedish Bitters to have something bitter before a meal.

These all contain something to get the digestion going. Many poisonous plants are bitter, and some say that eating bitter herbs fools your body into thinking it had better start digesting soon!

#### 5. *Why do we always eat eggs?*

{page 6}

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1 Another example: Jews always smash a glass at a wedding. This is generally regarded as a way of saying, "let's party," yet is actually supposed to be a solemn memorial to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans (c. 70 CE). I was at a wedding once where the Rabbi got quite upset about this!

2 Even smearing blood on your doorposts, something that may strike us today as highly unusual, was apparently quite common in the ancient world. The Chinese did it on their New Year to repel demons (Walker, *Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, 678-9).



The egg is the quintessential symbol of birth. It is shaped like a zero (or rather, vice versa, which is why the term for zero in tennis, “love,” is a corruption of the French word for egg, *l’oeuf*<sup>21</sup>), symbolizing silence, emptiness, the womb from which the myriad forms of existence are born (note that the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *aleph*, has no sound).

The egg is the perfect symbol of creation. Not only does it produce life itself... but the shell represents Earth; the membrane, Air; the yolk, Fire; and the white, Water.<sup>22</sup>

The egg is sacred to Aphrodite (or Freya) as well as Oestre, (a.k.a., Astarte, Ishtar, Ashera), the goddess celebrated at Easter (as in *estrogen* and the *estrus* cycle).

A more Jewish explanation for why we eat eggs is that most foods soften when you cook them. The egg, on the other hand, gets harder. Historically, it’s said that putting Jews in the “oppression cooker” only hardens their determination to stay Jewish. When Jews have it relatively easy (like in the US today), they tend to assimilate.

#### 6. *Why do we wash and dip into salt water?*

Traditionally the salt water represents the tears cried by the suffering slaves.

Sorrow is a measure of the depth of life. It carves a hole big enough to hold your richest feelings and experiences. Each tear is a precious memory seeking expression. Let them all out and in the middle of your puddle of sorrow gaze upon your wealth.

*The Cosmic Tribe Tarot*

Salt water can also represent the ocean, birthplace of life. Dipping in the water, then, as in baptism, can symbolize rebirth.<sup>23</sup> In neolithic burials the dead were frequently buried in fetal position in egg-shaped graves.<sup>23</sup> The first thing that Jewish mourners eat is eggs.<sup>24</sup>

#### 7. *Why do people search for eggs on Easter?*

This could represent the Greek myth of Demeter searching for Persephone— essentially, Spring rebirth. Hunting for the *afikomen* (see page 26) could mean something similar.

#### 8. *Why is there an empty seat at the table?*

{page 7}

Because our redemption is bound up with that of people everywhere, including those who will not eat tonight.

When we are told to love the stranger as yourself, this doesn’t mean as *much* as you love yourself, but as a *part* of yourself: your greater, true Self (see also question 27). The empty seat, then, can represent on a social level the same thing as the *afikomen*: the missing piece, our ‘other half,’ that part of ourselves we long for in order to (re)gain a sense of completion, of wholeness.

Being a hopeless romantic, it’s actually painful for me to see an empty seat. That’s why it’s so important that everyone arrive on time: with *several* seats missing, it’s that much harder for me to move ahead.

Sufis describe this feeling as the song of the reed pipe. To make a flute, a cane is cut from the grass growing beside a stream. The sound it makes is the reed crying to return to its home.

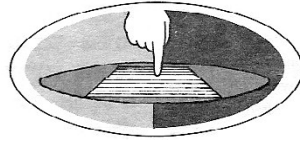
We are all cut from the shore, torn from our home. Our home is with God, but God is not so far away. Being with God— in my view at least— simply means being at one with the world. As long as we see ourselves as individuals, we suffer our own isolation. When we see ourselves as part of something greater, then we may suffer the pain or loss of others, but we gain the joy of “coming home.”

The empty seat, then, is there to remind us that we are not all here.

That said, when I say “let all who are hungry come and eat,” I don’t really expect or want some stranger to walk in and join us. A seder is not a soup kitchen. I try to be generous in welcoming anyone who expresses an interest in attending beforehand, but I also try to have a

range of ages and a certain percentage of Jews present. Of course if someone does show up, there's always room.

### 9. *Why do we eat matzah?*



Traditionally, we eat matzah because there was no time to let the bread rise as the Jews quickly escaped Egypt (but see also question 3, above).

Second, it is said that flat bread represents the food of *oppressed* people (but see also question 11, below).

Third, unleavened bread is simple, uncultured. Getting back to simplicity reminds us of our roots. We do this at *Sukkot*, too, the Festival of Booths (Tabernacles). For eight days, we re-experience a basic, primitive shelter, just as on Passover, we eat a plain, uncultured food. Then it's back to bagels and air conditioning!

Putting aside our modern luxuries for a week says something else to our egos: that we're not the ones in charge. The fact is that, like yeasted bread, we are all somewhat puffed up with hot air. *Hametz* is that bit of Pharaoh that we carry around when we put on airs, thinking we're the ones running the show. Even piety can lead to pride and arrogance<sup>24</sup>. But the exodus is no ego trip.<sup>25</sup>

The Torah states, "You shall guard the *matzot*" (Ex 12:17). According to Rashi [a medieval commentator], "*matzot*" can be read as *mitzvot* [good works]. Thus, just as our *matzot* shouldn't turn to *hametz* [pride], so too our *mitzvot* shouldn't.<sup>26</sup>

That's why you'd be hard-pressed to find any mention of Moses in traditional haggadahs. God's the hero, not Moses. The strength in our hands and outstretched arms is divine. Even Jesus said, "The Father in me, *He* doeth the works" (see also question 18 below).

Another aspect of *hametz* is that wild yeast, the kind they used before Fleishman's, makes bread sour, hence sourdough (in fact, the Hebrew word for sourdough starter is actually *se'or*<sup>27</sup>). Can we let go of our sourness, our resentments?

The lesson of slavery could have been one of self-pity: to flaunt our suffering before other peoples so as to convince them that we are "owed" because of our experience. We could have wallowed in our role of victim. Or we could have learned to be more "realistic" about this harsh world, maintaining that the only way to survive is to be constantly on guard. We could say, "having been enslaved by a people who at first welcomed us, we must never again let our guard down. Now we know we can trust only each other; everyone else is out to get us..."

Our ideal is to be able to deal humanely with the stranger, neither out of fear nor out of a need to dominate or patronize, but out of deep caring, having ourselves once been strangers in a strange land.<sup>28</sup>

For more on making life into lemonade, see *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can* by Carolyn Myss. For even more on *hametz*, see questions 12 and 27.

### 10. *Why are there three ritual matzahs?*

{page 8}

One interpretation is that the middle matzah is the bread of affliction/poverty while the top and bottom ones symbolize abundance. Tonight we experience both. The two loaves of abundance, by the way, correspond to the two loaves customary on Sabbath eve (which correspond, in turn, to the two portions of manna granted for the Sabbath in the wilderness (Ex 16:22)).

Another interpretation is that the three matzah represent, from top to bottom, our past liberation, our present situation, and our future redemption.

11. Why does it say matzah was the bread of the slaves?. Wasn't it what they ate once they were freed?

{page 8}

It's both. Matzah can be the bread of affliction or the bread of freedom, depending on how you look at it. "It is the dual nature of matzah that is the secret of its importance... It is not in appearance that freedom is to be found."<sup>29</sup>

Matzah, as humble as it is, can represent freedom, and this teaches us not to equate freedom with wealth. My dad used to say, *Mas vale pan con amor que carne con dolor* (literally, "bread with love is more valuable than meat with pain"). If you've ever gone backpacking, you know what he means: the simplest dinner tastes delicious. To a great extent, slavery is in the eye of the beholder.

Consumed with anger,  
The world is an ugly place.  
bathed in happiness,  
The world is a wonderful place.  
But, aha! the same world.<sup>30</sup>

What is it that you're angry about? What are you feeling stuck with? Are you so sure this isn't part of God's plan? *Hametz* (see question 9) represents our enslavement to our own idea of what's right. Essentially, it's the impulse to be completely free: to throw off all bonds, all obligations, all authority.<sup>31</sup> But self-righteousness (i.e., thinking you know what's right) is bondage to an idea, and this is idolatry. Our challenge is to see beauty in the beast (see question 18).

For comparison, the word *yoga* means "yoke": to bind oneself in service to God, just as the word *religion* means "to bind back together." When we commit ourselves in service to the whole, which is God, we find true liberation.

12. Why do we say "now we are slaves" and "next year in Israel (or Jerusalem)?"

{page 8}

This passage was written during the Babylonian exile ("By the rivers of Babylon..."), from 586 to 537 BCE (about 50 years). So why don't we update it?

Human slavery (not to mention animal, plant, and planetary slavery) is alive and well. And I'm not just talking about sweatshop labor. Do you pay rent? A mortgage? Do you need money to feed yourself? If you have to pay for a place to live, if growing your own food is not an option, you are a slave. A piece of land, like clean air and water, is our birthright. On top of this, unless you profit from the Federal Reserve, the IMF, or the World Bank, you are a slave to those who print money at will, causing inflation for the rest of us (see *The Creature from Jekyll Island* by G. Edward Griffin).

Even if you happen to be either loaded or enlightened, saying "I am free" is like saying, "this finger on this hand is free." We are all in this together.

Also, slavery is never purely physical. That's why Israel is not a place we can move to in order to be free. Look at "Jerusalem": it is hardly The City of Peace. The global economy, like the whole of human history, is the fallout from The Fall of Man. It's a drama we enact in each of our lives. They say "denial is not a river in Egypt." Like *mitzrayim* (literally, "the narrow places"), the promised land is a state of mind.

In that respect, there is some debate as to where the Passover story should begin. The obvious answer is that it starts in Egypt: *Avadim hayenu l'Pharaoh b'Mitzrayim* ("We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt"). But some rabbis have argued that the story begins long before: *Mi-tehilah ovdei avodah zarah hayu avotienu* ("In the beginning our ancestors worshipped idols"). So in typical rabbinical style, most haggadahs accommodate both perspectives. Why?

Notice that both passages incorporate the word *avodah*. In Hebrew, the word for slavery also means service or worship. Idolatry is worship of anything other than God.

Idols are those things that humans perceive as powerful in this world. They represent those forces over which we seem to have no control, and which therefore must be placated... Idol worship is a form of self-enslavement to those things we fear and thus come to serve... The enslavement is real, whether it be to other people (parents, spouses, children, bosses), or to old habits, or to our jobs, or to self-fulfillment, or to any of our fears and insecurities.<sup>32</sup>

By saying “this year we are slaves,” i.e., by acknowledging that we are all in this together and that we have ties in our lives, involuntary slavery can become voluntary servitude. We do our part, yet we recognize that our obligations are only temporary, and that our ultimate commitment is to God alone.

13. *Why do we distribute the top matzah and part of the middle matzah?*

{page 8}

One possibility, if these represent affliction and abundance (see question 10) is even wealth can be a burden when we hoard it. On the other hand, both our burdens and our bounty become the bread of freedom when we share them.

Another possibility, taking these matzahs to represent the past and the present, is that on Passover we are sharing both and that the story goes on: we are always halfway through our lives (see question 2).

14. *What does the word “afikomen” mean?*

{page 8}

It’s possible that the word *afikomen* derives from the Roman *epikomios*, or entertainment after dinner, which is of course when we traditionally look for the hidden matzah. In fact, it is said that the *afikomen* should be last thing you taste on Passover night. This may have to do with another possible origin for the word having to do with the “Last Days.” In Greek *aphikomenos* means “the one who comes,” i.e., the Messiah. And who opens the door for Elijah, the prophet who heralds the coming of the Messiah? Who finds the *afikomen*, the missing inner half?

What is broken off is not really lost to us, so long as our children remember and search.<sup>33</sup>

15. *What does the afikomen represent?*

{page 8}

Our inner child? Our lost wholeness, our other half (*anima/animus*)? A way to make a buck? (Now that’s *redemption*.) Youthful aspirations aside, it is said that we hide the larger portion because in this world, more is hidden than revealed.

16. *What’s a “pushke” and why do we pass it?*

{page 9}

It’s a Sephardic tradition in my family to pass a sack with a rock in it weighing a few pounds around the table. Each person “lugs” this sack their back for a moment before passing it on. This is a ritualized token experience of heavy labor. Since it can also be seen as a way of sharing the load (as opposed to passing the buck), I sometimes combine this tradition with the necessity of collecting money from people to help defray expenses, like passing the hat– or in this case, the *pushke*. The *pushke*, in Yiddish, is a traditional charity donation can.

17. *What is the significance of the passage from Malachi?*

{page 9}

These are the closing words of the *Prophets*, the second of three parts to the Old Testament (along with the *Torah* and the *Writings*). They are traditionally read on “the Great Sabbath,” the Saturday preceding Passover (like “Palm Sunday” before Easter).

There’s a karmic lesson here.

I have known you the most intimately of all the people of the earth; therefore I bring the evil you do back to yourselves.

Amos 3:2

So much of our karma, that which we still carry to work out, is contained in our relationship between parents and children. Reconciliation must precede union with God, for God is nothing but all of us.

18. *God makes it clear that it is S/he and no one else who will slay the Egyptians’ first-born. Why?*

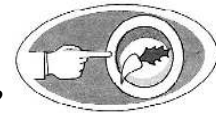
{page 9}

Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

Job 5: 6-7

While it may *look* like a free agent like Moses, Jesus, an earthquake, terrorists, the government or the angel of death (see cover illustration) is either to thank or blame for anything, God is always behind everything. This is especially important at Passover, which is so full of signs and wonders. It’s why Jesus said to let “thine eye be single” (Mt 6:22). In other words, “whatever you see, see it as God. There is nothing going on on this planet but God”<sup>34</sup> (see also question 9).

One angel in particular is worth mentioning in this regard; that’s Satan, who in the oldest books of the Bible is simply God’s emissary.<sup>35</sup> Don’t shoot the messenger!



19. *Why do we use horseradish for the bitter herb when it’s not bitter?*

{page 9}

I think this has to do with what is/was readily available in Eastern Europe (and at the supermarket). Besides, horseradish certainly opens you up and, in sufficient amounts, even makes you cry. “Harshness gives us the humility necessary for freedom.”<sup>36</sup>

20. *If the bitter herbs represent slavery, why don’t we eat them before the matzah?*

We first need that taste of freedom to truly know and feel how bitter is slavery. Without that taste of freedom, it would be easy to accept slavery as part of the human fate. The midrash states: “By far the worst part of slavery in Egypt was the fact that the Israelites had come to accept it.”<sup>37</sup>

21. *Why **these** four questions?*

{page 10}

These are just examples. The Talmud says that if people have their own questions you can just skip the *Ma Nishtana*.<sup>38</sup> In the traditional haggadah, two of these questions aren’t even answered. They’re just there to stimulate discussion. If you wanted all the answers we’d be up all night!

22. *Why do we have to recline to the **left**?*

{page 5 & 11}

First of all, we're commanded to lean in order to be at ease (go figure). This is because the seder is modeled after the Greek *symposium*, in which people discuss things while slaves fan them and dangle grapes, etc. into their mouths. You get the picture.

We lean to the *left* probably because most people are right-handed. But *why* are most people right-handed? Whether or not this is statistically natural, we do know that left-handers, even in this country just a few decades ago, were regularly *forced* to switch over to using their "right" hand.

What makes the right side the right (correct) side and the left, as in Latin, the *sinistre* side? This surely stems from the patriarchal suppression of the female, *yin*, counterclockwise, and lunar side of things more than 5,000 years ago. This is just one example of how deep-seated and invisible oppression can be.

### 23. *Why do we eat charosetz?*

{page 11}

I want to leave, don't want to stay here  
Don't want to spend another day here  
Though I wanna split now, I can't quit now  
You've Really Got a Hold on Me

The Miracles, "You've Really Got a Hold on Me"

People glibly say the *charosetz* symbolizes the mortar the slaves used to build with. But then why is it sweet? Because slavery can be sweet (see also question 25).

If the Israelites really did number two million, they would have constituted possibly as much as 30-40% of the population in Egypt. How could such a huge minority allow itself to be enslaved for so long?

<u>Location</u>	<u>Proportion of Slaves</u>
Athens, fifth century BCE	30 percent
Italy, end of the Republic	35 percent
Southern United States, 1860	33 percent <sup>39</sup>

What's the most basic and invisible form of slavery? Where is most of our power? Some say the *charosetz* symbolizes sex (and resisting sexual slavery). According to a legend in the Babylonian Talmud, the Egyptians forbade the Israelites to have sex. If you've read *Civilization and its Discontents*, you can understand why. Our life energy manifests itself most clearly in our sex life. In fact, perhaps *all* life energy is sexual energy, and personal freedom begins with freeing one's sexuality.<sup>40</sup>

Just as sex can bring us together, the *charosetz* can be seen as the mortar that binds us. Even the most onerous chores and drudgery can be a wonderful time of cohesion, a social time we are all too lacking with all our labor-saving (and gas-spending) devices.

### 24. *Why do we use the bottom matzah for the sandwich, and why is there no blessing over it?*

{page 11}

The bottom matzah is often taken to represent salvation (see question 10). We experience redemption when we take the bitter with the sweet (see question 11). At that point, no blessing is required because our life is a blessing. We're *living* the acceptance, the gratitude.

### 25. *What's with the guy jumping into the sea?*

{page 11}

It takes individual faith and initiative to make a change.

*Pesach* means to jump, pass over. The beginning of personal liberation is 'jumping out' of our habits and routines. True liberation is not achieved by a gradual, comfortable process, but by jumping out of what is familiar to embrace the unknowns of freedom.<sup>41</sup>

When you are about to leave Egypt— *any* Egypt— do not stop to think, "but how will I earn a living out there?" One who stops to make provisions for the way will never get out of Egypt.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps this is why, when Jews traditionally clean their houses out of *hametz* (leavened products), they can't just stow it elsewhere. No trust fund trippies. We must leave our baggage behind. Otherwise, our possessions may come to possess us.<sup>43</sup>

## 26. What does it mean that 80% of the slaves "didn't deserve" to be free?

{page 11}

It means they chose not to. We must open the door so that Elijah (or *Shechina*, the spirit of God, the Holy Ghost) can enter.

Who will comprise the "righteous remnant," the one-fifth that merit the redemption? Those who cry. Those who recognize that Western culture is killing us... In Egypt, *Hashem* [God, or literally, "The Name"] only redeemed those who wanted to be redeemed. The others wanted to be Egyptians. Do we want to be redeemed or do we want to be Egyptian?<sup>44</sup>

Of course we don't mean Egyptian literally. Note that a number of non-Hebrews also chose to leave Mitzrayim (Ex 12:38). It's about choice. A pupil of the Indian saint Ramakrishna once asked, "by what means can one see God?" Ramakrishna replied,

Can you weep for him with a yearning heart? Men shed a jugful of tears for their children or wife or money. But who weeps for God? So long as the child remains engrossed with toys, the mother is busy doing household duties. When the child gets tired of its toys, throws them aside and cries for its mother, then the mother runs in haste and takes the child in her arms.<sup>45</sup>

Is there anything wrong with *not* choosing God? Either those who died were not ready to change (i.e., they were too complacent) or perhaps they simply chose otherwise, i.e., they were happy just the way they were. Which story you pick depends on how moralistic you want to be. In other words, was there any fault, blame, or error in their choice? Is dying the end of the world?

There is no failure. Just a big field to wander in.

Natalie Goldberg

## 27. What happened to the section on the four children?

As of yet I don't find it worth spending time on (so I passed it over). However, I do want to offer this discussion of the "evil" son.

The *hametz* that we avoid on Passover is said to represent *yetzer ha-ra*, the "evil impulse" (see also question 9). In this instance, what the haggadah says the evil or wicked son is doing is *kafar bayikar*, which means, "going against a cardinal principle." What is this principle?

One possibility is *Hayikar*, "The Principle," which is another name for the central tenet of Judaism, the *Sh'ma*: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." What does this have to do with the evil son? If we take God to be the whole of which we are a part, i.e., the universe (which means "the one turning"), then the message of the *Sh'ma* is the same as that of practically every religion, namely, that "we are one." We are all in this together, so what's best for one is best for the other, and what hurts one hurts the other. That's why the Exodus is not about "us" and "them"; both are part of a system, *The* system.

The *Sh'ma* concludes with a reminder that God brought us out of Egypt (Num 15:41). This brings up another part of what the evil son may be denying, namely, that "God acts in history to redeem us."<sup>46</sup> We're part of one universal process, one in which everything turns out for the best.

Some haggadahs prefer to call the evil child “isolated.” Indeed, the Torah says that whoever disregards Passover by eating *hametz* (see question 9) “shall be cut off from Israel” (Ex 12:15). Like many dire-sounding biblical pronouncements, this can be read not as a punishment but as a natural consequence of one’s choices. I isolate *myself* whenever I try to make it, think I can make it, or think I have to make it on my own. This is the essence of evil, sin, and the fall of man.

We try to live apart from God. We try to do without Him. We act as though we had life of our own; as separate minds; as though we could have plans and purposes and interests separate from His. All this, if it were true, would mean that existence is not one and harmonious, but a chaos of competition and strife. It would mean that we are quite separate from our fellow man and could injure him, rob him, or hurt him, or even destroy him, without any damage to ourselves, and, in fact, that the more we took from other people the more we would have for ourselves. It would mean that the more we considered our own interests, and the more indifferent we were to the welfare of others, the better off we would be. Of course it would then follow naturally that it would pay others to treat us in the same way, and that accordingly we might expect many of them to do so. Now if this were true, it would mean that the whole universe is only a jungle, and that sooner or later it must destroy itself by its own inherent weakness... But of course, it is not true, and therein lies the joy of life.<sup>47</sup>

Forgetting God is the fundamental sin, yet it’s nothing to be ashamed of; we all do it. In fact, I’d say the four children are stages that we all go through– or better yet, alternate between. I appreciate, for instance, that while the “wise” child only asks about what we should do on Passover, the “evil” child asks *why*.

When it comes to being isolated, even Moses was somewhat stuck in *mitzrayim* (i.e., narrow-thinking). When God told him to confront Pharaoh, Moses said ‘I couldn’t possibly do that. I have a speech impediment!’ (“uncircumcised lips”, Ex 4:10-12). So of course God says

‘Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I the LORD? (Ex 6:12,30)

Similarly, when the angel told Sarah (who was elderly) that she would have a child, she laughed. So God asks Abraham,

‘Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying: Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old? Is anything too hard for the LORD? (Gen 18:13,14)

Note that in the Exodus story, God doesn’t rush in to save his people until they cry out to him.<sup>48</sup> That is, when we ask for help. “The healing begins the moment we recognize the possibility of possibility.”<sup>49</sup> Is anything too hard for God?

## 28. Isn’t describing Passover as liberation from the womb rather misogynist?

{page 13}

Calling the exodus a birth is misogynist only if change is patriarchal. Passover is about leaving any circumstance or state of mind that is no longer appropriate. Egypt was appropriate as the womb of Israel just as it is for every child. Then there comes a time to move on.

The Exodus story begins in Goshen, the place where Joseph’s family settled when they arrived in Egypt. Goshen midrashes (i.e., free associates) into the word *gooshah*, the soil, the substance of sustenance. This grounding is like the womb of Mother Earth: protecting, nurturing. Goshen/Gooshah is the security that allows life to continue. However, eventually comfort becomes constraint, safety becomes routine. The natural human urge for development bursts like a swelling seed.<sup>50</sup>

However, even as it grows, that seed remains rooted in the soil. We are not liberated *from* the Earth but *through* it.

## 29. Why isn’t there more political stuff about social justice and the environment in this haggadah?



Ever since I left for college, nearly every seder I've been to talks about if not focuses on "modern plagues" like environmental devastation and economic injustice. Why is this night different?

I don't think Passover is about environmental devastation and economic injustice. And that's not what I'm about.

Pissed off yet?

I don't focus on the negative, which doesn't mean that I ignore it. On the contrary, I quit activism when I realized that fighting for a cause was self-defeating. Nearly twenty years later, I'm still not able to be an effective activist because, in a word, I forget to love my enemy—rather, that *there are no enemies*.

Let's look at the definition of "Passover," i.e., *pesach*:

"The verb *p-s-h* has been understood in three different ways: 'to protect,' 'to have compassion,' and 'to pass over.' [The last option] seems to be the least likely of the three possibilities."

N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 87

Is our entire holiday built around the least likely definition?

According to Jerry Donoghue, who uses Dick Schwartz's Internal Family Systems model to teach internal Nonviolent Communication (a.k.a., Compassionate Communication), there are basically three ways to respond to hurt, whether it happens to ourselves or others. One is to try to protect: that is, to try to *fix* the situation. Another is to listen empathetically: that is, to provide a space for healing to occur *spontaneously* without trying to guide or speed it along. The third is to ignore the pain, drowning it in food, entertainment, or some other distraction. These are the same three options for what *pesach* means, and the quality of our lives is largely determined by which of these choices we make.

Most of us have heard of the "fight or flight" response. This equates to fixing the situation, i.e., protecting yourself or others, either by trying to change things or by leaving. There is also the "freeze or faint" response, which is a paralysis, a passing or checking out, either by playing dead or by burying your head in the sand. And then there is standing and facing the problem, which does not mean doing anything about it. For many of us, this is very hard to do. Yet this is often what's required, and *all* that's required, to end a very bad situation, i.e., a nightmare.

Nightmares, the situations in or sleeping or waking life that haunt and afflict us, are driven by fear, i.e., avoidance. When you stop driving, i.e., running from or attacking them, they stop moving too. It's like chasing your own tail, fighting your reflection, or trying to escape your own shadow. It works in the movies, where the hero, through luck or intelligence, usually manages to outwit or outmaneuver the monster or villain. But when we want our nightmare to stop, our horror movie to end, we don't fight the monster on screen. All we have to do is realize that it's just a movie. That's what truly facing your situation means.

It's important to remember that this is not about what we *do*. It's about what we *want*. Do we *want* the situation to be any different? Trying to change something means *wanting* to change it. It doesn't matter whether we're standing or moving, i.e., how it looks on the outside.

We look at the Buddhist and think his advice is, "don't just do something, sit there." But as soon as you try it, you see that sitting still is not the same as meditating. Neither is Buddhism about sitting still while you or someone else is suffering. Somehow, you act without wanting things to be any different.

It seems paradoxical, but it's actually not that complicated or difficult. The only thing that matters is *what our actions are motivated by*. The bottom line is, you must not try to change anything or anybody except out of love for them. So there is no "bad guy" to fight, whether it's the government, or terrorists, or your boss, your spouse, or yourself.

Forget everything I've said, forget what Passover is about. Just remember this line from the poet Rilke:

"Perhaps everything which is terrible is, in the deepest sense, something that wants our love."

30. *How could any one of the miracles involved in the Exodus have been enough?*

True, none of them would have been enough. But *dayenu* means to be grateful and proud of each success as it is achieved, to celebrate each step toward freedom as if it were enough, then go on.

*Dayenu* means that if we reject each step because it is not the whole liberation, we will never be able to achieve the whole liberation. *Dayenu* means to sing each verse as if it were the whole song--and then sing the next verse!<sup>51</sup>

### 31. *Why are we drinking the wine we're supposed to leave for Elijah?*

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Traditionally we fill a glass and leave it for the coming Messiah. Reform Jews believe that if a Messianic Age is ever going to happen, it's up to us to initiate it. I'll drink to that!

### 32. *Why are prayerbooks so full of praising? It's nauseating!*

Why are people on the street often cursing?

I think the people who wrote these things were actually excited about their lives. They didn't take them for granted. I too once found it hard to imagine that someone could be so thankful. You never know what you've lost until you find it!

### 33. *If we thank God for getting us out of Egypt, why don't we blame God for putting us there?*

God didn't put us in Egypt. And if God had done all the miracles listed in *Dayenu*, it would not have been enough. We choose. We always choose.

Ignorance, prejudice, hatred; contempt for truth and justice; hunger and terror; the fear of a world-destroying disaster-- these remain to plague the human race. To end these plagues, to summon Elijah-- that is the task of all who care.<sup>52</sup>

Sounds like we have a lot of work to do. But is the Messianic Age, what *Revelation* calls "The New Jerusalem," really that far off? Our redemption may be bound up with that of people everywhere, but what does it consist of? Is it really waiting for us to take out the trash? What exactly *does* a perfect world look like?

Passover points to the illusion of circumstance, for we are really only restricted by our narrow thinking. Redemption lies in your own liberation from thinking the world is not good enough. That you are not good enough. Freedom is truly closer than your own breath.

*More questions? Write [alan@alanmuskat.com](mailto:alan@alanmuskat.com).*

## Yahatz supplement

Some do not get the chance to rise and spread out like golden loaves of challah, filled with sweet raisins and crowned with shiny braids. Rushed, neglected, not kneaded by caring hands, we grow up afraid that any touch might cause a break. There are some ingredients we never receive.

Tonight, 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.

Tamara Cohen, "Yahatz"<sup>53</sup>

## Dayenus

# If

I can see how short and precious this life is and take care of myself, without having to be reminded through tragedy or ill health...

I can wish for all beings to have the food, education and above all love that they need to grow healthy and strong...

I can remember that we are all struggling to be human and helping each other to do that, whether we know it or not...

I can create intimacy by being honest with others, addressing discomfort that tells me I have something to say...

I can listen to others as I'd want them to listen to me...

I can make it a practice to spend time alone, affirming my values and remembering my goals...

I can choose fulfilling work and guilt-free play...

I can come to see, respect, and look forward to old age and death as a golden harvest...

I can worship oneness and wholeness, rather than security, power, pleasure, knowledge, or peace...

I can remember that I will be irrational and confused as long as the race I am a part of is growing...

I can stop using others' suffering to not face my own...

I can stop reading the sign on the door and step through it...

I can realize that there's absolutely no hurry, forgiving myself for sitting in the corner and hugging my fear...

I can accept that everything is a piece of God's puzzle, that maybe *nothing* needs to be fixed and there *are* no "Ifs,"...

I can laugh at the fact that I will soon forget all this...

**Dayenu.** <sup>54</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *A Passover Haggadah*, 7, 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Guide to the Perplexed," Torah from Dixie website, [tfdixie.com](http://tfdixie.com). There's a lot of good articles there. Regrettably I can't find my source for the preceding quote, "the commandments are ways to make us free."

<sup>3</sup> *Man* originally meant "woman," while the word for "man" was *wer*, as in *werewolf*, or wolf-man. The words *man*, *moon*, *mentation* (or thought) and *menstruation* all share the same root. It's believed that the lunar and menstrual cycles were the first patterns to be recognized, leading to the first measurement (or *mensuration*) and from that to mathematics and science. (Walker, *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, 574, 634, 645).

<sup>4</sup> Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> adapted from "Pharaoh's Nile" by Randi and Murray Spiegel, <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/6174/pharaoh-gilligan.htm>. Nine times God hardens pharaoh's heart (Ex 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10: 1,20, and 27, 11:10, and 14:4 and 8) and nine times pharaoh hardens it himself (Ex 7:13-14 and 22, 8:15, 19, and 32, and 9:7 and 34-5). But God doesn't start reinforcing pharaoh's decision until after the fifth plague (boils was the sixth). See Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 64-5, and also Romans 9:18-9.

For Jews loading up on Egyptian booty, see Ex 3:21.

<sup>6</sup> *Baytzet Yisrael* (Psalm 114): "When Israel went out of Egypt, the House of Jacob left an alien language. Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel His dominion. The sea saw and fled, the Jordan turned backward. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. What ails you, O sea, that you flee; O Jordan, that you run backward? Mountains, why do you skip like rams; the hills, like rams? Tremble O Earth before the Master, before the God of Jacob, the One who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint-stone into a flowing spring."

<sup>7</sup> One year at someone else's seder everyone sat straight-faced as someone sailed through an "obvious" departure from the *Song of Songs*. Instead of "turtle-dove," it said "the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." I figured blood sugar levels were running pretty low so I let it ride. I learned years later that "turtle" is a standard abbreviation for turtle-dove. The joke's on me!

<sup>8</sup> In Exodus – and most of the Old Testament– God is *exoteric*, outward, almost visible, and not very sexy. In the "Song of Songs," attributed to Solomon, God is inside us (Wascow, *Seasons of our Joy*, 153). In fact, *Shechina* is often translated as "indwelling presence."

<sup>9</sup> See also Exodus 23:9 and Deuteronomy 16:11,12, and 24:17-18.

<sup>10</sup> *The Parnes Haggadah*, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bparnes/HAGGADAH/seder.html>.

<sup>11</sup> traditional haggadah commentary on Ex 12:12.

<sup>12</sup> from the *Midrash Mechilta* to Exodus 14:22, as quoted in the *Gates of Freedom Haggadah*, 34-5. Nachshon was a chieftan of the tribe of Judah (see Numbers 2:3, 10:14).

<sup>13</sup> Rashi on "13:18" [sic], as cited in Dan Lasar, "Someday my Prince Will Come," Torah from Dixie site, *op cit*.

<sup>14</sup> Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 25, on Ex 1:17. Also points out that in the course of this brief episode the term 'midwife' is repeated seven times.

<sup>15</sup> closing words to *Tikkun* magazine's 2000 Passover Supplement (which I highly recommend).

<sup>16</sup> O'she Shalom: "May the one who makes peace in the heavens, make peace for us and for all Israel. And we say Amen."

<sup>17</sup> *Adir Hu*. an acrostic (each line starts with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet). First verse: "God of might, God of right, we would bow before you. Sing your praise in these days; celebrate your glory. As we hear, year by year, freedom's wondrous story."

<sup>18</sup> Strassfeld, 44.

<sup>19</sup> Manly P. Hall, "Past Lives and Present Problems," 6. In Barbara Walker's *Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, the historian Tacitus is quoted in support of the contention that the Israelites could well have been hired laborers who came down with a contagious disease and were therefore *kicked out* of Egypt (676-7). There's a Passover story for every bias!

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Walker, *Woman's Dictionary of Signs and Symbols*, 492. "My grandfather always planted the first seeds of the new crop by the light of the first full moon after the vernal equinox [i.e., the first night of Passover]. Family tradition has it that he never had a crop failure" (Rel Davis).

<sup>21</sup> *Ever Wonder Why?*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Cabot, *Celebrating the Earth*.

<sup>23</sup> Marija Gimbutas, *Civilization of the Goddess*, 281-2. See also *Overlay*, 55: "Rebirth."

<sup>24</sup> *The Journey Continues, The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2002, 13,91.

<sup>25</sup> Strassfeld, 9.

<sup>26</sup> "Someday my Prince Will Come," *op cit*.

<sup>27</sup> Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 90. This idea is courtesy of Yanna Fischman.

<sup>28</sup> Strassfeld, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Strassfeld, 40.

<sup>30</sup> Herbert, in Taitetsu Unno, *Shin Buddhism*, as quoted in "The Oak Tree in the Garden: The Journal of the Hidden Valley Zen Center," July / August 2003, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Strassfeld, 9, second sidebar.

<sup>32</sup> Strassfeld, 37,9.

<sup>33</sup> *The Shalom Seders*, 78.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 6:22 and Paxton Robey, audio recording.

<sup>35</sup> Early accounts depict "the satan" as any of God's angels performing the task of being an obstruction; one that is not necessarily malevolent (Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, esp. 39-41).

<sup>36</sup> "15-Step Soulful Seder Companion," by Chabad?

<sup>37</sup> Strassfeld, 36.

<sup>38</sup> Strassfeld, 21.

<sup>39</sup> Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 97

<sup>40</sup> The Talmudic legend (Sotah 74b) is based on Exodus 2:25 & Deuteronomy 26:7, "God saw our misery (or affliction)." *Gates of Freedom* 119 n28. See also Daniel Lasar's "Recipe for Success," Torah from Dixie site, op cit. It's also said that the sexual prohibition was to be self-imposed but Miriam argued against it.

<sup>41</sup> "Your 15-Step Soulful Seder Companion," Chabad?

<sup>42</sup> Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, as quoted in Strassfeld, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Strassfeld, 41-2.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Lasar, "Someday my Prince Will Come," Torah from Dixie site, op cit

<sup>45</sup> Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, *How to Know God: the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, 110.

<sup>46</sup> Strassfeld, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Emmet Fox, *The Sermon on the Mount* (1932), 184.

<sup>48</sup> Ex 2: 23-4 and Sarna, 37.

<sup>49</sup> *Tikkun* Passover Supplement 2000.

<sup>50</sup> William Blank, *Tarot, Torah, and Tantra*, 34-5.

<sup>51</sup> *The Parnes Haggadah*, op cit.

<sup>52</sup> *The Parnes Haggadah*, op cit.

<sup>53</sup> Tamara Cohen, "Yahatz," in *The Journey Continues, The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2002, 49.

<sup>54</sup> These *dayenus* were inspired by an untitled set I got from Shoshana; though I don't know where she got it, I've changed them so much that it doesn't really matter. Isn't that appropriate?