

MT Jaffe Haggadah

Created for Passover 2015 – edited several times most recently in April 2026.

“Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.” — Gustav Mahler



* = New Reader

!*! = Everyone Reads together

Words in () are directions or references and don't have to be read aloud.

* Welcome to our Passover Celebration, The Festival of Liberation! We call this ceremonial meal a “seder” (pronounced say-der) which means “order.” We’re reading from a Haggadah which means “telling.” By reading the Haggadah we tell the story of Pesach, the Hebrew word for Passover, first celebrated more than 3,000 years ago.

* “Pass over” refers to the tenth plague that befell Egypt but passed over Israelite homes. A traditional observance of Passover includes retelling the story of the Israelites’ journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land while drinking 4 glasses of wine and eating special foods that symbolize Passover’s many messages.

* Telling the story of Passover is one of the most important mitzvot (good deeds) in Jewish life. As the Torah tells us, “You shall tell the Pesach story to your children in the days to come.” (Exodus 13:8)

* The sun is going down and the full moon is rising. It is time to begin. Each year we go on a journey in our hearts from slavery to freedom, from sadness to joy—just as every year we journey from the cold and darkness of winter to the warmth and light of spring.

* (Read this if it is the 1st or 2nd night of Passover. If not, skip to the next reading.)
Tonight, in our home and other homes across this town, in towns all across this country in countries all across the planet, families of Jews and their friends are beginning their Seder and lighting their candles. Imagine them joining us at one huge table that stretches across the world; imagine the flames of all our candles, countless

as the stars in the sky.

The Festival Candles

* May each of us help kindle flames of hope and freedom, and bring light to the world. Let us thank G-d for the continuing miracle of being alive, and for the blessing of being together tonight.

* Leave no family on its own

To celebrate the Feast alone:

Invite them all to see and hear it.

Share the freedom of the spirit.

!* (Light the candles) Blessed are you, Adonoi, Creator of the universe who makes us holy with Your commandments and in whose honor we kindle the festival lights in this season of our freedom.

Ba-ruch ata Adonai, Elo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam. Asher kee-d'sha-nu b'meetz-vo-tav v-tzee-va-nu l'had-leek ner shel Yom Tov (Yom Tov for most days or Shabbat v'shel)

* Tonight's seder is not just the retelling of an ancient and compelling story. Rather, we are asked to actually experience the bitterness of oppression and the sweetness of freedom so we may better understand the hope and courage of all men and women, of all generations, in their quest for liberty, security, and human rights.

* An ancient rabbinic text instructs us, "Each person in every generation must regard himself or herself as having been personally freed from Egypt." (that quote is from Mishnah Pesachim) We have before us family and friends, a beautifully prepared table, a great feast, and a traditionally arranged seder plate. Let us recline, enjoy, learn, and relive the dramatic and miraculous Pesach.

Kadesh: The First Cup of Wine

* May our Passover be full of joy and meaning. Let us all fill our glasses with wine or a fruit of the vine...

!* Blessed are you Adonoi, Creator of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

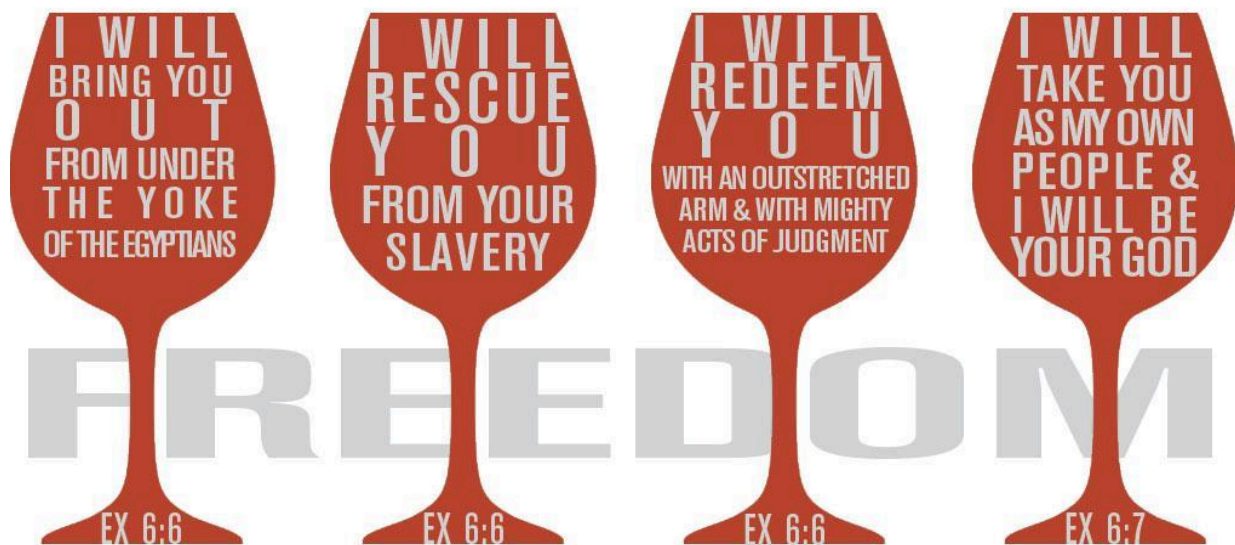
Baruch atah adonoi, elohaynu melech ha-olam, boray p're ha-gafen.

* Let's all say the blessing that reminds us of the transitory nature of existence, of the continuous wonder of being alive.

!! Blessed are you Adonoi, who gave us life, has kept us alive and allowed us to enjoy this moment. Baruch atah adonai, elohaynu melech ha-olam, she-hecheyanu, v'ki-y'manu, v'higi-anu la-z'man ha'zeh.

* Let's all say one more blessing that calls us to awaken in all areas of our lives:

!! Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! Sanctify mine eye, and mine ear, and my tongue, and my spirit, and my heart, and my soul, and my body, and mine entire being from turning unto anyone but Thee. Give me then to drink from the cup that brimmeth with the sealed wine of Thy glory. (from Bahá'u'lláh)



(There is a quote in the [materials page](#) about spring and baseball that Grandpa Alan always loved.)

* Tonight, we drink four cups of the fruit of the vine. There are many explanations for this custom, primarily from the four verses in Exodus as in the picture of the four glasses of wine. Some have also said the four cups represent four important kinds of freedom: Political, Economic, Emotional, and Spiritual Freedom.

* As we reach for and attain each of these freedoms, we take another step towards a

truly liberated life. Some might even call this redemption. As we drink from these cups may we reflect on how can do our part in bringing everyone closer to the sweet taste of redemption.

* With this first cup, Political Freedom, we remember that no person or group of people want to be under the rule or mistreatment of another. The Israelites spent 400 years under Pharaoh's oppressive rule. Let us honor their prayers by ensuring all forms of slavery cease to exist.

* The four cups also represent the four corners of the earth, for freedom must live everywhere and also, for the four seasons of the year, because freedom's cycle must last through all the seasons. Spring is the season of new growth and new life. Like no other creature, the most significant growth for a human being takes place inwardly.

* During this springtime for the soul, we grow as we achieve new insights, new knowledge, new goals. We raise our cups to signify our gratitude for life, and for the joy of knowing inner growth, which gives human life its meaning. And with raised cups, we toast to life by saying: L'Chaim!

Urchatz: Washing Our Hands with a Silent Blessing.

* This tradition is a way of showing that we hope to purify our hearts as well as our hands in preparation for eating and taking part in our Seder. (If you haven't washed your hands – volunteer to do it now. We may appoint someone to wash hands while we all sit in silence for a moment.)

Karpas: Dipping the Greens

* Notice how our seder plate has different foods as symbols. The karpas or greens and the egg symbolize new growth, rebirth, spring, the stirring of new life and freedom. We pass, then dip the parsley the first time in salt water for the tears of the oppressed. We will dip the parsley twice tonight. (This is a good time to eat the egg.)

Yachatz: Breaking the Middle Matzo/Matzah

* Every year, on Passover, we gather around to share a story of miraculous redemption. We eat the Matzah, the “unleavened bread of faith,” also known as the “bread of affliction” and the “bread of healing.”

* The Jews left Egypt with nothing but their faith in G-d and no time for their dough to rise. This unleavened dough became matzah and it serves a symbol of faith in the Almighty even in the face of challenges.

* We have three matzahs (hold them up), two represent the bread that was on display in the Temple. The middle piece, in addition to the shank bone on our seder plate, represents the lamb used for sacrifice. We break the matzoh in two and begin to taste and feel the affliction of slavery and fleeing for our lives. (We can play hide and seek with a broken portion of the matzoh at this time. If we play hide and seek with the matzah, whoever provides the prize \$, gets to say who will hide it. The young among us will look for the broken piece at the end of dinner.)

* As we nibble a little matzah we keep our mouths dry until instructed to drink water and we remember that like the broken matzah, we are incomplete. Within us, individually and collectively, there are prayers to be fulfilled, promises to be kept, dreams to be realized.

Maggid: The Story

* The story begins. Pharaoh feared that the Israelites were becoming too numerous and might rise up against him so he wrote a decree to kill all male Israelite babies. An Israelite woman named Yochevet had a little girl named Miriam. When Miriam was five years old, Yochavet gave birth to a boy. The family hid the baby boy from the Egyptians. His name was Moses.

* When she could no longer hide him, Yochavet made a wicker basket for Moses, caulked it with pitch, and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile, hoping an Egyptian woman would find him. By disobeying Pharaoh's decree, Yochavet saved her son who eventually saved her people.

* Miriam watched over Moses until an Egyptian princess pulled him from the water. Bravely, Miriam dared to suggest to the princess that she hire a Hebrew nursemaid, Yochevet Moses' mother. The Egyptian princess was a heroine in the story as well.

* Had she not taken the Hebrew baby as her own, the story would have had a different ending. A rabbinical commentary relates that God spoke directly to the princess, saying, "Moses was not your child. Yet you treated him as such. For this I will call you my daughter."

* Therefore the princess, Pharaoh's daughter, bore the name Bityah, "daughter of God." The Hebrew people were saved by the righteousness of an Egyptian woman, and the love of Yochavet, the mother of Moses, and the bravery of Miriam, his sister. (Sip water now to help with the dry mouth from nibbling the matzoh.)

* At this seder, we fill a cup for Miriam. In the desert she was a source of strength and comfort. Legend has it that, because of her virtue, a well of water accompanied the Israelites on their wandering in the desert, providing fresh water as long as Miriam was alive. When she died, the well disappeared.

* According to another legend, Miriam's well has reappeared at different times and places in history. Some say the well can still be found--but we must seek it out ourselves. Those who find the well and drink from it draw strength and comfort from healing waters.

* We will all pour some of our water into Miriam's cup and pass it around. As we add the water, we name a woman or few who are or have been a source of strength in our lives. You can briefly tell us why or you can also simply say, "In honor of Miriam and all who virtuously nourish their family/community."

* The Pesach story continues throughout the evening and so much happened in the world of men, but we must never forget that the women have an equal place of honor at our table because both men and women struggle equally. Sometimes these struggles are the same, sometimes very different, but all humans are worthy of support during times of struggle.

(Time for Matzoh Ball Soup and The Four Questions.)

The Four Questions

([This video](#) can serve as this whole section if you'd like. If so, return after the Dr. Seuss section.)

* The traditional 4 questions are usually asked by the youngest child. Since many of us still feel young, all are invited to sing the four questions in Hebrew.

Ma nish-ta-na ha-lai-la ha-zeh,

Mee-kol ha lei-lot?

She-b'chol ha-lei-lot,

Anu och-leen, cha-metz u-matza

Ha-lai-la ha-zeh, ku-lo matza.

She-b'chol ha-lei-lot
Anu och-leen sh'ar y'ra-kot,
Ha-lai-la ha-zeh maror.

She-b'chol ha-lei-lot
Ein anu mat-bee-leen,
Afee-lu pa-am achat
Ha-lai-la ha-zeh, shtei-f'ameem.

She-b'chol ha-lei-lot,
Anu och-leen, bein yo-shveen
u-vein m'su-been Ha-lai-la ha-zeh,
Ku'la'nu m'su-been.

(The Dr. Seuss Four Questions can replace this section.)

- * **An intro question.** What makes this night different from other nights?
- * Once we were slaves in Egypt. The rulers made us obey their orders. Then like many people after us, we refused to be slaves anymore. Tonight is different because tonight we tell the story about how we ended our enslavement.

- * **Question 1** - On all other nights we eat either bread or matzoh. Why, on this night, do we eat only matzoh?
- * Legend has it that when Moses and his followers fled Egypt, they moved so quickly that the bread they baked did not have time to rise. Symbolically, the matzoh reminds us that when the opportunity for liberation comes, we must seize it, even if we do not feel fully prepared-indeed, if we wait until we feel prepared, we may never act at all.

- * **Question 2** - On all other nights we eat herbs of any kind. Why, on this night, do we eat only bitter herbs?

- * Tradition says that this root is to remind us of the time of slavery. We force ourselves to taste pain so that we may more readily value pleasure. Maror is the

stimulus of life, reminding us that struggle is better than the complacent acceptance of injustice.

* **Question 3** - On all other nights, we do not dip our herbs even once. Why, on this night, do we dip them twice?

* The first time, the salty taste reminds us of the tears caused by slavery. The second time, the salt water and the green help us to remember the ocean and green Earth from which we get air and water and food that enable us to live.

* **Question 4** - On all other nights, we eat either sitting or leaning. Why, on this night, do we eat while leaning?

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

_____ **(Return Here if using the Video or Dr. Seuss Four Questions)** _____

* No matter how much we know, how learned or accomplished we are, we must repeat the story, tell it to each other, tell it to our children, for if God had not helped us to leave Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would still be slaves. Tonight is a night for questions, not just the four questions but any questions we wish to ask.

Second Cup of Wine

* The second cup of wine represents economic freedom, the right to work and sustain ourselves through the labor of our hands and minds. This cup is dedicated not only to the struggles of the Jewish people, but to all people seeking a secure life free of fear and persecution. Young people tend to get their first jobs in the summer which is the season of the second cup.

* As we all hold up our glasses of wine, let us recall economic hardships of the past both of ourselves and of our ancestors. Let us notice all that is abundant in our current lives as we are free to pursue so many economic opportunities before us. And may we dedicate ourselves to work for economic justice locally and globally.

!! Blessed are you Adonoi, Creator of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

Baruch atah adonoi, elohaynu melech ha-olam, boray p're ha-gafen.

(For traditional observance – **Rochetzah: Wash Hands with Blessing**)

Motzi Matzoh: Blessing for the Matzah

* (Break and pass matzah – don't eat it this time - not yet.)

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry come and eat. All who are in need, let them come and celebrate Passover. The slave and the oppressed are hungry for food, but also starved for freedom. Tonight, we hold out the promise that the hunger for food and freedom can be satisfied.

* Tonight we are here in peace. Next year we pray there will be peace in Israel and all the world. As long as there are women, men, and children living in the streets, going to bed hungry, we cannot celebrate our own freedom with a full heart.

!*

Blessed are you Adonoi, Creator of the world, who brings bread from the earth.

Baruch atah adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam, ha motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

!*

Blessed are you Adonoi, Creator of the world, who makes us holy with the commandments and commands us to eat matzah. Baruch atah adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam, asher id'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivahnu al achilat matzah.

(Let us now eat our matzah.)

Maror: The Bitter Herb

* The bitter herbs, called maror in Hebrew, serve to remind us of how the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Jews in servitude. When we eat the bitter herbs, we share in that bitterness of oppression. We must remember that the legacy of slavery in the U.S. still persists – through racism and particularly the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people. And slavery still exists all across the globe.

* When you go to the store, where do your purchases come from? Who sewed together the clothes that you bought? Who picked the coffee beans for your morning coffee? We are reminded that people still face the bitterness of oppression, in many forms.

* As we bless the maror, let us reflect on how we can work to combat slavery and its legacy in all its modern day forms.

Korech: Charoset, Bitter Herb, and Matzoh. Hillel's Sandwich.

* The sweetness of the Charoset at the Seder reminds us of the hope and optimism of slaves throughout history as they find a way to a better life living in freedom. (Eat matzoh with charoset, lettuce, stuff represented on **our seder** plate and gefilte fish.)

* Gefilte Fish has mysteriously found its way into our seder and though tonight we don't have an official version of why this may be, we do know that to some the Gefilte Fish Patty represents our evolving community story and creativity in the face of economic deprivation.

The Ten Plagues

(fun – check out the [Pesach Rube Goldberg video](#))

* When Moses grew up, he became the leader of the Israelites and was determined to lead his people to freedom. He asked the Pharaoh to free the Israelites but the Pharaoh refused. Moses tried to convince the Pharaoh. He said, “In sadness I warn you, Pharaoh, if you do not let my people go, great suffering will come to your land and people. We'd rather gain our freedom without hurting your people.”

* Because Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen to the pleas of Moses, God sent plague after plague upon the Egyptians. The Jews marked their doorposts, as God told them to do, and death “passed over” (thus Passover's name) their homes, taking only the Egyptian children.

The Third Cup of Wine: The Cup of Remembrance

(Pour wine but don't drink until the blessing part.)

* This Cup of Remembrance and emotional freedom comes in autumn when the leaves fall and we commit to expanding our inner world. We expel the Pharaoh or harsh inner critic living within each of us.

* A full cup of wine symbolizes complete happiness. The triumph of Passover is diminished by the sacrifice of many human lives when ten plagues were visited upon the people of Egypt. It is fitting that we mourn their loss of life, and express our sorrow over their suffering. We cannot take joy in the suffering of others. Therefore, let us diminish the wine in our cups as we recall the ten plagues that befell the Egyptian people.

(As each plague is named, everyone dips a finger in wine and then touches a plate to remove the drop.)

!*

Dahm (Bloodied waters)

Ts'fardaya (Swarming frogs)

Kinim (Vermin)

Arov (Beasts)

Dever (Cattle disease)

Sh'chin (Boils)

Barad (Hail)

Arbeh (Locusts)

Choshech (Darkness)

Makat b'chorot (Slaying of the first born)

* In the same spirit, our celebration today is also shadowed by our awareness of continuing sorrow and oppression in all parts of the world. Ancient plagues are mirrored in modern tragedies.

* We are a world people, living in many lands and among many nations. The power of science has shrunk our planet and has made all of us the children of one human family. We are all victims together of enormous social problems. We share in their effects and in the responsibility to overcome them.

* We spill wine from our cups at the mention of each of these contemporary plagues. We cannot allow ourselves to drink a full measure since our own lives are sobered by these ills, which darken our lives and diminish our joy. As the pain of others diminishes our joys, let us once more diminish the wine of our festival as we repeat the names of these modern plagues:

!* War, Crime, Hunger, Poverty, Disease, Addiction, Child and Spouse Abuse, Pollution, Hatred toward Others, Indifference to human suffering.

* May there be peace, kindness, happiness, and compassion in the world.

!! Blessed are you Adonoi, Creator of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.
Baruch atah adonoi, elohaynu melech ha-olam, boray p're ha-gafen.

Shulchan Orech: Dinner

!! (We eat after we sing Dayeynu. Before we sing and eat, we must say one traditional mixed religion family blessing:) G-d is great. G-d is good. Let us thank him for this food. Amen.

* During this festival of life, it is important for us to remember the millions who died as victims of the Holocaust. Their anguish and death must be with us, even in our times of celebration. We resolve that their memory shall not be lost. We accept the responsibility of working to prevent such suffering from ever again occurring on earth.

* If we held 1 minute of silence for every victim of the Holocaust, then we would be silent for eleven and a half years. We remember the heroism of those who fought against fascism and tyranny in the forests and the cities of Europe. Men, women, and children who loved freedom and humanity, struggled with their own hands against the powerful armies of those who sought to oppress and kill them.

* There is a traditional song called Dayeynu. In it we express thanks to God for taking us out of the land of Egypt, for the Sabbath, for the Torah, and for Israel. Each of these events was so wonderful it alone would have been enough. We are reminded of each gift we have and how each would be enough. We are thankful for all that we have, each moment of happiness and fulfillment, each moment of light, each moment of life. Each is a gift and would be enough.

* As we reflect on the meaning of *Dayenu* in our history and in our lives, we pause to express our gratitude for the many opportunities we have been given, and for the blessings in our lives, both big and small.

!! (sing Dayenu – if help needed – [use this fun video – Dayenu by the Maccabeats](#))



*Ee'lu, ho'tzee, ho'tzee'anu, ho'tzee'anu mee'Meetz'ra'yeem, ho'tzee'anu
mee'Meetz'ra'yeem, Da'yeinu. Da Da'yeinu, Da Da'yeinu, Da'Da'yeinu,
Da'yeinu, Da'yeinu.*

(We eat and remember to drink water too.)

The Fourth Cup of Wine: The Cup of Elijah, The Cup of Hope

* Let us all fill our wine glasses one last time to pause and connect with our spiritual core which yearns to be free. Spiritual freedom comes in relationship with the Holy One. May we always accept winter as a time to go even further within and make our souls whole as we become one with G-d.

!* Blessed are you Adonoi, Creator of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine. Baruch atah adonoi, elohaynu melech ha-olam, boray p're ha-gafen.

* (Reader picks up Elijah's cup.) This is the cup of Elijah. According to Jewish tradition, the Prophet Elijah was a brave man who denounced the slavery of his day. Legend teaches that he will return one day to lead everyone to peace and freedom.

* Jewish history is full of traditions and while generally people add a little wine to Elijah's cup, our new-ish family tradition has quotes of freedom in Elijah's cup. As we pass it around, please pick one and read it aloud.

* It is customary during the Passover Seder to open the door of the house for Elijah, in the hope that the age of universal peace may soon be at hand. We, too, open the door to peace, knowing that Elijah's task is really our own. (Someone opens the door. Don't shut it quite yet.)

* Only when we have made a world where nation shall not lift up sword against nation, where justice is universal, and where each person is free, will the age-old dream of peace be real. Let us bring peace and justice to the world!

* Jewish history shows that life is ever-changing, and we must learn how to survive under all conditions. When we are persecuted, we must fight for our own freedom. When we are free, we must join the fight to free others.

(Shut the door. As in shut the door on persecution and serve dessert.)

Tzafun (Out of Hiding) & Barech (Blessing after the Meal.)

* Let's revisit the broken matzah. (Young ones can go looking for the hidden Matzah.)

When we find the hidden piece, we put the two pieces together just as we bring all of

you together to celebrate. When we remember to celebrate even in troubling or uncertain times, we are making our lives whole. When we celebrate with loved ones and strangers alike, we are working toward repairing the world, making life Holy.

* When we teach our children, we teach ourselves the lesson of Passover. We celebrate the Festival of Freedom not to dwell in the past or current trials and tribulations, but to find meaning, promote social justice, and enjoy what truly matters.

Hallel (Songs of Praise) and Nirtzah (Acceptance)

* May your plagues be few and your songs be plentiful! And To conclude our celebration of Life, of Freedom, and of Peace: May we all say together...

!! Lahsana ha'ba'a bi-Y'rushalayim! (Next year in Jerusalem!)

Sources and Extended Materials

