

THE COMMUNITY SEDER

A Shared Passover Experience



INTRODUCTION

This *Haggadah* (Passover guide) is designed to be a simple and easy-to-print reference for non-Hebrew speakers. It contains the basic information needed to conduct a Passover Seder. It is not intended to be a full *Haggadah*, which would contain a complete text of the traditional *Seder*, and would usually have interesting artwork, commentaries, and additional information and history.

Haggadahs come in a wide variety of styles representing many different traditions. They can be purchased on almost all websites that sell books or Judaica.

For more information about Passover, its customs and traditions, please visit any of the websites below that will have appropriate material that can enhance your Seder.

Union for Reform Judaism: **urj.org**

United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism: **uscj.org/index1.html**

Orthodox Union: **ou.org**

Jewish Reconstructionist Federation: **jrf.org**

Chabad: **chabad.org**

With the exception of most prayers and some nouns, all text in this *Haggadah* is in English only. All Hebrew words that are transliterated into English are in italics.

PREPARING FOR THE SEDER



The table should be set with the following special items.

- **The Seder plate, which contains, in clockwise order:**
 - Shank bone – *zeroa* – lamb or roasted chicken leg bone (a roasted beet is a vegetarian alternative)
 - Charoset* – a mixture of nuts, fruit, wine, and spices
 - Bitter herbs – *maror* – typically red or white horseradish (some people prefer raw horseradish)
 - Vegetable – *karpas* – parsley or any other vegetable, such as potatoes
 - Egg – *beitzah* – a roasted hard-boiled egg
- **A covered plate that holds three pieces of matzah.**
- **A bowl of salt water.**
- **A wine glass for each person.**
- **An extra wine glass for Elijah the Prophet.**

The *Seder* meal should be prepared and conducted without bread or other leavened food such as cake. Products made with *matzah* flour can be substituted.

Table Question:

What symbolic foods are part of your traditions?

LIGHTING THE YOM TOV (HOLIDAY) CANDLES

Before the start of every Sabbath or Jewish holiday, it is traditional for the women of the household (or any individual) to light two candles in honor of the holiness of the day.

After lighting the candles, recite:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us that we kindle the *Yom Tov* (holiday) lights.

Baruch Atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha-olam, Asher Kid'shanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹ-נֵי אֱלֹהֵי-הַיְנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.

SEDER: THE PASSOVER SERVICE

Sanctifying the Day

Kadesh קִדֵּשׁ

Holding the cup of wine in one's right hand, recite:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Baruch Atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha-olam Boreh Pree Ha-ga-fen.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹ-נֵי אֱלֹהֵי-הַיְנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

We thank you, God for giving us the gift of Festivals for joy and holidays for happiness, among them this day of Passover, the festival of our liberation, a day of sacred assembly recalling the Exodus from Egypt.

The Blessing of *Shehecheyanu* is recited at this point:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us in life, *sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.*

Baruch Atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha-olam, She-heche-yanu, V'kiye-manu Vehigi-yanu La-z'man Ha-zeh.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹ-נֵי אֱלֹהֵי-הַיְנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה

The first cup of wine is drunk.

A modern poem reflecting on the meaning of this night,
by Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish writer and Holocaust survivor.

PASSOVER

Tell me: how is this night different
From all other nights?
How, tell me, is this Passover
Different from other Passovers?
Light the lamp, open the door wide
So the pilgrim can come in,
Gentile or Jew;

Under the rags perhaps the prophet is concealed.
Let him enter and sit down with us;
Let him listen, drink, sing and celebrate Passover;
Let him consume the bread of affliction,
The Paschal Lamb, sweet mortar and bitter herbs.
This is the night of differences
In which you lean your elbow on the table,
Since the forbidden becomes prescribed,
Evil is translated into good.

We will spend the night recounting
Far-off events full of wonder,
And because of all the wine
The mountains will skip like rams.
Tonight they exchange questions:
The wise, the godless, the simple-minded and the child.
And time reverses its course,
Today flowing back into yesterday,
Like a river enclosed at its mouth.
Each of us has been a slave in Egypt,
Soaked straw and clay with sweat,
And crossed the sea dry-footed.
You too, stranger.
This year in fear and shame,
Next year in virtue and in justice.

Dipping Parsley in Salt Water

Karpas כרפס

Parsley (or any other vegetable such as celery or potato) is dipped in salt water and then eaten. The parsley symbolizes both the humble origins of the Jewish people as well as the rebirth of spring, which is starting now. (In Eastern Europe, where green vegetables were not common, a potato was used instead). The salt water symbolizes the tears shed during our slavery.

Before eating the vegetable, recite the following blessing:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Baruch Atah Adonai Elo-heinu Melech Haolam Boreh Pree Ha'adamah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדוֹ-נֵי אֱלֹ-הֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאָדָמָה

Breaking the Middle Matzah

Yachatz יחץ

The middle matzah on the plate is broken in half. One-half is put back with the stack; the other half is placed in a napkin (or special holder), designated the *Afikomen* (the dessert) and put aside. It is traditional in some homes to hide the *afikomen* now for children to find before it is eaten after the meal, or for children to “steal” the *Afikomen* and “hold it ransom.”

Table Question:

Where in your life have you experienced the tension between earning something and getting something?

The Telling of the Story of Passover

Maggid מגיד

Ha Lachma Anya: The Bread of Slavery and Affliction

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is hungry should come and eat, anyone who is in need should come and partake of the *Passover* meal. Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free people.

Table Questions:

1. What acts of hospitality have you witnessed or participated in this year?
2. What acts of hospitality have you benefited from this year?

Four questions and the importance of questioning in the Jewish tradition and at the Seder:

Questions are central to the Passover seder and to Jewish tradition as a whole. At this point in the seder, the youngest child asks the Four Questions, setting a tone of curiosity that carries through the night. Because slaves had no freedom to question authority or express independent thought, the act of asking questions itself symbolizes liberation.

Before asking the Four Questions, recite:

There arose in Egypt a Pharaoh who knew not of the good deeds that Joseph had done for that country. Thus, he enslaved the Jews and made their lives harsh through servitude and humiliation. This is the basis for the Passover holiday which we commemorate with these different rituals tonight.

The Power of Questions

Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, senior Rabbi of Central Synagogue in New York and the first Asian American ordained as both a rabbi and cantor in North America, reflects on why asking questions is at the heart of the Seder.

The fundamental pedagogy of the Seder is asking questions. The entire Seder is set up to invite people to ask questions. Built into it are questions that the youngest person at the table is supposed to ask, because we want to encourage our youngest children to ask questions. The whole point of this is to build our empathy muscle.

The Seder is an exercise in empathy. Because rather than just saying, "Let me tell you the story of my ancestors when they were slaves," we're commanded to imagine as if we ourselves were enslaved.

We actually are invited to taste the tears, to ingest the bread, and so with our senses, we are actually invited to create the Jewish remnant of slavery and then walk to freedom. That's a much bigger ask than just listening to stories.

To imagine this is happening to you and to put yourself in that place ultimately makes us more empathetic to the plight of those who have been oppressed or who are strangers. Because, as we say, "We were once the stranger."

The Four Questions

The youngest child (or any individual) asks (or sings):

Why is this night different from all other nights?

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

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות

1. On all other nights, we eat either bread or *matzah*; on this night, why only matzah?

Table Question: What role do traditions and rituals play in your own communities?

2. On all other nights, we eat herbs or vegetables of any kind; on this night why bitter herbs?

Table Question: What can we do to alleviate bitterness in other people's lives?

3. On all other nights, we do not dip even once; on this night why do we dip twice?

Table Question: What supplemental supports do I need in my life?

4. On all other nights, we eat our meals in any manner; on this night why do we sit around the table together in a reclining position?

Table Questions: Who do you lean on or count on? How do we show gratitude to those we rely upon?

The rest of the participants at the Seder answer:

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and God brought us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. And if God had not brought our ancestors out of Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would still be subjugated to Pharaoh in Egypt. Even if we were all old and wise and learned in Torah, we would still be commanded to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. And the more we talk about the Exodus from Egypt, the more praiseworthy we are.

The Four Children

The Torah describes four children who ask questions about the Exodus. Tradition teaches that these verses refer to four different types of children.

The wise child asks, "What are the laws that God has commanded us?" The parent should answer by instructing the child in the laws of Passover, starting from the beginning and ending with the laws of the *Afikomen*.

The wicked child asks, "What does this Passover service mean to you?" The parent should answer, "It is because of what God did for me when I came out of Egypt. Specifically 'me' and not 'you.' If you had been there (with your attitude), you wouldn't have been redeemed."

The simple child asks, "What is this Seder service?" The parent should answer, "With a mighty hand God brought us out of Egypt. Therefore, we commemorate that event tonight through this Seder."

And then there is a child who does not know how to ask. The parent should begin a discussion with that child based on the verse: "And you shall tell your child on that day, 'We commemorate Passover tonight because of what God did for us when we went out of Egypt.'"

Table Question:

Which child do you most resonate with and why?

The telling of the story of Passover continues:

While the Jews endured harsh slavery in Egypt, God chose Moses to lead them out to freedom. Moses encountered God at the burning bush and then returned to Egypt to lead the people out of Egypt. He demanded that Pharaoh let the Jewish people go. That part of our Passover story is best described in the familiar song "Go Down Moses."

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go;
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go.

Chorus

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt's land;
Tell old Pharaoh
To let my people go!

"Thus saith the Lord," bold Moses said,
Let my people go;
"If not, I'll smite your firstborn dead,"
Let my people go.

Chorus

No more shall they in bondage toil,
Let my people go;
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,
Let my people go.

Chorus

Table Questions:

What does freedom mean to you? When have you felt enslaved?

But Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let the Jewish people go. That is why God sent the Ten Plagues.

It is a tradition to remove ten drops of wine from our cups as we recite the ten plagues as a remembrance that while the Jews were redeemed through these plagues, people did suffer. Remove a drop of wine for each plague as you recite its name.

1. **Blood** *Dam* דָּם
2. **Frogs** *Tze-phar-day-ah* צְפַרְדֵּי
3. **Vermin** *Kee-nim* כְּנִיִּם
4. **Beasts** *Arov* עֲרוֹב
5. **Cattle Disease** *De-ver* דָּבָר
6. **Boils** *She-heen* שְׁחִין
7. **Hail** *Ba-rad* בָּרָד
8. **Locusts** *Ar-beh* אֲרֵבָה
9. **Darkness** *Cho-shech* חֹשֶׁךְ
10. **Slaying of the firstborn** *Ma-kat Bechorot* מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת

Table question:

What are our modern-day plagues?

Following the slaying of the firstborn, Pharaoh allowed the Jewish people to leave. The Jews left Egypt in such haste that their dough did not rise, so they ate *matzah*. When Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after the Israelites, God miraculously caused the Red Sea to split, allowing the Israelites to cross safely. When the Egyptians entered the Sea, it returned to its natural state and the mighty Egyptian army drowned.

As we conclude telling the story of Passover, we sing a song listing all the wonderful acts God performed for the Israelites when they left Egypt.

Dayenu **דַּיְנוּ**

Hebrew Version:

*Ilu ho-tsi, ho-tsi-a-nu,
Ho-tsi-anu mi-Mitz-ra-yim
Ho-tsi-anu mi-Mitz-ra-yim
Da-ye-nu*

Chorus

*Da-da-ye-nu,
Da-da-ye-nu,
Da-da-ye-nu,
Da-da-ye-nu,
Da-ye-nu Da-ye-nu*

English Version:

If God would've taken us out of Egypt and not executed judgment upon them, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've executed judgment upon them and not upon their idols, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've judged their idols, and not killed their firstborn, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've killed their firstborn, and not given us their wealth, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've given us their wealth, and not split the sea for us, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've split the sea for us, and not let us through it on dry land, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've let us through it on dry land, and not drowned our enemies in it, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

If He would've drowned our enemies in it, and not provided for our needs in the desert for 40 years, it would've been enough for us—*Dayenu*.

Table questions:

What gives you hope?

What gives you hope for our country, our city and those who are dear to you?

One Day

Song by Matisyahu, 2009

One day, one day, one day
 Sometimes I lay under the moon
 And thank God I'm breathin'
 Then I pray, "Don't take me soon
 'Cause I am here for a reason"
 Sometimes in my tears I drown
 But I never let it get me down
 So when negativity surrounds
 I know someday, it'll all turn around because
 All my life, I've been waitin' for
 I've been prayin' for, for the people to say
 That we don't wanna fight no more
 There'll be no more wars, and our children will play
 One day (one day), one day (one day)
 One day (oh-oh-oh)
 One day (one day), one day (one day)
 One day (oh-oh-oh)
 It's not about win or lose
 'Cause we all lose when they feed on the souls of the innocent
 Blood-drenched pavement
 Keep on movin' though the waters stay ragin'
 In this maze, you can lose your way, your way
 It might drive you crazy
 But don't let it faze you, no way, no way
 Sometimes in my tears I drown (I drown)
 But I never let it get me down (get me down)
 So when negativity surrounds (surrounds)
 I know someday, it'll all turn around because
 All my life, I've been waitin' for (waitin' for)
 I've been prayin' for (prayin' for), for the people to say
 That we don't wanna fight no more (fight no more)
 There'll be no more wars (no more wars), and our children will play
 One day (one day), one day (one day)
 One day (oh, oh, oh, oh-oh-oh, one day)
 One day (one day), one day (one day)
 One day (oh-oh-oh)
 One day, this all will change, treat people the same
 Stop with the violence, down with the hate
 One day, we'll all be free and proud to be
 Under the same sun, singin' songs of freedom like
 Wah-yo (one day, one day), wah-yo, oh, oh (oh-oh-oh)
 Wah-yo (one day, one day), wah-yo, oh, oh (oh-oh-oh)
 All my life, I've been waitin' for
 I've been prayin' for, for the people to say
 That we don't wanna fight no more
 There'll be no more wars, and our children will play
 One day (one day), one day (one day)
 One day (oh-oh-oh)
 One day (one day), one day (one day)
 One day (oh-oh-oh)
 One day, one day, one day

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

Tonight was about coming together, sharing stories,
traditions and creating a sense of belonging.

As we gathered around these tables, we were reminded
that Passover is not just about remembering the past,
but about showing up for one another in the present.

Thank you for being part of this Community Seder and
for helping create a community where everyone
has a place at the table.

