

Penn State Hillel

Women's Seder

Introduction:

In our era, we have chosen to begin Passover in a new way--with a women's seder. For the first night of Passover, we sit together, dance, study, sing and tell stories of our own liberation. In this way we ready ourselves for the upcoming celebration of freedom.

During the course of this evening, we hope that you will discover some new traditions or achieve some new understandings that you can take away from this table and bring into your own Jewish lives.

Before we begin, let us go around and introduce ourselves in a way that also acknowledges the women who have gone before us--our mothers and grandmothers. When you introduce yourself, use this formula:

I am __ (your name) __, daughter of __ (mother's name) __, daughter of __ (grandmother's name) __, and, (if you know it), daughter of __ (great-grandmother's name) __.

הדלקת נרות--Hadlakat Neiro--Candlelighting

We sit here together in the darkness, preparing to begin our women's seder. We're here to tell the story of our people. In doing so, we are stepping into a familiar ritual: telling the story of our going out from Egypt. But tonight we are stepping into the unknown as well, for we are taking the risk of telling new stories and of finding old stories that were lost.

As we relive the story of our escape from bondage and oppression we are moving toward the freedom of making choices--a freedom that comes as we begin to know ourselves. In our stories tonight, we begin to shed light on the dark places, to enrich our vision, and to open ourselves to a new understanding. Let us gain strength for the journey as we kindle a new light.

--Oberlin College Haggadah

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציונו להדליק נר של יום טוב

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov
Blessed are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who makes us holy with mitzvot and
commands us to kindle the light of the festival day

מה טוב סדרינו בנות ישראל כאור חדש המאיר עולם

Ma tovu sidreinu b'not yisra'el, k'or chadash ha'me'ir olam

Women of Israel, the wonder of our seders brings new light to the world.

Order of the Seder

שקדש--	Kadesh--	Make Holy
ורחץ--	Urchatz--	First Hand Washing
יחץ--	Yachatz--	Breaking the Middle Matzah
מגיד--	Maggid--	Telling the Story
רחצה--	Rachtzah--	Second Hand Washing
מוציא מצה--	Motzi Matzah--	Matzah Blessing
מרור--	Maror--	Bitter Herbs
כורך--	Koreich--	Hillel Sandwich
שלחן עורך--	Schulchan Orech--	Festive Meal
צפון--	Tzafun--	Searching for the Hidden Matzah
ברך--	Bareich--	Blessing after the Meal
הלל--	Hallel--	Songs of Praise
נרצה--	Nirtzah--	Conclusion

שקדש--Kadesh--Make Holy

Tonight we will drink four cups of wine, traditionally linked to G-d's four promises to Israel

והוצאתי--V'hotzaiti--I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians

והצילתי--V'hitzalti--And I will deliver you from their bondage.

וגאלתי--V'ga'alti--I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and extraordinary chastisements.

ולקחתי--V'lakachti--And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your G-d

--Exodus 6:6-7

The First Cup of Wine

With the first cup we bring out the Jewish women of biblical Israel. Recall the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and all who were mothers; the prophetesses and the women who joined them--those who danced alongside Miriam and who went to war with Deborah; those who were wise as was Hulda; those who prayed before the Lord as did Hannah; those who were royal: Michal, Avigail and Batsheva.

Let this cup also remind us of those unnamed: the mother who stood before Solomon, willing to surrender her child rather than see him cleaved in two; the woman who worked in the fields beside Naomi and Ruth; and all those evoked by the proverbial woman of valor: "She girds herself with strength, and performs her tasks with vigor...let her works praise her in the gates" (Proverbs 31:17, 31)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam borei p're hagafen.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

ורחץ--Urchatz--First Hand Washing

While a volunteer carries out the hand washing on behalf of us all, there is no blessing recited.

Our silent hand washing follows the words of *kiddush* with a power akin to that of our hands themselves. Weaving, washing, braiding, feeding and holding loved ones--our hands, according to the midrash, are created for the purpose of our work. Often we do not have a chance to pause or reflect on their work. But at this moment, we pause, appreciate and honor. Are we cleansing? Purifying? Dedicating? Sanctifying? The water refreshes, nurtures, and connects us to the original stream, the first flow. It reminds us of the fluidity of all life, and the fluid within us. It tickles our hands so that they may dance the dance of freedom

--Elana Ponet

כרפס--Karpas--Fruit of the Earth

Long before the struggle upward begins, there is a tremor in the seed. Self-protection cracks, roots reach down and grab hold. The seed swells and tender shoots push up toward light. This is karpas: spring awakening growth. A force so tough it can break stone.

And why do we dip karpas into salt water? To remember the sweat and tears of our ancestors in bondage. To taste the bitter tears of our earth, unable to fully renew itself this spring because of our waste, neglect and greed. To feel the sting of society's refusal to celebrate the blossoming of women's bodies and the full range of our capacity for love.

And why should salt water be touched by karpas? To remind us that tears stop. Spring comes. And with it the potential for change.

--Ronnie M. Horn

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי האדמה

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam borei p're ha'adama.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the earth.

יחץ--Yachatz--Breaking the Middle Matzah

We lift the middle matzah and break it in two. Hear the sound of glass broken at the end of every Jewish wedding. Hear the echo of stone tablets cast down and shattered at the foot of the mountain. Hear the crack of the whip on the backs of slaves. We carry our brokenness with us.

We lift the middle matzah and break it in two. The larger piece is hidden. To remind us that more is concealed than revealed. To remind us how much we do not know. How much we do not see. How much we have yet to understand.

--Sharon Cohen Anisfeld

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 hidden.

מי שברך אבותינו מקור הברכה לאמותינו
Mi shebeirach avoteinu m'kor habracha l'imoteinu

May the source of strength
who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing
And let us say: Amen

מי שברך אמותינו מקור הברכה לאבותינו
Mi shebairach imoteinu m'kor habracha l'avoteinu

Bless those in need of healing with *refuah sh'leimah*,
the renewal of body, the renewal of spirit
And let us say: Amen

כוס מרים--Kos Miryam--Miriam's Cup

Kos Miryam, the Cup of Miriam--with this cup of pure spring water we remember G-d's gift of *mayim hayim*, the living waters from Miriam's well. Elijah's Cup represents our future redemption in the messianic age, when peace will fill the world. The Cup of Miriam represent our past redemption, when our people were brought out of Egypt and delivered from slavery.

Miriam's well was said to hold divine power to heal, sustain, and renew. It became a special source of transformation for a people leaving slavery to form a new identity. Throughout our journey as a people, we have sought to rediscover these living waters for ourselves.

Tonight at our seder, we continue this journey. Just as the Holy One delivered Miriam and her people, just as they were sustained in the desert and transformed into a new people, so may we be delivered, sustained, and transformed on our journey to a stronger sense of ourselves as individuals and as one community. May the living waters of Miriam's well nourish us and give us inspiration as we embark on our journey through the Hagaddah.

זאת כוס מרים כוס מים חיים זכר לציאת מצרים

Zot Kos Miryam, kos mayim hayim. Zeiher litz'i'at mitzrayim.

This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt.

These are the living waters, G-d's gift to Miriam, which gave new life to Israel as we struggled with ourselves in the wilderness.

Blessed are you G-d, Who brings us from the narrows into the wilderness, sustains us with endless possibilities, and enables us to reach a new place.

Sip from Miriam's Cup

--Matia Rania Angelou and Janet Berkenfield

מגיד--Maggid--Telling the Story

The maggid is the heart of the hagaddah. The word maggid comes from the same Hebrew root as the word hagaddah. The root means to tell. This section of the hagaddah contains the story of the Exodus. The story is not a neat narrative with a beginning, middle and end. A pastiche of questions, rituals, biblical passages and tales from different moments in Jewish history, the maggid's structure invites us to use our own creativity in retelling and re-experiencing the Exodus.

It should be emphasized that the real mitzvah of telling the tale is one of real communication. The language and content of the tale as told must be understood both by the one who tells it and by its hearers. Those who simply mumble through the hagaddah text in a Hebrew they do not understand are literally not fulfilling the commandment of the seder.

--Arthur Green in "The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary"

הא לחמא עניא--Ha Lachma Anya

This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in need come and share our Passover. This year we are here. Next year in the Land of Israel. This year we are slaves. Next year, may we all be free.

The Four Questions

I learned the Four Questions in the kitchen. My mother handed me a towel and said: "I'll wash, you dry. I'll sing a few words, and you repeat." And so we sang, from the night after Purim, every night until I'd learned it all.

I taught the Four Questions at bath time to two little ones, lithe and slippery as seals. "I'll sing a few words, and then you sing," I said. They loved to dip and splash for "sh'tei f'amim." And so we sang, from Purim to Pesach. Every night, until they learned it all.

This is a rite of passage. We learn our part and take our turn. Wine trembles in our cups. Candles flicker. Conversations stops. First we ask the prescribed questions. Then, we add our own.

--Unknown Source

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה
מכל הלילות מכל הלילות

Ma nishtana halaila hazeh
Mikol haleilot mikol haleilot

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים
חמץ ומצה חמץ ומצה
הלילה הזה הלילה הזה
כלו מצה כלו מצה

Sheb'chol haleilot anu ochlin
hmeitz umatzah hmeitz umatzah
Halaila hazeh haliala hazeh
kulo matzah kulo matzah

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים
שאר ירקות שאר ירקות
הלילה הזה הלילה הזה
מרור מרור

Sheb'chol haleilot anu ochlin
Sh'ar y'arakot sh'ar y'arakot
halailah hazeh halailah hazeh
maror maror

שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבלין
אפילו פעם אחת אפילו פעם אחת
הלילה הזה הלילה הזה
שתי פעמים שתי פעמים

Sheb'chol haleilot ain anu matbelin
afilu pa'am echat afilu pa'am echat
halialah hazeh halailah hazeh
sh'tei f'amim sh'tei f'amim

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלים
בין יושבין ובין מסובין
בין יושבין ובין מסובין
הלילה הזה הלילה הזה
כלנו מסבין כלנו מסבין

Sheb'chol haleilot anu ochlin
bein yoshvin uvein m'subin
bein yoshvin uvein m'subin
halailah hazeh halailah hazeh
kulanu m'subin kulanu m'subin

To answer the question of why is this night different, we first begin by telling the story of slavery and redemption: The recurrent exhortation of the Passover service is to remember that we were strangers in Egypt and to help those who are, in our own time, the strangers.

נועבדים חיינו חיי

עתה בני חורין ובנות חורין

עבדים חיינו

עתה בני חורין

עבדים חיינו

עתה בני חורין ובנות חורין

עתה בני חורין ובנות חורין

Avadim Hayinu, hayinu

Ata b'nei horine, u'vanot horine

Avadim hayinu

Ata, ata b'nei horine

Avadim hayinu

Ata ata b'nei horine u'vanot horine

Ata ata b'nei horine u'vanot horine

We were slaves, but now we are free

The Four Children--The Four Girls Within All of Us

Wise Girls

At times, we are wise girls: strong and confident in what we know and who we are, curious and eager to learn more, seeing clearly through tangled and complex dilemmas, and able to make wise and appropriate decisions for ourselves and on behalf of others. Yet, as wise girls we risk growing complacent in our knowledge, smug in the "superior" wisdom or the status quo, and so caught up in the pursuit of learning and producing that we neglect others around us and our own well-being.

Wicked Girls

At other times, we are wicked girls: angry, rebellious, critical, and negative. We set ourselves apart from our community, feeling, perhaps, that we don't belong and not understanding that it is we, not others, who place ourselves on the outside. Yet, it is as wicked girls that we are able to

see our world from another perspective, to see that some times the emperor wears no clothes and to speak up and criticize what is wrong and what is unjust.

Simple Girls

At times, we are simple girls: relaxed and playful, enjoying life without questioning, analyzing or examining deeply; loving others with passion that cannot be expressed in words; being loved in return without any logic or reason. Yet, as simple girls we risk missing the color and texture of our complex universe, and we may forfeit the opportunity to contribute to *tikkun olam*, the repair and healing of the world.

Girls Who Don't Know How to Ask

At other times we are girls who don't know how to ask; we don't understand; we find that we cannot speak the language of the people in our company; we are struck dumb by a profound or strange new experience; or we are fearful because nothing like this has ever happened to us before. If we can remain silent, and tolerate our fear and our inability to speak for a while, we may discover worlds of riches we couldn't possibly have imagined. But if our fear paralyzes us, if we lose confidence and withdraw from the world, or if it is fear of others that silences us, we truly need to be brought out from slavery "by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

Each girl within us needs the other girls. The wise girl needs the forcefulness of the wicked, the playfulness of the simple and the sense of wonder of the speechless one. The wicked needs the erudition of the wise, the self-acceptance of the simple, and the contemplative spirit of the speechless. The simple needs the diligence of the wise, the clear vision of the wicked and the confusion of the speechless. And the one who is struck dumb needs the words of the wise, the shout of the wicked and the song of the simple.

At different times, each of our girls appears. We are, in turn, interested and curious, frustrated and angry, calm and contented, sad and fearful. It is easy to praise the wise, scold the wicked, smile with the simple, and rescue the speechless. It is far more difficult to challenge the wise, to love and appreciate the wicked, to prod the simple and to allow the dumbstruck to struggle with their confusion. We must learn how to encourage each girl's special gifts and discourage destructive tendencies.

All of these exist within us, sometimes in harmony and other times in cacophony. Our personal liberation depends upon understanding and balancing all of the very different parts of ourselves. May we come to know and accept the four girls within all of us so that we can grow closer to wholeness and freedom this year.

--Ruth Berger Goldston

The Telling

Ima, Mother, tell me a story.

Yocheved looks down over her bulging belly at the little daughter tugging at her hem. This is her Miriam, full of whys and whens and how comes. A story? Yocheved, sitting at her loom, has

only one story to tell--the one she fears her daughter is too young to hear. But Miriam will not be hushed, and so Yocheved, weary from the mud and the cloth and the stove, begins...

Once there was a people enslaved by an evil king. They worked day and night, but he was never satisfied. This king, Miriam, wanted more, wanted everything the people could give. And he took everything from them, down to their lives, down to their sons.

Miriam, bored of the story she has heard too many times, puts her hand on her mother's belly.

Ima, *Will I have a brother?*

Yes.

And Ima, *will the bad king take my brother?*

No. This time, the bad king cannot have everything he wishes. The voices of slavery will call out and be answered; through the strength of the few, and will be saved. Do you understand, my daughter? Only through courage will the bad king be overcome. Ahh, Miriam, I am a slave, but my children, they will be free..you hold the power to make them free.

Tell me a story, whispers Shifra and Puah as they wait, tense, in the darkness. Another baby will soon be born, but on this night, the angel of death will be forced away. *Puah, I am afraid,* and Shifra reaches for her hand.

Do not be afraid, my sister, my friend. Puah's voice does not shake. *We are the givers of life, and the power of life is strong, stronger than Pharaoh and his gods, stronger than law. Remember the force of life, within us all, in this birth tent, in this women's camp, and you will not be afraid.*

And what story can you tell me? whispers Pharaoh's daughter to the baby in the basket, his cries already slowing. She holds him to her breast. *What else can you be to me but a gift, a little treasure? A child for a woman who is barren, and when I am old you will tell my stories for me.* Pharaoh's daughter knows the origin of this gift, so often prayed for, but holds her silence. She walks calmly to her father's house. *Father, I have brought you our future, my son,* she says.

I have sent my husband Moses back to You, Tziporah tells the darkening sky outside her tent. *I found him aimless in the desert, but I know he belongs to You and to his people. He will have a hard time of it, I know; he hates crowds and says he doesn't speak too well. I have a child on the way, and he said he wouldn't leave me, but I saw Your voice in his eyes and so I have sent him...may he go with visions for the future and return with the faces of his past. What stories, then, will he have for our child?*

The women have dropped their tambourines in exhaustion; the sun is beginning to set. *Miriam, Miriam, sing to us,* they cry. *Miriam, tell us a story.* And Miriam, the child of slavery, hears the voice of her mother. And Miriam, the prophetess of freedom, begins to tell the story.

--Arielle Derby

The Ten Plagues

The biblical plagues played a necessary part of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. But today, women have still not completely escaped the bonds of slavery.

דם--Dam--Blood: Women's blood has been shed through political oppression and domestic violence. We remove a drop of wine for the spilled blood of women.

צפרדע--Tz'fardei'a--Frogs: The myth of the Frog Prince has enslaved women to an unattainable idea of romance. In addition, we have been made responsible for "turning frogs into princes" if we can only love enough, be good enough, be self sacrificing enough. We remove a drop of wine for all the women trapped in false hopes and false expectations for their lives.

כנים--Kinim--Lice: The poverty and economic injustice of unequal pay that condemns so many women and children. We remove a drop of wine for all people living in need.

ערוב--Arov--Beasts: Like beasts of burden, too many women have overworked themselves. Many must work two full-time jobs, one outside the home and one in the home. They receive little help, reward or recognition. We remove a drop of wine for the extra burden of working women with families.

דבר--Dever--Disease: The plague of those diseases which are prevalent among women. The scourge of ailments for which there is not yet a cure. Women's medical problems have not yet been treated as seriously as men's. We remove a drop of wine for all who suffer illness.

שחין--Sh'hin--Boils: Some women feel pressured by the media and societal messages to achieve an artificial and unattainable image of beauty or thinness. Many suffer from eating disorder or low self-esteem because of social pressures around body image. We remove a drop of wine for all women who feel they don't measure up.

ברד--Barad--Hail: The torrents of chemicals which destroy our bodies, poison our air and water, and pollute the land. This plague harms not only those living today, but also those yet to be born. We remove a drop of wine for the damaged earth we give to our children.

ארבה--Arbeh--Locusts: As locusts strip the fields, so patriarchy has kept us from the full fruits of our labors. Throughout history, in repressive and extreme political and religious societies women have been denied the opportunities to work, to study, to advance themselves. We remove a drop of wine for the pain of all women who have been denied the opportunity to pursue their own education and self actualization.

חשך--Hosheh--Darkness: Without the contributions of strong and educated women, we are still in the dark age of ignorance. Too many women in too many cultures still live imprisoned in their homes or suffer mutilation because they are women. We remove a drop of wine for those women who still live in fear because they are women.

ת בכורותמ--Makat B'horot--Death of the First Born: For all female infants in those cultures who are still left to die in the 21st century, unwanted, uncelebrated, ignored or unacknowledged--we spill a drop of wine.

From all these plagues, we must be freed!

--Women's Perspective

Miriam's Song

CHORUS:

And the women dancing with their timbrels
Followed Miriam as she sang her song.
Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted.
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history.
With every thread and every strand she crafted her delight.
A women touched with spirit, she dances toward the light.

[CHORUS]

As Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the sea,
The wonder of the miracle she soon came to believe.
Whoever thought the sea would part with an outstretched hand,
And we would pass to freedom, and march to the promised land.

[CHORUS]

And Miriam the Prophet took her timbrel in her hand,
And the women all followed her just as she had planned.
And Miriam raised her voice with song. She sang with praise and might,
We've just lived through a miracle, we're going to dance tonight!

[CHORUS]

Dayeinu

If Eve had been created in the image of G-d and not as a helper to Adam, Dayeinu.

If she had been created as Adam's equal and not as a temptress, Dayeinu.

If she were the first woman to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, who brought learning to us, Dayeinu.

If Sarah were recognized as a priestess, royal in her own lineage, Dayeinu.

If Lot's wife had been honored and not mocked when she turned her head, as devastation befell her
children, and not mocked for the falling and freezing of her tears, Dayeinu.

If our fore-mothers had not been considered as hardened roots or fruit-bearing wombs, but as women in
themselves, Dayeinu.

If our fathers had not pitted our mothers against each other, like Abraham with Sarah and Hagar or Jacob
with Leah and Rachel or Elkana with Hannah and Pnina, Dayeinu.

If Miriam were given the prophet's chair, or the priesthood, Dayeinu.

If the Just Women in Egypt who caused our redemption had been given significant recognition, Dayeinu.

If women bonding, like Noami and Ruth, were the tradition and not the exception, Dayeinu.

If women were in the Tribal Council and decided on the laws that dealt with women, Dayeinu.

If women had also been the writers of Tanach, interpreters of our past, Dayeinu.

If women had written the hagaddah and brought our mothers forth, Dayeinu.

If every generation of women together with every generation of men would continue to go out of Egypt,
Dayeinu, Dayeinu.

--E.M. Broner

Pesach, Matzah and Maror

Pesach: This roasted shankbone or beet symbolizes the lamb's blood that marked the doorpost of our homes in Egypt. The blood protected us from the Angel of Death as it passed over our houses and killed the firstborn of the Egyptians. We live this symbol and celebrate life-giving and life-saving blood.

Matzah: We think of all the world's homeless and hungry to whom this simple matzah would be a full meal. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "there are people in the world so hungry that G-d cannot appear to them except in the form of bread."

Maror: Maror leads us into memories of bitterness--the bitterness of Egypt, bitter waters, bitter words, enslavement, the bitter cold of the desert night and the bitter heat of the desert sun, the bitterness of wandering and the bitterness of exile. Yet, even as we remember the bitterness of slavery, we know that no bitterness is without end.

--Stephanie Aaron

The Orange

In recent years, it has become common to place an orange on the seder plate. Susannah Heschel, a professor of Jewish studies at Dartmouth and daughter of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel placed an orange on her seder plate one year after attending a seder at Oberlin College. She suggests that an orange represents the fruitfulness of a Jewish community when "lesbians and gay men are contributing and active members of Jewish life. In addition, each orange segment had a few seeds that had to be spit out--a gesture of spitting out, repudiating the homophobia that poisons too many Jews."

The orange is a symbol of the struggle of people who have been marginalized within the Jewish community; that includes gay and lesbian Jews, and indeed all Jewish women. The orange reminds us that the bimah is no longer an exclusively male bastion. The orange is a symbol of the juicy vitality of Judaism, which reseeds and reforms and reconstructs itself from generation to generation. And the orange is a mark of our confidence in the Jewish future, which means that someday, when you are a mom or day, maybe you too will bring something new to the seder plate.

--Anita Diamont

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam borei p're ha'eitz.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree.

The Second Cup of Wine

With the second cup, we deliver from our past the women who have lived in the long centuries that followed, from late antiquity to the cusp of the modern era. Recall those who prayed at the birth of a daughter, "may she sew, spin, weave, and be brought up to a life of good deeds," the wives who ground corn, baked bread and cooked food, nursed their children, and conversed while spinning yarn in the moonlight; those who kept the Sabbaths, the festivals, the commandments concerning a woman's cycle; those who sewed Torah scrolls, made candles for the synagogue, and embroidered Hebrew inscriptions.

Beruriah, whose learning was so prized that when the sage discussed her insights, they observed, "Rightly did Beruriah say;"

Al-Wuhsha and Gluckel of Hameln, savvy businesswomen in 12th century Cairo and 17th century Europe;

Dona Gracia Nasi, the Sephardi patroness and philanthropist, who fled the Inquisitions and helped others do the same;

Let us also remember with the cup the far too many who died cruel deaths, hacked by the Crusaders' swords, burnt at the stake on false charges of ritual murder, and broken on the racks of the Inquisition.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam borei p're hagafen.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

רחצה--Rachtzah--Second Hand Washing

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציונו על נטילת ידים

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who makes us holy with the commandments and commands us to wash our hands.

מוציא מצה--Motzi Matzah--Matazah Blessing

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz

Praised are you, Adonai our G-d, ruler of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציונו על אכילת מצה

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivana al achilat matzah

Praised are you, Adonai our G-d, ruler of the universe who makes us holy with the commandments and commands us to eat matzah.

מרור--Maror--Bitter Herbs

This is the way to experience bitterness: take a big chunk of raw horseradish, let the burning turn your face all red.

This is the way to experience bitterness: dig back to the time of raw wounds, remember how it felt before the healing began, years or months or days ago.

This is the way to experience bitterness: hold the hand of a friend in pain, listen to her story, remember Naomi who renamed herself Mara, bitterness, because she "went away full but G-d brought her back empty" (Ruth 1:21).

This is the way to experience bitterness: recall the pain of exclusion that is part of the legacy of Jewish women. Listen to the words of Bertha Pappenheim, founder of the German Jewish feminist movement, who said, "No continuing education can repair how the souls of Jewish women--and thus Judaism in its entirety--have been sinned against..."

Or the words of Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah, who wrote, "But do not speak to me of the progressiveness of Judaism! Why isn't there one prayer in the books to fit my modern case--not one to raise up the spirit of the so-call emancipated woman?"

How big a piece of maror must we eat to re-experience this bitterness?
And what if I've known enough pain in this year already? And what if exclusion is not just a memory for me?
And what if I eat the whole root and my tongue catches on fire and my ears burn? Then will I know slavery?

--Ma'yan Hagaddah

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציונו על אכילת מרור
Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al acilat maror
Praised are you Adonai our G-d, ruler of the universe who makes us holy with the commandments and commands us to eat maror.

כורך--Koreich--Hillel Sandwich

From darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from winter to spring, and now from bitterness to sweetness. But with the light, there is still darkness in the world. With our freedom, there are still those who are enslaved. It is still winter for some, and life remains bitter for many throughout the world.

Even in our own lives, we live within the tapestry of these contradictions. It is dark, and it is light; we are trapped and we are liberated; we are cold and we are warm; we experience pain and joy, just as we have eaten the maror with the charoset, taking the bitter with the sweet.

Through this act, we acknowledge the fullness of life, shaded by the gradations of experience; never black and white but a reflection of the full range of possibilities.

--Joy Levitt

שולחן עורך--Schulchan Orech--Festive Meal

start without me
i'm okay really
i'll be right in

she never sat like i wanted her to
she would start to sing so pretty
an ancient melody
and a new melody from her ancient childhood
then, i must check on the brisket
or the potatoes or the ceiling or the dishes or the kitchen floor

the festive meal was her palace
her beauty and radiance and sadness all laid out for us on her table
meat and vegetables and sweets and pretty dishes and tablecloths and things she never had

her time to give us what G-d had given her;
a long table, a festive meal, and a taste of the world to come

--Mayim Bailik

צפון--Tzafun--Searching for the Hidden Matzah

Afikomen--an opportunity to find what was hidden, to recover what seemed lost. Breaking off the matzah is a break or change from the old order. Often, we hide the past from ourselves and need to redeem it to create a whole from the broken half.

Passover's deepest lesson is about transformation. As we pull ourselves out of the narrow place that constrains us, our Mitzrayim, we know that we can change. We can also transform the world--and in so doing we transform ourselves.

Retrieving the afikomen is symbolic of making whole whatever is broken, hidden or lost in our own life.

ברך--Bareich--Blessing after the Meal

Leader:

חברי נברך

Chavei n'vareich

Let us praise God!

Group:

יְהִי שֵׁם יי מְבָרַךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

Y'hi shem Adonai m'vorach mei-atah v'ad olam

Praised be the name of God, now and forever

Leader:

יְהִי שֵׁם יי מְבָרַךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.
בְּרִשׁוֹת הַחֲבֵרָה, נְבָרַךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ.

Y'hi shem Adonai m'vorach mei-atah v'ad olam.

Birshut hachevrah, n'vareich Elohinu she-achalnu mishelo.

Praised be the name of God, now and forever. Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten.

Group:

בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ חַיֵּינוּ.

Baruch Eloheinu she-achalnu mishelo uv'tuvo chayinu.

Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten, and by whose goodness we live.

Leader:

בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ חַיֵּינוּ.
בָּרוּךְ הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ.

Baruch Eloheinu she-achalnu mishelo uv'tuvo chayinu. Baruch hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten, and by whose goodness we live. Praised be the Eternal God.

All:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַזֵּן אֶת־הָעוֹלָם
כָּלֹ בְטוֹבוֹ, בְּחֵן בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים. הוּא נוֹתֵן לָחֵם
לְכָל־בָּשָׂר, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ. וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַגָּדוֹל תָּמִיד
לֹא חָסַר לָנוּ, וְאֵל יַחֲסֹר לָנוּ, מִזּוֹן לְעוֹלָם וָעֵד,
בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל. כִּי הוּא אֵל זֶן וּמְפָרֵס לְכָל,
וּמְטִיב לְכָל, וּמַכִּין מִזּוֹן לְכָל־בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הַזֵּן אֶת־הַכֹּל.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, hazan et haolam kulo b'tuvo, b'chein b'chesed uv'rachamim. Hu notein lechem l'chol basar ki l'olam chasdo. Uv'tuvo hagadol tamid lo chasar lanu, v'al yechar lanu, mazon l'olam va-ed, baavur sh'mo hagadol. Ki hu El zan um'farneis lakol umeitiv lakol, umeichin mazon l'chol b'rivotav asher bara. Baruch atah Adonai, hazan et hakol.

Sovereign God of the universe, we praise You: Your goodness sustains the world. You are the God of grace, love, and compassion, the Source of bread for all who live; for Your love is everlasting. In Your great goodness we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for all. We praise You, O God, Source of food for all who live.

וְעַל הַכֹּל, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ וּמְבָרְכִים
אוֹתְךָ. יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמֶךָ בְּפִי כָל־חַי תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֵד,
כְּפָתוּב: וְאֶכְלֶתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ, וּבִרְכַתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטְּבֵהָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתְּ־לָךְ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי,
עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְעַל־הַמְּזוֹן.

V'al hakol, Adonai Eloheinu, anachnu modim lach um'var'chim otach. Yitbarach simcha b'fi chol chai tamid l'olam va-ed, kakatuv: V'achalta v'savata, uveirachta et Adonai Elohecha al haaretz hatovah asher natan lach. Baruch atah Adonai, al haaretz v'al hamazon.

For all this we thank You. Let Your praise ever be on the lips of all who live, as it is written: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, give praise to your God who has given you this good earth." We praise You, O God, for the earth, and for its sustenance.

וּבְנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּמַהֲרָה בְיָמֵינוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, בּוֹנֵה בְרַחֲמָיו יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. אָמֵן.

*Uv'neih Y'rushalayim ir hakodesh bimheirah v'yameinu.
Baruch atah Adonai, boneh v'rachamav Y'rushalayim. Amen.*

Let Jerusalem, the holy city, be renewed in our time. We praise You, *Adonai*, in compassion You rebuild Jerusalem. Amen.

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוָמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם,
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Oseh shalom bimromav, hu yaaseh shalom, aleinu v'al kol Yisrael, v'imru amen.
May the Source of peace grant peace to us, to all Israel, and to all the world. Amen.

יְהוָה עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן, יְהוָה יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם.

Adonai oz l'amo yitein, Adonai y'vareich et amo vashalom.
Eternal God: give strength to Your people; Eternal God: bless Your people with peace.

The Third Cup of Wine

With the third cup, we redeem and recall the voices of the women of the modern Jewish experience. Recall the German housewives who made their Jewish homes islands of serenity; the mothers of the shtetl who hawked wares in the marketplace; the daughters of the shtetl who sang, "Why was I born to be a seamstress, why?"; the ladies of the sisterhood who outfitted the Sunday schools; the chalutzot (pioneers) who labored on the kibbutzim.

As we get closer to our own moment in time, the most famous--Henrietta Szold, Golda Meir--burst forth. But with this cup, let us redeem those whose names are less well known: the writer, Mary Antin; the educator, Rebecca Gratz; the activist, Emma Goldman; the social worker, Bertha Pappenheim; the religious leader, Regina Jones; the Zionist, Manya Shochat.

And we must pause to remember in sorrow that in modern times too, Jews died as Jews. Edith Hollander Frank and her daughters Anne and Margot, were but three among the millions slaughtered and gasses in the Holocaust.

וְךָ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam borei p're hagafen.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

The Cups of Elijah and Miriam

We open our doors and our ears to welcome Elijah in to our homes, Elijah, the eternal wanderer, is given a momentary respite and a drink from his cup before continuing his endless quest for the end of days. Elijah, the eternal companion of the Jewish people, will herald the messianic age. In the meantime, he reminds us of the hope he carries.

אֵלֶיָּהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֵלֶיָּהוּ הַתְּשֻׁבִי
אֵלֶיָּהוּ אֵלֶיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי
בְּמַהֲרָב בִּימֵינוּ יָבוֹא אֵלֵינוּ
עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד
עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד

Eilياهو hanavi, eilياهو hatishbi
Eilياهو eilياهو eilياهو hagiladi
bimheira v'yameinu, yavo eileinu
im mashiach ben david
im mashiach ben david

Elijah the Prophet, come to us soon, for you herald Messianic days.

In the years of wandering in the desert, Miriam's well accompanied the Israelites. According to tradition, Miriam's well is still with us. Every Saturday night, at the end of Shabbat, its waters flow out into wells everywhere in the world.

While the return of Elijah is left to the future and all its potential, Miriam is present with us always. She is here to provide healing, inspiration, and wisdom. She and her waters sustain us as we await Elijah.

There is still a long journey to freedom, a long while before Elijah can herald the messianic age. Miriam the Prophet calls to work for--not wait for--that day. She sustains us with the most basic substance on earth--water that cleanses and heals. She lifts our hearts as she leads us once again in song and dance.

הלל--Hallel--Songs of Praise

הודו ליי כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו יאמר נא ישראל כי לעולם חסדו

Hodu l'adonai ki tov ki l'olam hasdo. Yomar na Yisrael ki l'olam hasdo

Let all who revere G-d's name now say, "Ki l'olam hasdo"

Sing praise to the One, for G-d is good, "Ki l'olam hasdo"

The Fourth Cup of Wine

With the fourth cup, we take to this seder table contemporary Jewish women, those among us now. Celebrate those at this table and those not so near. For all belong to this, the most recent stage in the history of our women.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu melech haolam borei p're hagafen.

Praised are you Adonai our G-d ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

נרצה--Nirtzah—Conclusion

By the Merit of our Righteous Mothers

Deep in the darkness of Egyptian slavery, our fore-mothers caught glimpses of light. The pyramids of hardship did not persuade them; they dreamed themselves openings and moved swiftly. How could they weep at night, when a nation was waiting to be born?

These ingenious women devised elaborate plans to reawaken desire in their work worn husbands. They fed them, bathed them, and drenched them with sweet smelling oils. And their magic worked wonders. Our mothers' wombs grew to be as full as pomegranates. The midrash relates that each woman could have birthed the whole nation--six hundred thousand in each womb!

Shifra and Puah, the mighty pair of midwives, defied Pharaoh's strict orders to ensure that life would continue for a new generation. But our mothers' foresight and skill extended outside the birthing room. With Miriam the Prophetess as their able guide, they greeted G-d's splitting of the sea with an eruption of their own beautiful music. "From where did they have instruments in the middle of the desert?" asks the midrash. They were believers in G-d's miracles, these women; they were prepared for redemption.

As we greet redemption at Passover each year, we too are the engines of our people. Preparing our house and families for the holiday is a true labor of love, fueled by fear of G-d and faith in the future. We too are able to see new possibilities where there appears to be darkness. We gather strength from Shifra and Puah, Miriam and Yocheved, joining our forces together to effect change. Let us allow Miriam's song of praise to inspire us and guide our steps.

--Tammy Jacobowitz

לשנה הבא בירושלים

L'shana haba'a b'y'rushalim

Next Year in Jerusalem!

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