

# **PASSOVER HAGGADAH**

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# SEDER

## Order of Service

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# SYMBOLS OF THE PASSOVER SEDER

## A) The Sedar Table Setting

- 1) Sedar Platter. This is a large plate that is set conveniently for the person(s) who will conduct the Sedar. Upon the Sedar Platter, the following are placed:
  - a) Pesach. The Roasted Shankbone (The shankbone should be that of a lamb or an appropriate equivalent.)
  - b) Charoset. (This is a mixture of chopped apples, chopped nuts and cinnamon blended with a small quantity of sweet wine.)
  - c) Moror or Bitter Herbs. (Fresh horseradish either grated or cut into pieces may be used.)
  - d) Karpas. (This may be parsley, watercress or lettuce. Celery, onion and potatoes are also used.)
  - e) The Roasted Egg. (A hard-boiled egg will do if necessary.)
  - f) Three Matsot. The matsot are each covered separately in a large napkin suitably folded, or placed in a special matsot cover. (These matsot need not, however, be placed upon the Sedar Platter. Owing to their size, it may be more convenient to keep them on their own platter or separate in their special cover.)
- 2) Wine. A cup of wine is placed at each setting. A filled wine decanter should also be at hand. (Fruit juices, especially grape juice, may be used in place of the wine.)
- 3) Cup of Elijah. A large brimming goblet named for the prophet Elijah is set near the center of the table.
- 4) Individual Portions. During the course of the Sedar, the individual participants will require various items, several of which are also included on the Sedar Platter. Bowls of the following should be easily available to each person.
  - a) A dish of charoset.
  - b) A plate of horseradish, cut into small pieces or grated.
  - c) A portion of parsley, watercress or lettuce.
  - d) A dish of salt water
- 5) Sedar Decorations. Appropriate decorations for the Sedar table, or for the room in which the Sedar is taking place, include flowers; figures of domestic animals and their young; and works of art generally that celebrate the Passover themes of freedom, creativity and Spring.

# I.

*Commentary:* Wine plays a significant role in many Jewish ceremonies. Historically, wine has been employed on festive occasions as a symbol of sanctification and rejoicing. In the traditional Seder service, each participant is expected to drink four cups of wine. The number of cups as "four," was arbitrarily determined, developing as a response to the ritual needs of the period in which the traditional Seder evolved. Thus, in the traditional Seder the first cup is drunk at the beginning of the service, as part of the ceremony of sanctification (Kiddush), to signify the special quality of the festival day. Another cup, the Cup of Benediction, follows the grace after meals. These two cups of wine were not unique to the Passover in traditional observance. They were similarly drunk on the Sabbath, festivals, and other happy occasions. To emphasize, therefore, that the Seder was a uniquely joyous experience, two more cups of wine were added to the traditional Seder: one to be drunk before dinner was served, after completion of the first part of the service; and the other at the conclusion of the entire service.

A fanciful homily to justify four cups of wine at the Seder is provided traditionally by basing the number "four" upon four divine promises of deliverance and favor that are recounted in the legendary scriptural account of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. These promises, which appear in the Pentateuch, Exodus 6:6 and 7, are: "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians," "I will deliver you from their bondage," "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm," and "I will take you to Me for a people."

It may be noted, regarding the ceremonial use of wine in this Haggadah, that the Seder service has been shortened considerably from its traditional length. This is to satisfy the general need in modern ritualism both for conciseness and the avoidance of unnecessary additions and repetitions. Accordingly, the traditional four ceremonial occasions for drinking have been reduced to two. Moreover, the following additional changes may be instituted at the option of the participants. Rather than draining the cup at each ceremonial occasion, it will serve the festive significance of the wine if a sip is taken. Furthermore, the symbolic purposes of the Seder will be satisfied if fruit juice is substituted for the wine. Although any kind of fruit juice will do, grape juice is particularly appropriate.

## **Reader**

**Our world is a place of wonder. Whenever we pause, we see the ways of change. Even now the warmth of spring replaces the cold of winter. Nights grow short and days long. Blessed is the light and warmth of spring!**

*(Candles are lit)*

**Blessed is the fountain of life, ground of being, by whose power we light the (Sabbath and) festival candles.**

[Historical Reading]

## **Group**

**From the power of creation flowed stars and planets, sun and earth. Orbiting in its course, earth from the sun receives rays of changing times and seasons. Winter's rays are indirect and thin; they shine briefly and are quickly gone. As the rays turn direct and full, days lengthen and the air is warm. The time of spring has come. Blessed is the light and warmth of spring.**

**Blessed is the fountain of life, ground of being, by whose power we have abided, we have endured, to reach this festive season.**

[Historical Reading]

## **Reader and Group**

**We raise our cups to the force and flow of life in its many seasons.**

**Blessed is the fountain of life, ground of being, by whose creative power humankind fashions the fruit of the vine.**

**Blessed is the fountain of life, ground of being, by whose creative power we forge commandments of the heart and delight in them.**

**We have in love and favor taken the festival of Pesach as our possession, a remembrance of an essential goal of humankind.**

**For it is a preeminent event among hallowed occasions, a symbol of the fulfillment of humankind.**

**We have chosen freedom and sanctified it among all good things.**

**So have we sanctified Pesach in love, and in favor have we taken it as a possession.**

**Blessed is the ground of being by whose power we hallow the Pesach.**

[Historical Reading]

## II.

*Commentary:* The original significance of the Karpas (parsley, lettuce, watercress) and Salt Water is to be found in connection with Pascal Lamb. The blood of the Pascal Lamb, according to Scripture, was to be placed on the lintel and side-posts of the Israelites' homes. This would protect their first born sons from death, the last plague that was to be visited on the Egyptians (Exodus 12:21-23). The blood was applied to the lintels and side-posts by striking them with bunches of hyssop dipped in the Paschal Lamb's blood. The Karpas represents the hyssop, and the Salt Water the blood. For the modern reader, the Karpas is generally seen as pointing to the rich productivity of the earth, of which we are particularly aware in the spring. The Salt Water may be viewed simply as a condiment.

### **Reader**

**For, lo, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
The time of singing is come,  
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;  
The fig-tree puts forth her green figs,  
And the vines in blossom give forth their  
fragrance (Song of Songs 2:11-12).**

*(Parsley, lettuce or watercress is shared with the group, placed in individual plates.)*

### **Reader and Group**

**We are freed by the warmth of love to grow full and strong. From our fullness and strength come the gifts we share with others. So does the warmth of spring free the land to create its rich growth. Winter's chains melt, and the seeds sprout green and tall. Blessed are the fruits of life and earth, whose goodness and beauty bring joy to the heart of humankind.**

*(Parsley, lettuce or watercress is dipped into salt water and the following is recited before partaking.)*

**Blessed is the ground of being, fountain of life, by whose power we bring forth the fruit of the earth.**

[Historical Reading]

## **Reader or Song (page )**

**The rain is over and gone,**

**The winter no more sends its clouds.**

**The turtledove coos in our land,**

**It's time, it's time, it's time to blossom for flowers.**

### **III.**

*(The middle matsah on the plate of Three Matsot is broken by the reader. One half is left the matsot plate. The other half which serves as the Afikomen, is hidden, so the children may later find and return it for a reward in which every child shares.)*

*Commentary: The term Afikomen derives from the Greek, most probably from a word meaning "after-meal dessert," (although a Greek word meaning "festival song" has also been suggested as the origin." The Afikomen is the last food eaten at the Seder. It consist of a piece of matsah that has been broken off from the middle matsah of the stack of Three Matsot traditionally called Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael. The custom of the Afikomen has been traced to an ancient rule requiring that a piece of the Pascal Lamb be the last food eaten at the Seder. In a later period, when the practice of preparing and eating a Pascal Lamb had diminished, the rule was applied to a piece of matsah instead. A game is played with the children at the Seder over the Afikomen. After the middle matsah has been broken, the piece selected as the Afikomen is hidden by one of the adults. The children are encouraged to find the Afikomen, and receive a reward when it is returned. Pieces of the Afikomen are distributed to the group, and it is then eaten at the conclusion of the Seder meal. In the traditional Seder, the Afikomen was customarily hidden by the patriarchal head of the family under a pillow upon which he reclined. Reclining on a pillow, toward the left side, is a relic of the ancient practice of reclining on couches, which itself was modeled after Roman custom. Such reclining signified the patriarchal father's status as a free man and head of the family.*

*The significance of the Three Matsot has been changed. Traditionally, the Matsot are taken primarily as symbolizing affliction and oppression, hence their name "Bread of Affliction" (Lach-ma an-ya). The matsot are viewed rather as symbolizing human courage and power. There is no productive value or particular truth in the image of the Jews as passive victims of history.*

**Reader**

*(Raising the plate of the Three Matsot)*

**Matsah, the unleavened bread of Pesach, is dry and hard, a remembrance of the courage of the Israelites in their journey through a wilderness, dry and hard, to reach the land of Israel, their home of freedom. Amidst our festive abundance, the Matsah brings to mind all who hunger and thirst. In the coming year, may we find strength to help those less fortunate than ourselves. May all mankind, next year at this season, in peace and good will, enjoy a feast joyous as our own.**

[Historical Reading]

*(The Matsot plate is replaced on the table.)*

**Reader or Song (page )**

**Let all who are hungry come and eat.**

**Let all who are in want come and celebrate the Pesach.**

## IV. THE FOUR QUESTIONS

*(The four questions are usually asked by a child.)*

**Why is this night different from all other nights?**

**On all other nights, we eat either ordinary (leavened) bread or matsah (unleavened bread). Why on this night, do we especially eat matsah (unleavened) bread?**

**On all other nights, we eat every kind of vegetable. Why, on this night do we especially eat bitter vegetables?**

**On all other nights we usually do not dip vegetables even once. Why, on this night, do we dip them twice (in salt water and charoset)?**

**On all other nights, we eat either sitting as usual or in an easy and festive manner. Why, on this night, do we eat only in an easy and festive manner?**

## V. Response

### **Reader and Group**

**The four questions are timeless, for they have no one meaning or response. Over the ages, the four questions have been understood and answered in many different ways. We, too, are called upon to answer them in our own way. In the spirit of ever new response, for our time and our place, we now answer the four questions.**

## **Reader**

In every life, there is a journey to freedom. When very young, we know little of freedom. Freedom comes only gradually, as our thoughts and actions become truly our own. At the beginning of life's way, we depend upon others, parents and families, to perform our tasks. Slowly the years pass, we grow older and travel further along the path to freedom. Grateful though we are to those who have taught and loved us, still we must see the world in new ways, our own ways. We take responsibility for our actions, and come to live in and through ourselves.

## **Group**

The journey to freedom enriches our lives, yet its challenge is often hard. Freedom must be worked for, it does not come as a gift. Life lived through others may seem easier and safer. When we choose ourselves, at times we feel lonely, and frightened by all there is to do.

## **Reader and Group**

At journey's end, freedom brings its rich reward. Like earth unchained by spring to bear its sweetest fruit, humans in freedom bring forth their true selves, their greatest creation. How honest the thoughts we truly think. How real the acts we truly do. How full the love we truly feel.

## **Reader or Song (Page )**

Only be strong and of good courage.

(Joshua 1:18)

## **Reader**

In every new age, the Jews in community make a journey to freedom. When the world is reborn, the Jewish spirit, too, is reformed and created anew. Pesach celebrates the journey of the Jew to creative freedom.

## **Reader and Group**

**Pesach as a journey to freedom is first told of in the Book of the Torah named Exodus. It is written that in ancient times, the Jews, who were called Israelites, once came to dwell in the land of Egypt. There they lived in peace until a new Pharaoh arose. He made slaves of the Israelites, and harsh taskmasters ruled over them. The Israelites could not leave the land, or live as they chose. They could not follow their religion, or work as they wished. Then a new time came; Egypt changed and the Pharaoh weakened. The Israelites found strength to leave their bondage under the leadership of Moses. They departed Egypt in a great exodus to begin a long journey to freedom.**

## **Reader**

**The Israelites left Egypt in springtime, when animals give birth to their young, and the early grains are ready for harvest. So great was their hurry, there was no time to bake their regular bread. Instead they made the special, quick bread called matsah. They took for their journey everything that could be swiftly gathered: matzos, clothes, herds and flocks, even the newborn calves, kids, and lambs.**

## **Group**

**As in every journey to freedom, the Israelites met with hardships. In freedom, we must care for ourselves. As slaves, the Israelites were cared for by their masters. The path from Egypt took the Israelites through a wilderness of hunger and thirst. Many thought the journey too hard. Some wished they had never left Egypt's fleshpots, and the safety of slavery.**

## **Reader**

**Yet the Israelites did not retreat. The price of freedom was great, but the price of slavery was greater. They completed their journey to receive freedom's reward: the power to create the life they desired.**

## **Group**

**The Israelites ruled themselves, and from liberty's choice a community was born. Laws were written and ancient promises fulfilled. Settling in the ancient land of Canaan, the Israelites created a new country. Here they rejoiced in all they had done, and gave to future ages the Passover, a festival of creative freedom.**

## **Reader or Song (Page )**

**Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof  
(Leviticus (25:10)).**

# **VI. THREE PESACH SYMBOLS**

## **Reader**

**Symbols are rich legacies of the past. They point to the deep recesses of life.  
Thus these words of a great sage.**

**Rabbi Gamaliel stated: "Whoever does not speak these three words on the  
Pesach has not truly fulfilled his festival obligations: Pesach; Matsah; and  
Moror."**

*Commentary: In the traditional Seder, the Roasted Shankbone signifies the Pesach or Paschal Lamb. This was a lamb of special perfection that, according to the Pentateuch, was to be ritually slaughtered and eaten by every Israelite on the Passover (Exodus 12:3-14). As observed in the following commentary on Matsah, however, the pentateuchal Passover was a relatively late festival incorporating elements from earlier pastoral and agricultural holidays. Thus long before any reputed Egyptian experience, the semi-nomadic tribes that were to become known as the Israelites celebrated the fertility of their flocks and herds in spring festivals. From the newborn animals, ritual sacrifices undoubtedly were made. It is reasonable to conclude that the Pascal Lamb of the Pentateuch reflects these earlier spring pastoral rites.*

*Although indirect evidence exists that this is the case, no clear mention of such a relation appears. Rather, the Pentateuch maintains that Moses prophetically instituted the sacrifice of the Pascal Lamb.*

*In this, the significance of the Roasted Shankbone is once again seen in the light of its most ancient values. The Roasted Shankbone symbolizes the entire process of creation by pointing to the new life that, with the birth of animals, comes forth in the spring.*

*Roasted Egg: In the traditional Seder, the Roasted Egg signifies additional festival offerings that, during the biblical period were sacrificed in the temple on the Passover. The Roasted Egg is not referred to in the traditional liturgy. Its obvious symbolic reference for the modern religionist is to the fertility of spring. The egg is traditionally eaten first at the Seder meal.*

*(Reader raises Pesach, roasted shank-bone or approximate equivalent.)*

## **Reader**

**What is the meaning of Pesach?**

## **Group**

**Pesach is the Paschal Lamb. In spring, new life bursts forth everywhere, and nature's abundance is all about. The lamb of Pesach points to the power of creation, and brings grateful awareness of the goodness we have received.**

*Commentary: The Pesach, as noted above, is presented in the Bible as a festival that was created to celebrate the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 12:14-29), but critically viewed it is a relatively late celebration that incorporates and reworks earlier pastoral and agricultural spring festivals. The matsah, or unleavened bread, exemplifies this point. Matsah has a long history in the agricultural communities of ancient Canaan as a ritual food eaten at spring festivals. In the legendary account of the exodus from Egypt, the matsah is made part of the story as the only kind of bread the Israelites had time to make: there was no opportunity in their haste to leave to allow the dough they prepared to leaven (Exodus 12:34).*

*As observed earlier, the matsah is here taken as a symbol of courage that meets the challenge of existence in freedom.*

*(Reader raises matsah)*

## **Reader**

**What is the meaning of Matsah?**

## **Group**

**Matsah is the unleavened bread. By their exodus from Egypt, the Israelites made it a bread of courage. Matsah points to freedom's challenges, and the abiding power of valiant response.**

*Commentary: Maror, the bitter herb, is taken traditionally as representing the bitter lives of the Israelites when slaves in Egypt. The Maror serves to symbolize the difficulties faced by all persons in their individual and collective journeys to freedom.*

*Charoset: This flavorsome combination probably originated as a side dish or spread for the matsah. The Charoset came to symbolize the clay that the Israelites, as slaves in Egypt, were forced to make into bricks. The Charoset is also viewed as symbolic of the help that humans can give one another in the universal struggle for freedom.*

*(Reader raises maror)*

## **Reader**

**What is the meaning of Maror?**

## **Group**

**Maror is the bitter vegetable. Yet dipped in charoset, its bitterness brings pleasure. So is the struggle for freedom turned to joy by the community of those everywhere you have joined together to celebrate the Pesach.**

## **VII. ELIJAH**

*Commentary: No scriptural figure occupies a more prominent place in the post-biblical legends of the Jews than the prophet Elijah. The reasons for such prominence may in considerable measure be attributed to Scripture's treatment of the story of Elijah (I Kings 17 to II Kings 3). For one thing, Scripture provides little information regarding the early life of Elijah, making him a mysterious figure, and leaving gaps for a lively imagination to fill with fantasy. Moreover, the scriptural account itself consists mainly of legends and miracle stories. Furthermore, Elijah according to Scripture, did not conclude his life on earth as humans generally do, through death, but was instead "translated," that is, removed from earth while still alive. The Bible describes Elijah's translation this way: "...behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."*

*This scriptural foundation supports two basic beliefs that pervade the post-biblical legends about Elijah. These are that Elijah, never having died, continues to wander the earth helping the poor and distressed; and that Elijah is the fore runner of the Messiah who will announce his miraculous coming and redemption of humankind. These two legendary beliefs provide two traditional explanations for the Cup of Elijah. The first is that the Cup of Elijah is set on the table for the prophet-should he choose to appear as a guest and protector of the household in the course of his benevolent wanderings on earth. The second explanation is that Elijah, when he appears to announce the coming of the Messiah, will have the task of resolving all the difficult legal and ritual questions that have been left unanswered by scholars of the Talmud. One of these unanswered questions is how many cups of wine should be drunk at the Seder. As observed above, in the paragraph in "Wine," the number four is justified traditionally basing it upon four promises of deliverance made to the Israelites in Exodus 6:6-7. There is, however, in the following verse, Exodus 6:8, still another promise of deliverance, "And I will bring you into the land...." This fifth promise gave rise to the question whether there should be five rather than four cups of wine drunk at the Seder, since it could be maintained there were five rather than four promises of deliverance. It was decided that the question should be left for Elijah to answer when he appears as fore runner of the Messiah. Hence an extra goblet of wine, the Cup of Elijah, is place don the Seder table. In the event that should Elijah suddenly come to announce the Messiah, and resolve as well the question of the fifth cup, it will be at hand to be enjoyed.*

*Interestingly enough, despite the popularity of the Cup of Elijah, there is no reference to Elijah in the liturgy of the traditional Seder service. A special section on Elijah has been included. This section is based upon the credible core in Scripture regarding the life of Elijah that the critical eye discerns through the strands of legends and miracles. Elijah is thus seen as courageously seizing the freedom to pursue religious truth, as he believes it to be, even though his course leads him against the combined might of the established religions and political institutions. Viewed in this way, the Cup of Elijah becomes a powerful symbol for liberal religionists generally in the celebration of Pesach.*

*(Door to house may be opened to symbolize openness to the spirit of Elijah. The large goblet of wine, placed near the center of the table, also serves this purpose.)*

## **Reader**

**In the human community, freedom does not come and stay. It lasts, like life itself, only when nurtured by use and care for by courage. So did the prophets of ancient Israel, in the beliefs they taught, and the goodness they sought, serve freedom. The might of kings could not still their voices, nor the power of nations make them slaves.**

## **Group**

**Elijah the Tishbite numbered among the prophets. Walking the wilderness of Israel, climbing its hills and dwelling in its caves, the moral desolation of the land appeared before him. From the murmurs of brooks and the whispers of mountains, he drew strength to trouble the heart of a nation and the conscience of the world. Without concern for self, or fear of others, he pursued justice. Having spoken, he disappeared in the whirlwind of time into the eternity of history.**

## **Reader**

**No age possesses all truth and goodness. As Elijah pursued a vision of virtue for his time, so must we seek visions for our own. We can speak of truth only as we believe it to be. Thus does the life of Elijah challenge us, and the spirit of the Tishbite dwell among us. We raise our cups to the memory of the prophet, and ask, in the words of the disciple, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."**

**And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."  
(II Kings 2:9).**

*(Drink from cup of wine. Door is then closed; Elijah's goblet remains on the table.)*

## **VIII.**

### **Reader and Group**

*(Each person takes a bitter herb dipped in charoset and places the combination between two pieces of matsah. The following is then recited.)*

## **Reader and Group**

**This was the practice of Hillel when the Temple was still in existence. He combined the matsah with the bitter herbs and ate them together, to fulfill that which is said in the Torah concerning the meat roasted for the Passover, "What matsah and with bitter herbs they shall eat it."**

**Blessed is the ground of being, fountain of life, by whose power we sanctify partaking of the bitter herb.**

*(Maror with Charoset is eaten.)*

[Historical Reading]

## **Reader or Song (Page )**

**And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it (Exodus 12:8).**

# **IX.**

## **Reader and Group**

**Blessed is the fountain of life, ground of being, by whose power we bring forth food from the earth.**

**Blessed is the fountain of life, ground of being, by whose power we sanctify partaking of the matsah.**

[Historical Reading]

*(Matsah is tasted to symbolize that the Seder meal will now begin.)*

## X.

*Seder meal is served.*

## XI.

*(Before the conclusion of the meal, perhaps before dessert, the children are given the opportunity to find the Afikomen. They are rewarded for returning the Afikomen to the reader. At the conclusion of the meal, the Afikomen is distributed to the group and eaten. This act signifies that the meal is now complete.)*

## XII.

### **Reader**

**Companions, let us say grace.**

### **Group**

**Let us praise life's ever flowing source, of whose generosity we have partaken, and through whose power we come to be.**

### **Reader and Group**

**Blessed is the ground of being, fountain of life, by whose power heaven and earth nourish and sustain all living things. We are grateful to all among humankind who compassionately and in loving kindness work for the betterment of the social order. We are grateful to our companions with whom on this night in unity we are rejoicing in this festival. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for bretheren to dwell together in unity.**

[Historical Reading]

**Reader and Group Song (Page )**

**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for bretheren to dwell together in unity.**

**Reader**

**May this night be visited with blessing.**

**Group**

**Amen.**

**Reader**

**May this night be remembered in goodness.**

**Group**

**Amen.**

**Reader**

**May this night be preserved in freedom.**

**Group**

**Amen.**

**Reader and Group**

**In the joy of thankfulness, the Seder of Pesach is now complete. The Torah states that the Israelites, in a covenant made at Mount Sinai, confirmed the new life their journey from bondage brought them. We, too, in the journey to freedom we have celebrated this night, confirm a covenant, a Covenant of Freedom. We rejoice in what we and others are, in the different and special person each one is. By mutual affirmation of one another in our uniqueness and personhood, we hallow life and receive the richness of creation. May the Covenant of Freedom forever guide our destinies and the future of all humankind.**