

## **A Reformed, Contemporary, Nonsexist Seder For Family and Friends of All Ages**

### **The Passover Seder**

#### **Leader**

Now in the presence of loved ones and friends,  
before us the emblems of festive rejoicing,  
we gather for our sacred celebration.  
With the household of Israel, our elders and young ones,  
linking and bonding the past with the future,  
we heed once again the divine call to service.  
Living our story that is told for all peoples,  
whose shining conclusion is yet to unfold,  
we gather to observe the Passover.

#### **Group**

You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought you out of Egypt. You shall observe this day throughout the generations as a practice for all times. Remember the day on which you went forth from Egypt, from the house of bondage, and how the Lord freed you with a mighty hand.

#### **Reader**

To the Temple in Jerusalem, they carried sheep and goats,  
Pomegranates and dates.

We also are ripe and burdened, arms outstretched with gifts.  
We carry our names, our histories, our memories and fears.

We have come to rest, to sing and to tell stories.  
We have come to learn, to teach and to grow.  
We bless this time with our presence.

#### **[Lighting of the holiday candles]**

#### **Reader**

O hear my prayer, I sing to you.  
Be gracious to the ones I love,  
And bless them with goodness, mercy and peace,  
O hear my prayer to You,  
Let us light these lights,  
And see the way to You,  
and let us say: Amen.  
Baruch Atah Adonay Eloheinu melech ha-o-lam

asher kid-sha-nu b'mits-vo-tav v'tsi-va-nu  
l'had-lik ner shel (shabbat v'shel) yom tov.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who has sanctified us by Your Commandments and commanded  
us to kindle the holiday lights.

**[Reciting the Kiddush]**

**Reader**

The seder begins with the kiddush, the blessing over a cup of wine. Wine stands for the  
sweetness and joy of a holiday celebration.

Baruch atah adonay elo-hey-nu melech ha-o-lam  
bo-rey p'ree ha-ga-fen.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who has created the fruit of the vine.

(Everyone sips from their wine glasses)

**Reader**

Baruch atah adonay elo-hey-nu melech ha-o-lam  
sh'heh-chi-ya-nu v'ki-ma-nu v'hi-gi-ya-nu la-z'mahn ha-zeh.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has  
given us life, kept us safely and brought us to this holy season.

**Reader [Shma]**

There is another prayer that Rabbis say is the watchword of our faith, the belief in one  
God. Let us all recite the Shma:

**Group**

Shma, yis-ro-el, ado-nay elo-hey-nu, ado-nay ech-od  
Bor-uch shem kivo mal-chu-tanu, layo-lam vay-ed

Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.  
Praised be thou, oh Lord our God, forever and ever.

**Reader (topical)**

We give thanks on this special day for all that we have in this country, ever mindful of  
those people who are not as fortunate. We are blessed to be able to celebrate Passover  
freely and without fear. We are grateful for the strength, good humor, and love that have  
seen us through the past year...for wonderful children and grandchildren...for generations  
of our extended family celebrating together...for good times and good friends...for good  
health and rapid recoveries...for birthdays and anniversaries.

We also remember those who join us at this seder in our memories, particularly those whose absence is still fresh and painful. The memorial light we have added to our seder table means that we remember them. We will always remember them. We also think about the events of 9/11, the many lives sacrificed there, and the many known and unknown acts of heroism. We light the memorial candle now, and hold a moment of silence for all these people. Our thoughts likewise are with the many American sons and daughters risking their lives in Iraq. We hope they will return home soon, their mission completed.

We pray for a kinder, gentler world and nation...for cool heads and compassionate hearts...for open minds...and for tolerance. May the year ahead bring joy, love, and fulfillment to us all. May we all live in peace.

**Reader**

We are gathered here tonight to affirm our continuity with the generations of Jews who have kept alive the vision of freedom inherent in the Passover story. We proudly avow that we are the descendants of slaves—the first group of slaves in recorded history ever to wage a successful rebellion against their slaveholders. Ours was the first in a long line of struggles that other peoples have had to wage against their oppressors.

**Reader**

Passover is more than a story. It is a link between the past and the present. Let us now suspend the present and go back to the rituals of our ancestors and the telling of the Passover story.

**(The Passover Symbols)**

**Reader**

The seder table is different from our regular supper table. We have 3 matzohs covered with a special cloth, a bowl of salt water, an extra cup of wine, and a seder plate with special foods: a bone, an egg, bitter herbs, parsley, and charoset—chopped apples mixed with nuts and wine. Each of the symbolic foods that we have at our Seder represents some part of the Passover story.

**Reader**

Here we have greens, which we dip in salt water, to remember both the tears of sadness and the joy of rebirth in the spring.

Baruch at-ah ad-on-ai el-u-hey-nu mel-ech ha'olam bor-ei p'ri ha'adama.  
You are blessed, oh God, spirit of the world, who creates the fruit of the earth.

(Each person takes greens and dips them in salt water.)

**Leader**

Now I break the middle matzah; I will conceal one half as the affikomen, which the children will search for later.

This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread,  
which our ancestors ate when they were slaves in the land of Egypt.  
Let all who are hungry come and eat.  
Let all who are in want share the hope of Passover.  
As we celebrate here,  
we join with our people everywhere.  
All who are in need, let them come and celebrate the Passover.

(The leader hides the affikomen.)

### **Reader**

Matzah was meant to recall that the dough prepared by our people had no time to rise before they fled Egypt. We eat the matzah for seven days, so we may remember our departure from Egypt as long as we live. The bottom matzah is a reminder of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The upper matzah symbolizes our thanks to God.

Baruch atah adonay alo-hey-nu melech ha-o-lam  
ha-mo-tzi le-chem min ha-a-retz.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,  
who brings forth bread from the earth.

(The uppermost of the three matzohs is broken and distributed among the group.)

### **Reader**

The horse radish or bitter herb reminds us of the bitterness of slavery. Although the haroset is sweet-tasting, it resembles the mortar and brick that the slaves used to build Pharaoh's monuments. Let us now put some bitter herb and some of the haroset on the matzoh, symbolic of the bitter lives of the Jews of old.

Together they shall be: the matzah of freedom, the maror of slavery,  
for in the time of freedom, there is knowledge of servitude.  
And in the time of bondage, the hope of redemption.

(The maror and haroses are distributed, and eaten between two pieces of matzah.)

### **Reader**

The lamb bone reminds us of the Passover sacrifice, offered to God because She passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, bringing plagues to the Egyptians and sparing us. The egg represents fertility and the rebirth of springtime.

(Pass around dish of eggs.)

### **The Four Questions**

**Reader(s)**

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread. Why on this night do we eat only matzah, the unleavened bread?

On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. Why on this night do we eat especially maror, the bitter herb?

On all other nights we do not dip herbs even once. Why on this night do we dip twice, first the green into salt water and then the bitter herb into haroset?

On all other nights, we eat sitting up straight. Why do we lean on a pillow tonight?

**All**

Ma nish-ta-nah ha lai-lah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-lay-lot?

She-b'chol ha-lay-lot a-nu och-leen cho-maytz u-matzah,  
ha-lai-lah ha-zeh ku-lo matzah.

She-b'chol ha-lay-lot a-nu och-leen sh-ar y'ra-kot,  
ha-lai-lah ha-zeh maror.

She-b'chol ha-lay-lot ayn a-nu mat-bee-leen a-fee-loo pa-am e-chat,  
ha-lai-lah ha-zeh sh'tay f'ah-meem.

She-b'chol ha-lay-lot a-nu och-leen bayn yosh-veen u-vayn m'su-been,  
ha-lai-leh ha-zeh ku-la-nu m'su-been.

**The Answers****Reader**

The answers to these questions reveal the story of Passover.

This night is different from all other nights, for on this night we celebrate a most important event in the history of humanity. On this night, we celebrate the going forth of the Hebrew people from slavery into freedom.

*Why do we eat only Matzah tonight?*

When Pharaoh let our ancestors go from Egypt, they were forced to flee in great haste. They had no time to bake their bread. They could not wait for the yeast to rise. The sun beating down on the dough as they carried it along baked it into a flat, unleavened bread called Matzah.

*Why do we eat bitter herbs tonight?*

Because our ancestors were slaves in Egypt and their lives were made bitter.

*Why do we dip foods twice tonight?*

We dip the parsley into salt water because the green reminds us of things that come to life in the springtime, and the salt water reminds us of the tears that were shed. We dip the bitter herbs into the haroset because the haroset reminds us of the bricks and mortar that the slaves made for Pharaoh.

*Why do we recline at the table?*

Because in the old days, only a free person could recline at the table, and since our ancestors were freed on this night, we also recline.

We perform these rituals so we can remember the bitterness of slavery and the sweetness of freedom.

### **Reader**

We celebrate tonight because we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord our God delivered us with a mighty hand. Had He not redeemed our ancestors from Egypt, we, our children and our children's children might have remained slaves. Therefore, even if we were all wise people, it would still be our duty from year to year to tell the story of the deliverance from Egypt. The more we dwell upon the story of the Exodus, the deeper is our understanding of the meaning of freedom and the stronger our determination to keep it for ourselves and to win it for others.

### **Reader**

Now, let us all join in re-telling the story of Passover. It begins a long time ago, with Abraham and his belief in one God, and it goes all the way to today. For not in one country alone, nor in one age, have violent people risen up against the Jews, but in every generation and in many lands have tyrants sought to destroy us.

Abraham's son was Isaac, his grandson was Jacob, and Jacob's son was Joseph, who became prime minister to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. When a famine broke out in Canaan, Joseph asked his father and all his people to come to Egypt where they would be safe. He gave them land, as Pharaoh had commanded. And the children of Israel stayed in Egypt and led a good life there.

Then Joseph and all his generation died, and Egypt had a new king. This new Pharaoh did not know how the Jews had been made welcome in Egypt. Instead he feared the Jews and their beliefs..because they were different..and he ordered that their first-born male children be killed.

### **Reader**

You all remember the story of the baby Moses, who was hidden from Pharaoh's soldiers by his mother. He was discovered by the Princess and taken to live in Pharaoh's palace. The princess named the baby Moshe, the Egyptian word for "boy-child from the lake." But Moses' own mother became his nursemaid and secretly taught him about his heritage.

Moses grew up in the palace. He lived and acted like an Egyptian, but in his heart he was a Hebrew. When Moses became the leader of the Jews, he begged Pharaoh to let his people go in freedom. But the Egyptians responded by making life even more terrible for the Jews.

"And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers and mothers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our troubles and our toil and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and with wonders."

**Song: Let My People Go**

When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go!  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go!  
    Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land;  
    Tell old Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"

"Thus saith the Lord," bold Moses said,  
"Let my people go!  
If not, I'll smite your first-born dead,  
Let my people go!"  
    Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land;  
    Tell old Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"

The Lord told Moses what to do,  
Let my people go!  
To lead the children of Israel thro',  
Let my people go!  
    Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land'  
    Tell old Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"

When they had reached the other shore,  
Let my people go!  
They sang the song of triumph o'er,  
Let my people go!  
    Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land;  
    Tell old Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"

**Reader**

When Pharaoh defied the command of God and refused to release the Jews, he brought trouble upon himself and his people, for the Lord afflicted Egypt with plagues. Only after the 10th plague did Pharaoh relent and let the Jews go free. And, even then, he sent his troops after them in the desert. But the Israelites were again rescued from extinction.

But the story of Passover also teaches us that, even when the Egyptian armies were drowning in the sea, Jews were cautioned to temper their rejoicing with sorrow over the loss of life.

"My creatures are perishing, and you sing praises?  
Though we descend from those redeemed from brutal Egypt,  
And have ourselves rejoiced to see oppressors overcome,  
Yet our triumph is diminished  
By the slaughter of the foe,  
As the wine within the cup of joy is lessened  
When we pour ten drops for the plagues upon Egypt."

### **Reader**

Like the plagues of our ancestors' time in Egypt, modern life has its plagues as well. In this ritual the cup of wine we enjoy at this seder is diminished because, in our time as well, the freedom, health, and lives of others are curtailed. Each drop of wine we pour represents the hope and prayer that people will cast out the plagues that threaten everyone everywhere they are found..beginning in our own hearts.

The making of war,  
the teaching of hate and violence,  
despoliation of the earth  
perversion of justice and of government,  
fomenting of vice and crime,  
neglect of human needs,  
oppression of nations and peoples,  
corruption of culture,  
subjugation of science, learning, and human discourse,  
the erosion of freedoms.

### **Reader**

We pour ten drops for the plagues upon Egypt. As I call out each plague, each of us should dip his or her finger into the wine, a symbol of regret that the victory had to be purchased through another's misfortune.

Dam, Blood  
Tzfardeuah, Frogs  
Kinim, Lice  
Arov, Wild Beasts  
Dever, Blight  
Sh'hin, Boils  
Barad, Hail  
Arbeh, Locusts  
Hosheh, Darkness  
Makat b'horot, Slaying of the First Born

After the final plague, Pharaoh let the Israelites go. They left Egypt in the middle of the night, with the full moon as their guide, and they walked to the shores of the Red Sea.

We are grateful for all the wonderful things that God did for us. He brought us out of Egypt; He gave us the Ten Commandments, gave us the Torah, and led us into the land of Israel.

**Reader [Dayenu]**

We have a song about these wonderful things called "Dayenu," which means: "It would have satisfied us" ...any one of these things would have been enough.

The traditional Haggadah says that  
It would have been enough for God to take us out of Egypt.  
It would have been enough to bring us through the Red Sea, enough to give us the Torah and Shabbat, enough to bring us into the land of Israel.

While we count each of these blessings as if it would have been enough on its own, we know that more was given, and more is promised.

**All** Da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-ye-nu da-ye-nu.  
I-lu-ho-tzi, ho-tzi-a-nu,  
ho-tzi-a-nu mi-Mitz-ra-yim,  
ho-tzi-a-nu mi-Mitz-ra-yim,  
Dayenu.

Da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-ye-nu da-ye-nu.

I-lu na-tan, na-tan la-nu,  
na-tan la-nu et ha-sha-bat,  
na-tan la-nu et ha-sha-bat,  
Dayenu.

Da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-ye-nu da-ye-nu.

I-lu-natan, na-tan la-nu  
na-tan la-nu et ha-torah,  
et-ha-torah na-tan la-nu,  
Dayenu.

Da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-da-ye-nu, da-ye-nu da-ye-nu.

**Reader**

This year, when bigots still try to prove that the Holocaust never happened, it is fitting that we recall this passage from the "Diary of Anne Frank":

"That's the difficulty in these times: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to meet the horrible truth and be shattered. It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again.

"In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out."

We hope that all people will one day be able to celebrate the meaning, and the symbol of Passover, including Jews in other countries who are persecuted because of their religion.

(wine glasses are filled; drink some wine)

### **Leader**

For us here at this table, on this day, let us enjoy our companionship and good spirit. Let us rejoice at the wonder of our deliverance of old..from bondage to freedom, from agony to joy, from mourning to festivity, from darkness to light, from servitude to redemption. Before God, let us ever sing a new song.

### **[Elijah the Prophet and Miriam the Prophet]**

At this time, we fill our glasses with wine again. But this time, we fill an extra cup, the Cup of Elijah the Prophet. In Jewish tradition, Elijah is the long-awaited messenger of the final redemption of humanity from all oppression. In the tradition of women's seders, the memory of Miriam the Prophet has been linked with that of Elijah. Miriam foresaw the birth of her brother, Moses, and according to teachings of the midrash, was responsible for finding the wells in the wilderness that served as way stations on our people's journey.

(The door is opened, symbolically, for Elijah.)

### **Song**

E-li-ya-hu Ha-na-vi	Bim'-hey-ra b'ya-mey-nu
E-li-ya-hu Ha-tish-bi	Ya-vo e-ley-nu
E-li-ya-hu, E-li-ya-hu.	Im Ma-shi-ah ben Da-vid,
E-li-ya-hu Ha-gil-a-di.	Im Ma-shi-ah ben Da-vid.

**And now we eat!!**

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**After the meal**

**[The Aphikomen]**

(After the meal ends, the children go to find the Aphikomen and receive their just rewards. Then everyone eats a piece of the Aphikomen.)

**Concluding the Seder**

**All**

How does the journey to freedom continue?

**Reader**

Following fire and cloud, we stumble, shivering with cold and fear.

**Reader**

Some will always cry out for Egypt, longing to return to the known.

**All**

How does the journey to freedom continue?

**Reader**

Risking together what we never imagined possible on our own, we keep walking. The sea rises to our nostrils. Then, with a breath, the waters part.

**All**

How does the journey to freedom continue?

**Reader**

We build fragile shelters and watch as they sway in the wind. Aching for song, our throats are parched. The water is too bitter to drink. Even manna sometimes takes like sand.

**All**

But ours is a holy journey. We falter but will not turn back. Embracing the challenge of tradition, we clear new paths to the future. Ours is holy journey, a journey towards new life.

**Leader**

Our God and God of our ancestors, be You ever mindful of us, as You have been of our fathers and mothers. Grant us grace, mercy, life and peace on this Feast of unleavened bread.

**All** Amen.

**Leader**

Remember us this day in kindness.

**All** Amen.

**Leader**

Visit us this day with blessing.

**All** Amen.

**Leader**

Preserve us this day for life.

**All** Amen.

**Leader**

The Seder service now concludes: its rites observed in full, its purposes revealed. Let us all join hands in love and friendship.

This privilege we share will ever be renewed.  
Until God's plan is known in full,  
His highest blessing sealed.

Peace!  
Peace for us! For everyone!

For all people, this, our hope:  
Next year in Jerusalem!  
Next year, may all be free!

**Chad Gadya**

Chad gad-yo, chad gad-yo.  
D'za-been a-bo bis-roy su-soy  
Chad gad-yo, chad gad-yo.

V'o-so shun-ro v'o-chal l'gad-yo.  
D'za-been a-bo bis-rey su-soy  
Chad gad-yo, chad gad-yo.

V'o-so kal-bo v'no-shach l'shun-ro.  
D'o-chal l'gad yo.  
D'za-been a-bo bis-rey su-soy  
Chad gad-yo, chad gad-yo.

**One Kid**

One kid, one kid that father bought for  
two zuzim. One kid, one kid.

And the cat came and ate the kid that  
father bought for two zuzim. One kid,  
one kid.

And the dog came and bit the cat that  
ate the kid that father bought for two  
zuzim. One kid, one kid.

And the stick came and beat the dog

V'o-so chut-ro v'hi-koh l'chal-bo  
D'no-shach l'shun-ro, Do'chal l'gad-yo.  
D'za-been a-bo bis-rey su-soy  
Chad gad-yo, chad gad-yo.

V'o-so nu-ro v'so-raf l'chut-ro  
D'hi-koh l'chal-bo, d'no-shach l'shun-ro  
D'o chal l'gad-yo.  
D'za-been a-bo bis-rey su-soy  
Chad gad-yo, chad gad-yo.

V'o-so ha-ko-dosh bo-ruch-hu,

V'sho-chat l'ma-lach, ha-mo-ves,  
d'sho-chat l'sho-cheyt,  
D'sho-chat l'so-ro. d'sho-so l'ma-yo,

D'cho-vuh l'nu-ro, d'so-raf l'chut-ro,

D'hi-koh l'chal-bo, d'no-shach l'shun-ro  
D'och-loh l'gad-yo, d'za-been  
a-bo bis-rey zu-zey,  
Chad gad-yo, chad ga-yo.

And the Angel of Death came and slew the  
slaughterer that slaughtered the ox that  
drank the water that quenched the fire  
that burned the stick that beat the dog  
that bit the cat that ate the kid that  
father bought for two zuzim. One kid,  
one kid.

And the Holy One, blessed is He, came  
and killed the Angel of Death that slew  
the slaughterer that slaughtered the ox  
that drank the water that quenched the  
fire that burned the stick that beat  
the dog that bit the cat that ate the  
kid that father bought for two zuzim.  
One kid, one kid.

that bit the cat that ate the kid that  
father bought for two zuzim. One kid,  
one kid.

And the fire came and burned the stick  
that beat the dog that bit the cat that  
ate the kid that father bought for two  
zuzim. One kid, one kid.

And the water came and quenched the  
fire that burned the stick that beat  
the dog that bit the cat that ate the  
kid that father bought for two zuzim.  
One kid, one kid.

And the ox came and drank the water  
that quenched the fire that burned the  
stick that beat the dog that bit the cat  
the cat that ate the kid that father  
bought for two zuzim. One kid, one kid.

And the slaughterer came and  
slaughtered the ox that drank the water  
that quenched the fire that burned the  
stick that beat the dog that bit the  
cat that ate the kid that father bought  
for two zuzim. One kid, one kid.

The End