

הגדה של פסח

Passover Haggadah

Jewish Labor Committee
יידשער ארבעטר-קאמיטעט

*“Now when your brother sinks down in poverty
And, without means, his hand falters beside you,
Then you shall strengthen him,
And enable him to live beside you ...*

*I am the Lord your God who brought you forth
out of the land of Egypt*

Leviticus 25:35, 38

(image: Textile mill strikers, Lawrence, Massachusetts, Winter 1912)

Occupations of Talmudic Rabbis

Many people believe that the ancient Jewish sages were involved only with the study of the Torah. The fact is that many sages had other professions from which they made a living.

Here are several famous rabbis and their occupations:

Rabbi Joseph	locksmith
Rabbi Seshet	woodcutter
Rabbi Jose	net maker
Rabbi Meir	secretary
Rabbi Yochanan	shoemaker
Rav Papa	brewer
Rav Adah Sabulah	pearl diver
Rabbi Yehudah	baker
Hillel	woodcutter
Shammai	carpenter
Rabbi Chanina	shoemaker
Rabbi Simon ben Lakish	circus performer
Abba Saul	grave digger
Abba ben Abba	silk dealer
Yitzchak Nafcha	blacksmith
Rabbi Meir	scribe
Rabbi Chalafa	leather maker

What does labor want?
We want more schoolhouses and less jails,
more books and less arsenals,
more learning and less vice,
more constant work and less crime,
more leisure and less greed,
more justice and less revenge.

— *Samuel Gompers, 1894*

NOTE: The four-letter Hebrew representation of the name of God appears in this Haggadah, and thus can be considered a holy document. Please treat it with the appropriate reverence. Rather than discarding it, it can be sent to any synagogue, which will be able to dispose of it appropriately.

INTRODUCTION

We have come together at this time for many reasons. We are here because it is Spring, the earth is reborn, and it is a good time to celebrate with family and friends. But more importantly, we are here to remember the ancient Jewish story of liberation – a great struggle for freedom and dignity. We are here because the struggle for human freedom never stops. We are here to remember that there are those in our midst who struggle every day for dignity and freedom ... especially economic freedom.

Throughout Jewish history, the Exodus story has become a central idea of Jewish life and the experience from which the core values of our people grew. Prescriptions for social, civil and ritual practices all harken back to the experience of our liberation from ancient Egypt. Some of Judaism's most fundamental laws and practices originate from the Exodus experience – the Sabbath (*Deuteronomy 5:12-15*), regulated loans (*Leviticus 25:35-38*), and the treatment of servants (*Lev. 25:29-43*), as well as widows, and orphans and the poor (*Deut. 16:11,12*).

The Passover Haggadah, or "narrative," is a special book. Over the centuries, thousands of different versions have been produced for home and community use. Many use a variety of terms to describe the transformation of the Hebrews when they left ancient Egypt (*Mitzrayim*). "...I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary acts. And I will take you to be my people ..." (*Exodus 6:6-7*)

Each of these terms has an ancient tradition of meaning. Nonetheless, together, they have come to connote words which, in American usage of our day, suggest "liberation." While "redemption" in a religious context implies a spiritual state, in this ancient biblical context, it referred to an individual act of physically saving someone from danger or bondage. "Deliverance" has also been understood with its more "spiritual" connotation; yet, as is clear from the Exodus passage, it is also a political term. Based on concepts introduced by the biblical text, the Haggadah re-frames the Exodus experience to make it an eternal process of redemption and deliverance, one which is experienced by every generation.

This special Haggadah has been prepared to bring leaders and members of the organized Jewish and Labor communities together to retell the Exodus from Egypt, and its relationship to the struggles of working people to improve their lives, the lives of their families, co-workers, and their communities. The story of Passover is rich with imagery and meaning for Jews and for those in organized labor as well. Complete with persecution, oppressive taskmasters, impossible work demands (making bricks without straw), work quotas and a struggle for freedom, the Haggadah touches the very soul of Jews and those in labor who see themselves as struggling to improve the lot of workers.



THE SEDER (*Seder means "order"*)

Reader: While the word Haggadah means "narrative," very little of the classic Haggadah is devoted to a simple telling of the Exodus story. Instead, the rabbis wove a variety of activities into the Seder that purportedly serve to highlight the values of the Exodus and enable the participants to "learn by doing." There have been many textual additions to the Haggadah as well as commentaries on the meaning of the texts and actions over the ages. Still, a basic structure remains.

<i>Kaddesh</i>	We say the <i>Kiddush</i> / First cup of wine
<i>Ur'chatz</i>	We wash our hands in preparation for eating <i>Karpas</i> {see next line}
<i>Karpas</i>	We dip a vegetable in salt water and say the blessing
<i>Yachatz</i>	We break the middle <i>matzah</i> and hide the larger half, the <i>Afikoman</i>
<i>Maggid</i>	We tell the story of Passover / Four Questions / Second cup of wine
<i>Rachtzah</i>	We wash our hands and say the blessing
<i>Motzi/Matzah</i>	We say the blessing for "bread" and <i>matzah</i>
<i>Maror</i>	We dip the bitter herbs in <i>charoset</i> and say the blessing
<i>Korech</i>	We eat a sandwich of <i>matzah</i> and bitter herbs
<i>Shulchan Orech</i>	We eat the festive meal
<i>Tzafun</i>	We eat the <i>Afikoman</i>
<i>Barech</i>	We say the blessing after the meal / Third cup of wine / Welcome Elijah
<i>Hallel</i>	We sing songs of praise / Fourth cup of wine
<i>Nirtzah</i>	We complete the Seder



Not just then - but now ...

Throughout all the atrocities of enslavement and despotism, of inquisition, forced conversion and massacre, the Jewish nation carried in its heart the yearning for freedom. It gives this longing a folk expression which shall not pass over a single soul in Israel, a single down-trodden, pauperized soul!

Throughout all the generations, every Jew must regard himself as if he personally were redeemed from Egypt. This is the peak of historic consciousness...

I am not acquainted with a literary creation which can evoke a greater contempt for slavery and love of freedom than the narrative of the slavery and the Exodus from Egypt.

And I do not know of any other ancient memory so entirely a symbol of our present and future.

— *Berl Katznelson (1887-1944), one the intellectual founders of Labor Zionism*

THE SEDER TRAY AND ITS SYMBOLS



The Seder tray, which is placed at the head of the table, usually has six circular indentations in which the following symbolic foods are placed:

- **Maror** (bitter herbs): Some grated horseradish is placed in the *Maror* section. *Maror* symbolizes the bitter lot of the enslaved Israelites described in the Haggadah.
- **Karpas** (vegetable): A green vegetable we dip in salt water as part of the Seder.
- **Charoset** (sweet food mixture): Usually, chopped apples (and/or dates), walnuts and cinnamon, moistened with wine. *Charoset* symbolizes the mortar the Israelite slaves used to cement the mud and straw bricks in their labors.
- **Zeroa** (bone): The bone is symbolic of the “mighty arm” of God, as the Bible describes it, which influenced Pharaoh to release the Children of Israel from bondage. In some households a meat bone is roasted; in others, the neck of a chicken or some other fowl is roasted and used as a symbol on the Seder tray.
- **Baytza** (egg): A hardboiled egg is roasted and placed on the Seder tray. The egg is symbolic of the festival sacrifice brought when the Temple existed in Jerusalem. It also represents the renewal of life.
- **Chazeret** (vegetable): *Chazeret*, with the same symbolism as *Maror*, is usually bitter tasting.

“Purpose-Driven Freedom”

Even the poorest Jew, must, on the eve of Passover, eat only in reclining position, a mark of Freedom, and a custom which dates back to Roman times. Further, we are required to drink no less than four cups of wine. Four cups of wine are consumed during the Seder as a reminder of the four promises of Redemption that are mentioned in the Book of Exodus:

I will *bring* you out of *Mitzrayim*;
I will *deliver* you from bondage;
I will *redeem* you with an outstretched arm;
I will *take* you to Me for a people.

CANDLE LIGHTING

Reader: From the cold dark days of winter we emerge to the warm light days of spring. Passover is a journey from darkness to light, from the old to the new. It can also be a journey from the comfortable shackles of the known to the hopeful, fearful possibilities of the unknown – from bondage (physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual) to freedom

*We are told that each one of us is to regard ourselves as if we personally had gone out of Egypt. The Hebrew word for Egypt (Mitzrayim) comes from the word for narrow, constrained. Thus, “being in Egypt” meant being constrained to the narrow banks of the Nile River. But, in a broader sense, to say “we must leave Egypt” is to say that **all** of us must struggle to break out of our narrowness and to grow – whether physically enslaved or not.*

Together:

May the light of these candles not only bring light to our own places of darkness, but also shed light on the darkness of economic injustice and the constraints of being denied a voice. May these candles renew our courage to act for dignity, fairness and justice for working people wherever they labor.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.

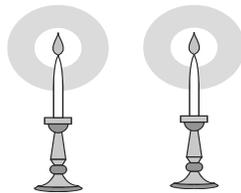
*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kiddishanu b'mitzvotav,
v'tzivanu lehadlik neir shel Yom Tov.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, who sanctifies us by your commandments
and commands us to kindle the lights of the Festival.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shehechyanu vekiyemanu
vehigi'anu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, who gave us life, and kept us strong,
and brought us to this time.



Equality is the mother of justice, queen of all virtues.

– Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE - 50 CE), Jewish philosopher



KADDESH/THE FIRST CUP

(fill first cup of wine)

Reader: With this first cup of wine, we pause to remember that all human beings are created “*b’tzelem Elohim*,” in the image of God. Every person is a manifestation of the divine presence. All of us play an essential role in the ongoing drama of creation and redemption.

Consider the cup of wine which we are about to drink. Countless sets of hands played a role in bringing this wine to our seder: the entrepreneurs and farm-owners who decided to direct their energies and capital into the wine business, the workers who planted and pruned the vines, those who picked the grapes, the vintners who directed the fermentation of freshly-harvested fruits into wine, the janitors who kept the winery clean and sanitary, the truck drivers and loading dock workers who transported the finished product, the clerks at the wine shops, and the servers who bring the wine to our tables tonight.

Together:

Just as we are dependent upon so many of God’s children, many of whom we will never know, all of God’s children deserve basic dignity, respect and sustenance. With this cup, we recognize and honor our interconnectedness with all people.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam borei pree hagafen
Blessed are you, Source of all Life, who creates fruit of the vine.*

(We drink the First Cup)

[*On the actual first night of Passover, a longer blessing for the holiday is added.]



Karpas/Greens

Together:

Taste the freshness of these greens. They can remind us of the coming of spring and the yearly renewal of life that accompanies it.

Let us dip these greens in salt water, so that the taste of the reviving freshness of spring will be mixed with the memory of tears shed in slavery.

(dip greens in salt water)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה .

Baruch atah Adonai Elohainu Melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adama.

Blessed are you, Source of all Life, Creator of the fruit of the earth.

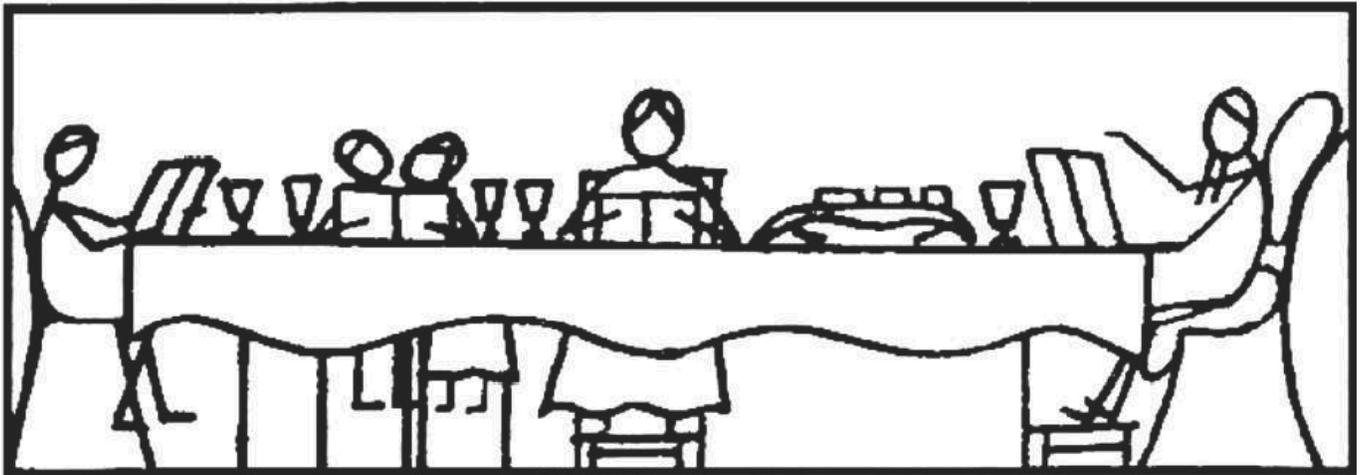
The rains are gone. The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of singing has come ...
— Song of Songs 2:10-13

YACHATZ/BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH



Reader 1: This *matzah* we eat, what is it a symbol of? The *matzah* is the symbol of the bread of poverty. As the Talmud teaches us, just as the poor person usually has to eat bread that is broken, tonight we break this special bread to remind us of our neighbors that are today poor and hungry.

Reader 2: *Unleavened bread is the leveler that raises us all to the same lofty height. Outside, the battle rages between the haves and have-nots, between those who have more and those who have less. Too often the struggle for daily bread is attended by feverish competition, tension and trauma. But at this most egalitarian of banquets, bread of the most unpretentious kind is a common denominator that makes all people one.*



Graphic by Otto Geismar, from Haggadah fur Gross und Klein, Germany, 1927

Reader 3: We dedicate this festive meal to the dream and the hope of freedom, the dreams and the hopes that have filled the hearts of many from the time of our ancestors to this day. But the freedom we strive for means more than broken chains. It means liberation from all those enslavement's that chain the spirit and impoverish the mind.

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. And you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.”

— Cesar Chavez (1927-1993), President of the United Farm Workers, 1966

MAGGID/TELLING THE PASSOVER STORY

(uncover and lift matzah)

*Ha lachma anya
di achalu avhatana
b'ara d'mitzrayim.
Koldichfin yeitei v'yeichol,
kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach.
Hashata hacha,
l'shanah haba-ah b'ara d'yisra-eil.
Hashata avdei,
l'shanah haba-ah b'nei chorin.*

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא
דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהָתָנָא
בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם.
כָּל דְּכַפִּין יִיְתִי וְיִיכֹל,
כָּל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיְתִי וְיִפְסַח.
הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא,
לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
הַשְׁתָּא עַבְדֵּי,
לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.

Together:

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Mitzrayim.

*All who are hungry, let them enter and eat.
All who are in need, let them come and celebrate Passover.
Now we are here. Next year in the land of Israel.
Now we are enslaved. Next year we will be free.*

In the hope that next year all people will be free, we utter a plea
for those around the world who are persecuted and enslaved.

Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, just as You took the Israelites from among the Egyptians and led them through the sea and the desert, so may You have mercy on our brothers and sisters, those who are distressed and those who are oppressed, where ever they may be. Save them. Lead them from narrow straits to abundant favor, from darkness to light, from enslavement to redemption, speedily, in our day, and let us say: Amen.



No prayer is recited before we break the middle matzah on our seder plate. This is a silent act. We realize that, like the broken matzah, we are all incomplete, with prayers yet to be fulfilled, promises still to be redeemed.

– Rabbi Harold Schulweis (1925-2014)
author and longtime spiritual leader of Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, CA

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

(fill second cup of wine)

Mah nishtanah ha-laylah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-leilot?

Why is this night different from all other nights?

מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הלַיְלָה הַזֶּה, מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

On all other nights, we eat leavened
or unleavened bread.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת, אָנוּ אוֹכְלִים חֵמֶץ
וּמִצָּה;

Why on this night do we eat only matzah?

וְהַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, כָּלוּ מִצָּה.

On all other nights, we eat various kinds of
vegetables.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת, אָנוּ אוֹכְלִים שְׂאֵר
יִרְקוֹת;

Why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs?

וְהַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, מְרוֹרִים

On all other nights, we need not dip our
vegetables even once.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת, אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבְּלִין
אֶפְלוּ פַּעַם אַחַת;

Why on this night do we dip them twice?

וְהַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, שְׁתֵּי פַּעַמִּים.

On all other nights, we sit either sitting up
or reclining.

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת, אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין
וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין;

Why on this night do we eat reclining?

וְהַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, כָּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין.

Why on this night do we . . .

Eat unleavened bread? *When Moses led us from Mitzrayim, our ancestors were forced to flee in great haste. With not a moment to spare, they snatched up the dough they had prepared and fled. But the hot sun beat as they carried the dough along with them and baked into flat, unleavened bread they called matzah. This matzah represents our rush to freedom.*

Eat Bitter Herbs? *We eat bitter herbs, maror, to remind us how bitter our ancestors' lives were made by their enslavement in Mitzrayim.*

Dip Twice? *You have already heard that we dip the karpas in salt water because it reminds us of the green that shoots forth from the earth in the springtime. We dip the maror in the sweet charoset as a sign of hope; our ancestors were able to withstand the bitterness of slavery because it was sweetened by the hope of freedom.*

Recline at the Table? *Reclining or relaxing at the table was a sign of being a free person in ancient times. Slaves were not allowed such luxury. Because our ancestors were freed on this night, we sit as free people at the table.*

To ask questions is to acknowledge first and foremost that we do not live in isolation, that we need each other. To ask questions is to signal our desire to grow. By admitting what we do not know, we take the first steps toward greater knowledge and learning. To ask questions is to signify our freedom.

— from *A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah*, eds. Rabbi Joy Levitt and Rabbi Michael Strassfeld

We Were Slaves/Avadeem Hayinu

עבדים היינו, היינו,
עתה בני חורין, בני חורין

*Avadeem hayeenu, hayeenu
Ata bnei choreen, benai choreen*

We were slaves, now we are free!

THE FOUR CHILDREN

Reader 1: *Four biblical verses¹ mention children asking or being told about the Exodus. From these verses the Rabbis created a framework for personalized instruction. They counseled parents to teach each child on the level of that child's understanding.*

¹ Deuteronomy 6:20; Exodus 12:26, 13:14 and 13:8

The Torah alludes to four types of children: one who is wise, and one who is irreverent (or wicked), one who is simple, and one who does not know that something unusual is going on.

Reader 2: *What does the wise child ask? The wise child loves Passover and is eager to celebrate the holiday. This child asks, "What are the decrees, the statutes, and the laws that the Eternal One our God has commanded concerning Passover?"² Teach this child the customs and rituals of the festival. Reveal their beauty, not only as beloved traditions but also as symbols of a noble ideal – the ideal of freedom for all people.*

² Deuteronomy 6:20

Reader 3: What does the irreverent or wicked child ask? *The irreverent child is scornful, detached from the celebration and the community. This child asks, "What does this service mean to you?" speaking as an outsider. ³ "Scold this child saying, " 'It is because of what God did for me when I went out of Egypt.' ⁴ For me; not for you; for a commitment to the community must be made before enjoying the blessings bestowed upon the community. Because you set yourself apart from your people, God would not have brought you from slavery to freedom."*

³ Exodus 12:26 ⁴ Exodus 13:8

Reader 4: What does the simple child ask? *The simple child is naïve and innocent, and very shy. This child would like to know what Passover means but cannot formulate sophisticated questions. The simple child asks, "What is this all about?"⁵ "Reassure this youngster, saying, 'With a strong hand, God brought us forth from Mitzrayim, out of the house of bondage.' "*

⁵ Exodus 13:14

Reader 5: And what does one say to the child that does not even realize that something unusual is going on? *Awaken this child saying, " 'This is because of what God did for me when I went forth from Egypt.' "*

I do not view labels as static categories. I believe in the power of the educational act to release locked potentials. For example, one who does not know how to ask may be silenced by the rules of society. The silence may hide an exceptional, sensitive child whose questions are choked.

A parent can "open the child," remove the obstructions, enable personal growth and break stereotypes.

– Yaariv Ben Aharon (1905-2006)
radical socialist, a pioneer of the Israeli kibbutz movement

August 18, 1942.

Mr. Alex Levine,
253 Paulson Avenue,
Passaic, N.J.

Dear Mr. Levine:

I have your letter of August 14, requesting a statement from me to your son, Gerald, on the occasion of his "bar mitzvah," regarding the importance of retaining his Jewish identity. I feel strongly on the subject and would be pleased if you would convey to him the following message from me:

Dear Gerald:

At this time when the Jewish people in other lands are enduring the most terrible trials, some might think – "perhaps if the Jews lost their identity as a people, the prejudice against them would disappear and they and future generations of Jews would be spared suffering and persecution." Always there have been a few weak in mind and spirit who would seek such an easy way out.

Study and reflection, however, supported by a knowledge of Jewish history, show that those who seek to hide or who prefer to forget their origin are not spared when the tide of anti-semitism rises. In some parts of the world today, some who had almost forgotten their Jewish origin have become victims of the worst intolerance. Perhaps their lot was even harder than others because they lacked the inner moral strength which must come from kinship with others even in suffering and the feeling that one is part of a great heritage that has survived every tyrant of the past.

In all of this there is a great moral lesson. Jews must retain their identity. They must carry on a knowledge of their history and preserve their culture, but they must at the same time work hand in hand with enlightened people of all faiths and creeds all over the world to liberate humanity, end age-old injustice and establish a new order of freedom and righteousness for all.

The salvation of the Jews, therefore, lies in the salvation of humanity.

As you grow to manhood, you should educate yourself in the history of the Jewish people and their past and present problems, and, if possible, their literature and culture generally, and you should also align yourself with progressive movements not only in Jewish affairs but also on the economic and political scene. Thus you will bring joy to your parents who will be proud to have a son devoted to high ideals and you will also make a useful contribution to the welfare and happiness of your fellow-men.

The best wish I can voice for you and your parents is that you will be a good American, an upright Jew, and a lover of humanity.

Sincerely yours,

DAVID DUBINSKY

— *David Dubinsky, long-time President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, was founding Treasurer of the Jewish Labor Committee.*
Letter from ILGWU Archives, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University

MAGGID/THE STORY

Reader 1: It is written that long ago, during a time of famine, the ancient Israelites traveled to *Mitzrayim* to stay for a while. According to this story, the Israelites were a single family – Jacob and his children. One of Jacob’s sons was Joseph, whose wisdom was recognized by Pharaoh, the ruler of *Mitzrayim*. And Pharaoh made Joseph a leader over all the people in his land.

Reader 2: *But as time passed, another Pharaoh became the ruler of Mitzrayim. He did not remember Joseph and his wise leadership. This new Pharaoh turned the Israelites sojourners into slaves, and burdened them with heavy labor, work quotas and sorrow. These slaves built the cities of Pithom and Ramses.*

Reader 3: “And the Egyptians compelled the children of Israel to labor with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar, and in bricks besides all their other service wherein they made them labor with rigor.” (Exodus 1:13,14)

Reader 4: *Over the years, the Israelite population in Mitzrayim grew. Pharaoh became afraid that they would some day overpower their oppressors. Pharaoh ordered Israelite midwives to kill all Israelite baby boys. This decree spurred the first act of civil disobedience in Israelite history. Tonight we recall the Israelite midwives that refused to follow Pharaoh's orders. And we recall Yokheved, who hid her infant son to save him. We recall Miriam, who watched and protected her baby brother until he was safely in the arms of Pharaoh's daughter.*

Reader 5: “We cried out to God, the God of our ancestors, and God heard our plea and saw our affliction, our misery, and our oppression.” (Deuteronomy 26:7) “Our affliction” refers to Pharaoh’s decree to force the separation of men and women. “Our misery” refers to the drowning of all Israelite males at birth. “And our oppression” refers to the straw. For Pharaoh decreed, “You shall no longer provide the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather straw for themselves.” (Exodus 5:7)

Reader 6: Moses was raised in Pharaoh's home. And yet when he reached adulthood he realized with whom his fate was truly cast. Moses demanded that Pharaoh let his people go! Many times he risked his life to insist on the freedom of his people, until Moses finally succeeded.

Reader 7: At our Passover Seder, every year we celebrate the story of Moses and the people he lead out of slavery 3,000 years ago. We celebrate the struggle of all people to be free. Throughout the centuries, the story of Moses and the people he led and the Exodus from Mitzrayim inspired Jews and non-Jews in times of persecution and hardship.

Reader 8: Persecution and exploitation arise in every generation. Telling the story of the Israelites in ancient Egypt is not enough, unless we take notice of oppression in our times and work to free these oppressed people and relieve their hardships.



Together:

*Let us remember that the thirst for freedom exists in all people. Many centuries after the time of Moses, African people were brought to America as slaves. These slaves longed for freedom, and they were inspired by the story of Moses and the ancient Israelites. During the U.S. civil rights movement of the early 1960s, the following spiritual song, was adopted as part of the culture of those brave men and women working for freedom, jobs and dignity. **Let us sing.***

O, Freedom

O, Freedom ... O, freedom ... O, freedom over me

*And before I'd be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

There'll be no more moaning, no more moaning,
no more moaning over me

*And before I'd be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

There'll be singing
There'll be peace

*And before I'd be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

Difference is the condition requisite to all dignity and to all liberation.
To be aware of oneself, is to be aware of oneself as different.
To be, is to be different.

— *Albert Memmi (1966)*
French-language Tunisian Jewish novelist and author

And a stranger shalt thou not oppress, for you know the heart of a stranger,
seeing you were strangers in the Land of *Mitzrayim*.

— *Exodus 23:9*

SPILLING THE WINE

Leader: A full cup of wine symbolizes complete happiness. The triumph of the Passover story is diminished by the sacrifice of many lives when God visited ten plagues upon the people of *Mitzrayim*. The plagues that befell the ancient Egyptians resulted from the decisions of tyrants, but the greatest suffering occurred among the subjects of the Pharaoh. Perhaps there is a lesson here as well. For the people of *Mitzrayim* were silent in the face of the evil Pharaoh brought down upon the Israelites. Their silence, their apathy, their failure to help those less fortunate, made them as guilty as Pharaoh himself. But, it is also fitting that we mourn their loss of life, and express our sorrow over their suffering. For we cannot take joy in the suffering of others. Therefore, let us diminish the wine in our cups as we recall the ten plagues that befell the Egyptian people.

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

Together:

Blood

Frogs

Lice

Flies

Pestilence

Boils

Hail

Locusts

Darkness

Death of the Firstborn

It was only after the tenth plague, and the slaying of Pharaoh's own son, that he allowed the Hebrews to go out from *Mitzrayim*. The Hebrews were ready and quickly packed to leave.

But, as soon as they had gone, Pharaoh changed his mind again, and sent his chariots and cavalry to recapture the Hebrews who had been slaves, who were by now on the shores of the Red Sea.

The Hebrews turned and saw the army of Pharaoh. Even though they numbered 600,000, and Pharaoh's army only had 600, they were frightened, and turned on Moses, for bringing them to this fate.

A story relates that the waters of the Red Sea did not divide at first. It was not until one person, Nachshon, waded into the Sea. He walked straight in, until the water was up to his knees. Nothing happened. He went further, until the water was waist deep. Still nothing happened. He went further until the water was up to his neck. Nothing. Then he went further until the water was about to cover him entirely. At that moment, the waters parted.

It took Nachshon, who was ready to take the ultimate risk for his freedom, and through his daring became free, and those who followed him who also took a leap of faith, ... to open a path ... to cross through to freedom.

— Adapted from *PESACH: TOCHNIT L'AMELIM V'CHOTRIM* (NYC: Habonim Labor Zionist Youth, 1982)

(“God helps those who help themselves.”)

Rabbi Hanoah of Alexandria said:

The real exile of Israel in Egypt was that the Israelites learned to endure it.

— The *JEWISH LIBERATION HAGGADAH* (New York, 1971)

Our sages have said:

Not only was it necessary to take the Jews out of Egypt; It was necessary to take Egypt out of the Jews.

CONTEMPORARY PLAGUES

Reader 1: Our celebration tonight is overshadowed by our awareness of continuing enslavement and oppression. Unlike the plagues visited by God upon the Egyptians in order to set us free, today humanity visits plagues upon itself. Plagues that enslave and denigrate our humanity. Plagues that do not recognize that we are all made in God's image and worthy of respect. These plagues include:

Together:

Child Labor

Slave Labor

Sweatshops

Hunger

Below-Subsistence Wage

Sexism

Racism

Ethnic Cleansing

Domestic Violence

Indifference to human suffering

“No business which depends for its existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By living wages I mean more than a bare subsistence level. I mean wages of decent living.”

— *Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1933*

Dayenu

(It Would Have Been Enough)

Liberation comes in small steps. Dayenu teaches us not to despair when the ultimate end seems far away. We have to fully acknowledge and appreciate each struggle towards freedom that we take, if we are to have the strength and conviction to continue.

— *Rabbi Tova Spitzer is a congregational rabbi in West Newton, MA*

Tonight, we recall all the wondrous deeds that were done for the Israelite people in the process of their liberation from bondage in Mitzrayim. “If God had only brought us out of Mitzrayim, it would have been enough!”

אלו הוצי - הוציאנו הוציאנו ממצרים
הוציאנו ממצרים דינו

*Ilu hotzi – hotzi anu, hotzi – anu mi Mitzrayim
Hotzi – anu mi – Mitzrayim DAYENU ...*

{Dai, da-yenu} (3x) - dayenu, dayenu! ...

IN EVERY GENERATION

Reader: In every generation, each individual should feel personally redeemed from *Mitzrayim*, as it is said: “You shall explain to your children on that day, it is because of what the Eternal One did for *me* when *I* went free from *Mitzrayim*.” (Exodus 13:8) For God redeemed not only our ancestors; God redeemed us with them, as it is said, “God freed us from there, that God might take us and give us the land that God promised on an oath to our ancestors.” (Deuteronomy 6:23)



THE SECOND CUP

Reader 1: With the first cup of wine, we recognized the fundamental honor due to all human beings, all of us created in the divine image. With this second cup, we now recognize the struggle often needed to secure sustenance, dignity and respect.

In America, Jewish immigrants to this country joined together, as did the Hebrew slaves of old, to liberate themselves from the bondage of sweatshops. When Jewish immigrants came to America and found themselves thrust into jobs with wretched working conditions and poverty-level pay, they joined together in unions to confront these problems and to better their lives.

Reader 2: Rose Schneiderman was a labor organizer, who spoke out at a memorial in New York, days after the terrible Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in March 1911 where 146 workers perished, mostly women and girls. A leader in an attempt to organize a union local at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory one year earlier, Rose had seen the workers beaten and jailed, and now burned and dead. She recalled the importance and difficulty of working people acting together:

“This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. Every week, I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred!

“I can’t talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled It is up to the working people to save themselves. And the only way is through a strong working-class movement.”



Sewing machine operators, mostly women, work at long, paired tables overseen by managers. Work baskets fill the space between chairs and scraps clutter the floor around their feet. The mix of cheap, skilled- and unskilled- labor fueled garment manufacturing growth. The industry doubled in size from 1900 to 1910, making it increasingly cost effective to bring many who had worked at home into larger garment factories.
Photographer: unknown, ca. 1900

Image courtesy Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University.



ILGWU Archives, Kheel Center, Cornell University

Is not this the chief function of our religion, to engender in us a sense of human worth?

— Jonathan Eybeshütz (1690 – 1764) German rabbi and Talmudist, in *YA'AROT DEBASH* (1779-82)

“Fifty-three years ago, the International Ladies’ Garments Workers’ Union was officially organized to war against the sweatshop. This war, that has continued for more than two full generations, has been more than a simple effort to raise wage standards. This has been a war of liberation to free people from endless hours of work in cellars, in stables, in dark hallways, in bedrooms where garments of 50 years ago were made.

“Why has a union of garment workers turned to building homes? ... The answer lies in the slums. Many of us, of different religious and national origins, are the children of immigrants for whom the Golden Land turned out to be miserable tenements of the East Side. We cannot forget the poverty, the sickness, the homework shops, the child laborers of this neighborhood.

“We have worked here as we work in our union—together, in cooperation, accomplishing through joint effort what we could never achieve as single workers—or as single tenants.”

-- *David Dubinsky (1892-1982), President, International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union*
Groundbreaking ceremonies, ILGWU housing project in NYC’s Lower East Side, 1953

Reader 3: With the second cup of wine, we pause to recognize the right and the necessity of people under collective distress to organize together to defend their basic rights. Three thousand years ago it was the slaves in Mitzrayim, 99 years ago it was the sweatshop workers in this country. Today, unions are a vital and necessary force to defend basic rights of workers wherever they may toil.

Reader 4: *In spite of our society's tremendous wealth today, too many people have to work far too many hours, often in more than one job, just to get by.*

Together:

In our own day, collective action and transformation have proven to be essential and effective means for creating social change in our society. By working together, we can achieve redemption. By joining hands with others to seek peace and justice together, we work to make the Divine manifest in this world.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Baruh atah adonai Elohainu Melech ha-olam borei pree ha'gafen.
Blessed are you, Source of Life, who creates fruit of the vine.

(We drink the Second Cup of wine)

Three conclusions from the Exodus story:

- 1) Wherever you live, it is probably Egypt.
- 2) There is a better place, a promised land.
- 3) The way to this promised land is through the wilderness —
there is no way to get there except by joining together and marching.

— *Michael Walzer, in EXODUS AND REVOLUTION*

“Remember the time when you were a slave in Egypt” is one of the most haunting refrains of our collective memory.

Moses, the first great man with whom the people identify, is first and foremost a liberator.

All Jewish history, written and oral — that is, the image Jews have forged of themselves — is constructed or reconstructed in this perspective:

Oppression — Liberation.

— Albert Memmi, in *THE LIBERATION OF THE JEW (1966)*



Photo by Bill Gillette <http://www.bgillettephotography.com/>

Field workers, San Joaquin Valley, CA

To earn a living can be as hard as to part the red sea— *Talmud, Pesachim 118a*

THE THREE SYMBOLS OF PASSOVER

Rabban Gamliel, a Jewish sage who lived in the land of Israel at the end of the first century, said: “Whoever has not called attention at the Seder to the three symbols of Passover has not fulfilled the obligation of this celebration. And these are the symbols: the *Passover offering* (shank bone), *matzah* and *maror*.”

PESACH

(raise shank bone)

Reader: This shank bone! Why do we have it on the Seder plate?

After wandering in the desert for forty years, we came to dwell in our own land where, each year, we would gather together to celebrate the Exodus from *Mitzrayim* with rejoicing and festivity. Families from across the land would make pilgrimages, and each family would bring a lamb as its special offering in honor of the festival.

This lamb was known as pesach, sometimes called the “pascal lamb,” in remembrance of the Exodus when blood of a sacrificed lamb was put on the doorposts of the houses of the Hebrew slaves so that God would pass over and spare the Hebrews’ households when God smote the Egyptians’ first born.

In Hebrew, *pesach* means “pass over.” That is why the offering was called *pesach*, or pass-over, sacrifice; and that is why the festival is called Passover.

The pascal sacrifice seems far away from us today. But try to imagine that this represented the annual gathering of Jews who were celebrating religious independence and hoping for national liberation. Hundreds of thousands of Jews would come to Jerusalem to proclaim the hope for redemption. This was our ancient “Independence Day.”

— *Na’amah Kelman, the first female rabbi ordained in Israel*

“The stranger that sojourns with you shall be unto you as the native among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

— *Leviticus 19:34*

MOTZI/MATZAH (raise *matzah*)

Reader: This *matzah*! Why do we eat it?

To remind ourselves that as our ancestors rushed to freedom, the dough of their bread did not have time to rise. This flat bread is a symbol of our intense desire to be free!

(Three pieces of *matzah* are lifted.)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem meen ha'aretz.

Blessed are you, Source of all Life, who brings forth bread from the earth.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצָנְנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kiddishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzevanu al acheelat matzah.

Blessed are you, Source of all Life, who sanctified our lives through the obligation of partaking of *Matzah*.

It is said that Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev discovered that the girls who kneaded the dough for *matzah* worked from early in the morning until late at night. The Rabbi pronounced the *matzah treif* (not kosher) because it was produced through *oshek*, that is, the oppression of workers.

Similarly, during the United Farm Workers organizing in the 1970s, the Bostoner Rebbe declared lettuce produced by non-union growers unkosher and off-limits.



Photo: Dave Blumenkrantz
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Hundreds of workers toil in sewing factories in partially abandoned buildings along Broadway Street, Los Angeles.

MAROR/BITTER HERB

Reader: *This Maror - this bitter herb! Why do we eat it?*

The *maror* represents the bitterness of our bondage in *Mitzrayim*. Just as we are commanded to bring to mind the bitterness of our bondage, so, too, are we obligated to remember to-night that bondage, oppressive labor and persecution are the bitter fate of countless men and women, and even children in all corners of the globe.

The first mark of the position of a minority is its complete lack of self-determination. Do what it may, the terms of its very existence are fixed for it by the mere weight and tendencies and habits of the majority. And this is no less true when the majority is friendly than when it is hostile.
— *Ludwig Lewisohn (1892-1955), American Jewish critic and novelist, The Menorah Journal, Aug. 1925*

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

— *Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), American clergyman, activist and civil rights leader, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963*

“The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.”

– Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), a leader in the anti-slavery abolitionist movement in the United States, an escaped slave who became a prominent activist, author and public speaker

“Liberty is not a gift. Bestowed, conceded, protected by someone else, it is denied and it vanishes. Our liberation must depend on our own fight for it.”

– Albert Memmi

America cannot develop citizens unless workingmen possess industrial liberty; and industrial liberty is impossible if the right to organize be denied.

– Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941), American litigator, Supreme Court Justice, *Colliers' Weekly*, 1912



Distribute *maror* (ground or sliced horseradish or radish)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.
*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,
asher kiddishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzeevanu al acheelat maror.*

Blessed are you, Source of all Life,
who has sanctified us by your commandments, and mandates the eating of bitter herbs.

KORECH/THE HILLEL SANDWICH

Reader: We now make a Hillel sandwich after the practice of Rabbi Hillel who in the days of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem combined the three foods (matzah, *maror*/bitter and *charoset*/sweet) in a sandwich to observe the precept “You shall eat the Pascal lamb with *matzah* and *maror* together.” We add the *charoset* to symbolize mixing the bitter with the sweet.

SHULCHAN ORECH/THE MEAL IS SERVED!

BARECH

(Grace After Meals—next page)



THE THIRD CUP

Oppression can be fought, and sometimes prevented, if we as common citizens all remain informed and active. It is inaction and apathy that allow despots and oppressors to gain power.

“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”

— attributed to Edmund Burke (1729-1797), British statesman and philosopher

*“First they came for the Communists but I was not a Communist, so I did not speak out.
Then they came for the socialists and the trade unionists but I was not one of them, so I did not speak out.
Then they came for the Jews but I was not Jewish so I did not speak out.
And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.”*
— Pastor Martin Niemoeller (1892-1984), German anti-Nazi theologian and Lutheran pastor

Reader 1: On this night, we remember with pride the resistance of the Jews in Hitler’s Europe. Starving, weighted down by oppression, tormented by the slaughter of their parents, their children, their brothers and sisters, they found the strength to rise up and resist.

The revolt in the Warsaw Ghetto began with a shot on Nalevski Street at dawn, April 19th, 1943, the first day of Passover.

Reader 2: *The fighting units, concealed in nearby bunkers, attics and cellars, began firing at Nazi patrols. The Germans retreated. With few and ancient guns and home-made Molotov cocktails, the several fighters, men and woman, took on the tremendous power of the German Army and Gestapo. Every inch of ground was bitterly contested, but as the days passed the situation grew more and more desperate. On May 8, the leadership of the resistance perished in the bunker at 18 Mila Street. No one surrendered.*

Reader 3: For weeks thereafter, small groups of resistance fighters emerged to battle the Nazis from behind rubble and wreckage. Resistance continued until the Germans burned the entire Ghetto to the ground. Not until September 1943, six months after the uprising began, was the area of the Warsaw Ghetto finally silent.

Those trapped in other ghettos also rose against the Nazis, in Vilna, in Bialystok, and smaller cities. Throughout Europe, thousands of Jews reached the forests, founded or joined partisan groups, formed underground fighting organizations, and joined anti-Nazi and anti-fascist resistance movements.

Blessing for Third Cup: **(Lift the cup)**

We drink this third cup of wine to honor the memory to those who fought for their freedom, and ours, in the ghettos, concentration camps, and the forests of Nazi Europe.

Let their example inspire us to stand up to oppression whenever and wherever it arises.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן
Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei pri ha'gafen.

Blessed are you, Source of Life, who creates fruit of the vine.

(We drink the third cup of wine)

THE CUP OF ELIJAH

Reader 1: As we open our doors to greet Elijah the Prophet, we lift the cup of Elijah, which symbolizes future redemption for all those who seek freedom. In *Mitzrayim*, the doors of the houses of the Hebrew slaves were shut tight on the night of the Tenth plague. However today we can leave our doors wide open. It is no longer a night of terror but the dawn of hope.

Reader 2: *We open the door to beckon the spirit of the prophet Elijah. In his passionate advocacy on behalf of the common people, and his ceaseless exposure of the corruption and waste of the court, Elijah sparked a movement and created a legend which would inspire people for generations to come.*

Reader 3: Elijah is said to return each generation in the guise of a poor person, coming to people's doors to see how he would be treated. By the treatment offered this poor person – Elijah himself – he would know whether we had reached a level of humanity making them capable of participating in the dawn of the Messianic age.

Reader 4: *The rabbis of the Talmud disagreed on whether there should be four or five cups. In order to honor both traditions, they added the cup of Elijah. Elijah has come to represent the leader who would resolve all differences, and this Cup has come to represent the ability to unite, to act even in the absence of consensus.*

Reader 5: Elijah has also come to stand for reconciliation. The prophet Malachi declared: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the day [of judgment] . . . And he will turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I smite the land with complete destruction."

Reader 6: *We acknowledge our parents and ancestors and community leaders as well. We vow that we will not allow their stories, their experiences, their wisdom to be stolen from us. It is our legacy and we will study it and teach it to our friends and children.*

Reader 7: Let each of us contribute a drop of wine from our own cups to the cup of Elijah to symbolize the personal commitment each of us will make to freedom and justice for all people. Tonight we focus our commitment on supporting all those who labor to live lives of dignity, security and health.

Reader 8: *As we contribute to the cup of Elijah let us meditate on the words of the sage Hillel the Elder:*

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
But if I am for myself only, what am I?
And if not now, when?*



THE FOURTH CUP

*We dedicate the final cup of wine to our hopes and dreams for the future.
 We dream of a world not threatened by destruction and hate.
 We hope for a time when Jerusalem will be a beacon of brotherhood and sisterhood.
 We dream of a world in which Jews and all other people are free to be themselves.
 We dream of a world at peace.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

Baruh atah adonai elohainu melech ha'olam borei pri ha'gafen.
 Blessed are you, Source of Life, who creates fruit of the vine.
 (We drink the fourth cup of wine)

NIRTZAH/CONCLUSION

The rites of the Seder are now concluded
 In accordance with ancient precepts and custom.
 With the same earnestness that we have prepared for it,
 May we live our lives throughout the year.

The leader concludes:
 Quite appropriately, the Haggadah ends on a note of triumph. Truth, justice and loving kindness are the enemies of slavery, tyranny, and oppression.

The weak may be overcome by the strong, but only for a while, for there are always new, emerging forces that crush the seemingly invincible forces prevailing for the moment.

All in unison:
 This is the power of Passover.
 This is the lesson of history.
 This is the story of freedom.

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּיְרוּשָׁלַיִם!
L'shana ha-ba-a' b'Yerushalyim

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

Self-negation is slavery. Self-affirmation is freedom.

— *Ludwig Lewisohn*

There is only this
There is no freedom without peace
Without peace we remain slaves to other men's fears

— *Haim Simon*

HALLEL

Additional words of song, praise and expression of humanity

Liberation is costly. Even after the Lord had delivered the Israelites from Egypt, they had to travel through the desert. They had to bear the responsibilities and difficulties of freedom. There was starvation and thirst and they kept complaining. They complained that their diet was monotonous. Many of them preferred the days of bondage and the fleshpots of Egypt.

We must remember that liberation is costly. It needs unity. We must hold hands and refuse to be divided. We must be ready. Some of us will not see the day of our liberation physically. But those people will have contributed to the struggle. Let us be untied, let us be filled with hope. Let us be those who respect one another.

— *Bishop Desmond Tutu, South African cleric, activist, opponent of apartheid.*

In what is certainly one of the first recorded strikes in history, the Talmud describes job actions taken by craftspeople associated with the Temple. The family that baked ceremonial bread was dismissed after it refused to teach its secret methods to others. When replacements were found wanting, the family refused to return unless its wages were doubled. The Talmud notes without comment that the community agreed to the doubling of the wages; the main issue discussed was whether the family would agree to share its secrets with other workers. The Talmud eventually accepted the family's refusal to share its secrets once it proved that family members had not used the ceremonial bread for their own purposes and that the family's concern was for the maintenance of high standards of their craft.

— *Michael Perry, in Labor Rights in the Jewish Tradition*

Freedom is not merely a matter of choice, of personal whim. Freedom is not an artifact, an expedient for more effective social management. Freedom is at the core of life, at the heart of all human personality.

— *Rabbi Ira Eisenstein (1906-2001), theologian, one of the founders of Reconstructionist Judaism*

The freedom of this meal at which all are equally free is expressed in a number of rites, which “distinguish this night from all other nights.”... This particular freedom expresses itself in the fact that the youngest child is the one to speak, and that what the father says at the table is adapted to the child’s personality and degree of maturity. In contrast to all instruction which is necessarily autocratic and never on the basis of equality, the sign of true and free social intercourse is this, that the one who stands – relatively speaking – nearest the periphery of the circle give the cue for the level on which the conversation is to be conducted. For this conversation must include everyone. ... The freedom of a society is always the freedom of everyone who belongs to it.

– Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1939), *German Jewish theologian and philosopher*



Pastures of Plenty

– Woodie Guthrie

It's a mighty hard row that my poor hands have hoed
My poor feet have traveled a hot dusty road
Out of your dustbowl and westward we rolled
And your deserts was hot and your mountains was cold

I work in your orchards of peaches and prunes
And I sleep on the ground 'neath the light of your moon
On the edge of your city you'll see us and then
We come with the dust and we go with the wind

California, Arizona, I make all your crops
Than it's up to Oregon to harvest your hops
Dig beets from your ground, cut grapes from your vine
To set on your table your light sparkling wine
Green pastures of plenty from dry desert ground
From the Grand Coulee Dam where the waters run down
Every state in the union us migrants has been
We'll work in this fight and we'll fight 'til we win

It's always we rambled that river and I
All along your green valleys I'll work 'til I die
My land I'll defend with my life if need be
'Cause my pastures of plenty must always be free

To the Worker

– *Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923), Labor Poet*

Be proud of your labor— it gives you the right
To savor the fruits of the earth.
Be brave, be human, not a slave,
Learn your proper worth!

Your worth's beyond the price of kings.
Only Nature, your compeer,
Can properly award your toil,
Thou god of earthly spheres!

But how reward you, when the world,
Its goods, is yours to own?—
Its bread and wine, its grain and gold,
Its store of precious stones.

Take what's yours by right to task!
Be Bold, base fear disdain!
Be Proud, unawed! And neither make,
Nor wear, enslaving chains



Go Down Moses

When Israel was in Egypt land,
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go!

CHORUS:

*Go down Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh
To let my people go.*

When Moses took them from their toil,
Let my people go!
He led them all to freedom's soil
Let my people go!

Repeat Chorus:

*Go down Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh
To let my people go.*

May 4, 1906 – One hundred and fifty children, ranging from 14 to 17 years in age, are striking against the waist contractor Izzi Lock, who never suspected that these girl slaves would be able to stage such a walkout. The strikers are asking for a 10-hour working day instead of 11 and recognition of the Ladies' Waistmakers' Union.

— *The Jewish Daily Forward*



The Talmud warns that employers who withhold wages are guilty of six violations: oppressing a neighbor, stealing, oppressing the poor, delaying payment of wages, failing to pay wages at the due date, and failing to pay wages before sunset. Indeed, the Talmud warns that “he who withholds an employee’s wages is as though he deprived him of his life.”

— *Michael Perry, in Labor Rights in the Jewish Tradition*



Our ancestors have always been deeply concerned about the hardships of those that toil. Our prophets and sages have warned us that wealth and the possession of power tend to make men callous to the needs and struggles of others. On the very threshold of our history, we admonish not to forget the injustice we suffered when we were in Egypt as strangers and slaves. But we, in the pride of possession, often forget the true nature and source of human wealth, unmindful of the fact that no one, however strong or wise, can control the destinies of his or her own life single-handed. Fair dealing between man and man enriches the whole world. But when one takes advantage of the other, then disappointment, strife and hatred ensue.

On this day of self-examination, teach us, O God, to search our ways and make acknowledgement that we ourselves have not been sufficiently mindful of the interests and rights of our neighbors. Let us confess humbly that often, in seeking to hold what we have, we give but little thought to the effect of our pursuits upon our fellows.

In this solemn hour, we pray Thee that we may stand by the side of the men and women of vision; and may we in our daily pursuit, through generous sympathy and personal sacrifice, help to build the better world.

— *adapted from The Gates of Prayer, 1945*

... Worker organizations existed during the period in which the Talmud was codified. The Talmud refers to a separate synagogue for coppersmiths; to separate seating in the Temple for different types of workers; and to efforts by the workers to engage in mutual self-help: Goldsmiths sat separately, silversmiths sat separately, metalworkers separately and weavers separately, so that when a poor man entered the place he recognized the members of his craft and on applying [for employment] to that quarter obtained a livelihood for himself and for the members of his family.

— *Michael Perry*, in *Labor Rights in the Jewish Tradition*



As labor is the common burden of our race, so the effort of some to shift their share of the burden onto the shoulders of others is the great, durable, curse of the race. As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy. Our reliance is in our love for liberty; our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all people of all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit, and we have planted the seed of despotism at our own doors.

Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and cannot long retain it. Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of all people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.

- *Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th President of the United States*

The JLC - the voice of the Jewish community in the labor movement and the voice of the labor movement in the Jewish community - enables the Jewish community and the trade union movement to work together on important issues of shared interest and concern, in pursuit of our shared commitment to economic and social justice.

We mobilize these communities in coalition to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry and to promote respect for diversity in the workplace and in our community. We support the strengthening of Jewish identity and security in the United States, Israel, and other communities around the world. We strive to advance worker rights in the United States and abroad.

Material for this special Haggadah has been adapted from the following sources:

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