

# A PASSOVER HAGGADAH



## הגדה של פסח

*Compiled by Eric & Raya Rzeszut, 2002  
Revised 2005*



Welcome to our Passover Seder. Together with Jews everywhere, we recount tonight a story told every year for the last 3000 years; a story about the community of Israel eternally linked with humanity's divine passion for justice and liberty. We remember the event that became the great symbol of liberation--the Exodus from *Mitzrayim*, the "narrows" of the biblical land of Egypt.

Tonight we remember our ancestors. It is our legacy and we will study it and teach it to our friends and to our children.



*(We light the candles and recite the following blessing.)*

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
asher kid-shanu b'mitz-vo-tav,  
v'tzi-vanu l'hadlik neir shel yom tov.*

We praise You, Adonai, majestic Sovereign of all Life,  
Who hallows our lives with mitzvot  
and commands us to kindle festive holy light.

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Four times, in the course of this Seder, we partake of the wine, as a symbol of joy and thanksgiving.

Before we drink the first cup, we each add a small portion to the cup reserved for Elijah, the prophet who will herald the coming of the *moshiach*. In doing so, we recognize that it takes all of us together to bring about a time of perfect peace.



## THE FIRST CUP – THE CUP OF SANCTIFICATION

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.*

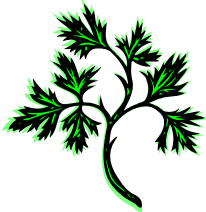
We praise You, Adonai, Sovereign of Life, who creates the fruit of the vine.

We have thanked G-d for the commandments which add holiness to life, for the wine which adds joy to life, and for the festivals which add beauty to life. Now let us thank G-d for the wonder of life itself.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
she-heh-che-yanu, v'ki-y'manu, v'higi-anu lazman hazeh.*

We praise You, Adonai, Sovereign of Life,  
for giving us life, and keeping us alive,  
so we may celebrate this season of joy.

*(All drink the first cup of wine.)*



## KARPAS – REBIRTH AND RENEWAL

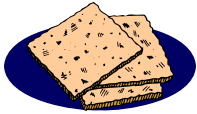
Many holidays have their origins in nature and the seasonal changes, and people throughout the world celebrate similar festivals at roughly the same time throughout the year. Like all people, our people in ancient, pastoral times celebrated the liberation of the earth itself from wintry darkness, and rejoiced in the yearly rebirth of nature.

We dip *karpas*, greens, symbol of the renewal of the earth at springtime, into salt water, symbol of the bitter tears shed by the slaves in *Mitzrayim* and recite a blessing.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
borei p'ri ha-adamah.*

We praise You, Adonai, Sovereign of Life,  
Who creates the fruit of the earth.

*(Each person takes some greens, dips them in salt water, and eats them.)*



We take the middle of the three *matzot* and break it in two. The smaller piece is replaced between the other two *matzot*. The larger piece is wrapped in a napkin and set aside as the "*afikoman*" from a Greek word that means dessert. Later we will share it, just as in days of old the Paschal lamb offering itself was shared during this service at the Temple in Jerusalem. Among people everywhere, sharing bread forms a bond of fellowship.



## MAGGID – THE STORY OF THE EXODUS

Questioning is a sign of freedom, proof that we are free to investigate, to analyze, to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. The Talmud states that anyone can ask questions; the youngest, the oldest, even a scholar at the table of scholars.

*Mah nishtanah ha-lilah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-laylot?*  
*Shebechol ha-laylot anu ochlin chametz u'matzah, chametz u'matzah;*  
*Ha-lilah hazeh, ha-lilah hazeh kulo matzah.*  
*Shebechol ha-laylot anu ochlin she-ar yerakot, she-ar yerakot;*  
*Ha-lilah hazeh, ha-lilah hazeh maror, maror.*  
*Shebechol ha-laylot ayn anu matbilin afilu pa-am echat, afilu pa-am echat;*  
*Ha-lilah hazeh, ha-lilah hazeh sh'tay fe-a-mim.*  
*Shebechol ha-laylot anu ochlin bayn yoshvin u'bayn misubin.*  
*Ha-lilah hazeh, ha-lilah hazeh kulanu misubin.*

Why is this night different from all the other nights?  
On all other nights, we eat either leavened bread or matzah;  
why, on this night--only matzah?  
On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs;  
why, on this night, do we especially eat bitter herbs?  
On all other nights, we do not dip herbs at all;  
why, on this night, do we dip them twice?  
On all other nights, we eat sitting or reclining;  
why, tonight, do we recline?

The **wise child** asks, "What are the precepts, laws, and observances which G-d commanded us?" In response to this child we explain the observances of the Passover thoroughly, the very last one of which is: After the Passover Seder, we do not turn to other kinds of entertainment. We talk with this child about the nature of freedom and justice and about the need to act to transform the world.



The **scornful child** asks, "What does this Seder mean to you?" Notice that this child says **to you** as would a person who does not feel personally a part of the Jewish people. By being distant from us this child denies redemption by rejecting the core tenet of our faith: the unity of G-d and the community of Israel. To this child we say: Join us tonight. Be fully here. Listen closely. Be with us, become part of us. Then you will know what the Seder means to us.

When the **simple child** questions, "Mah zot, what is this?" then we say, "We are remembering a time long ago in another land when we were forced to work for other people as slaves. With a mighty arm Adonai our God made us a free people and we are celebrating our freedom." Growing older, learning more about our people, and observing the seder year by year, this child too will come to love Pesach and to appreciate its beauty and its message.



And with the **child who doesn't think to question**, we must take the initiative. With patience and tenderness we say: This wondrous evening happens in the spring of every year, so we may remember how out of death and sorrow and slavery come life and joy and freedom. To remember the sorrow we eat bitter herbs; to remember the joy we drink sweet wine.

The sacred history of our people does not start with the tales of great heroes, nor of the righteous founding fathers, but with humble beginnings.

Our story begins with degradation and rises to dignity.

Our story moves from slavery toward freedom.

Our story opens with idolatry and advances toward the unity of God.

We began not with a heroic chapter but a bleak one. Not only have we known the degradation of physical bondage and spiritual servitude, but we have also been subjected to social degradation.

Isaac's son Jacob had many sons, but his favorite was Joseph, who was sold by his jealous brothers to a caravan, and they brought Joseph to Egypt. Joseph rose to become the Pharaoh's minister over all Egypt. He prepared storehouses with grain in anticipation of the great famine. When the drought and famine fell on the region, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food. He recognized them, and had them bring Jacob and Leah and all their families to Egypt. There the Israelites lived and prospered and multiplied.

After Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, a new king arose over Egypt who did not remember Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are flourishing and getting really strong. Let us, then, deal shrewdly with them, lest they become more powerful, and in the event of war, join our enemies in fighting against us and gain control over the region."

So they set taskmasters over them with forced labor and made them build garrison cities for Pharaoh; Pithom and Raamses. The Egyptians embittered their lives with harsh labor at mortar and brick and in all sorts of work in the fields. But the more the Israelites were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the Egyptians came to despise and dread them. Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, "Every boy that is born shall be thrown in the Nile, but let every girl live." We cried out to Adonai, the G-d of our ancestors, and Adonai heeded our plight, our misery, and our oppression.

Adonai heard our moaning and remembered the covenant that was made with Abraham and Sarah, with Isaac and Rebecca, with Jacob, Leah and Rachel and with every member of the House of Israel, even the generations waiting

to be born. And Adonai said, "I will go through the land of Egypt...and I will mete out justice against all the gods of Egypt."

Adonai called to Moses, charging him to appear before Pharaoh and demand that the people be released. But Pharaoh was stubborn; he would not heed the word of God. Nine times Moses went to Pharaoh to convince him of the supreme power of the Almighty. Nine times Pharaoh denied the Almighty and placed his trust in his own powers and his own gods. In the face of all pleas and portents, he refused to free the Israelites.

Many perished and the suffering was great. Pharaoh, nonetheless, remained obstinate; he would not yield. Finally when Adonai visited the tenth plague upon them, the death of first-born sons of Egyptians, a great cry went up throughout Egypt, and Pharaoh ordered Moses to take his people out of the land. And so Adonai brought us out of Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents; not through a messenger, not through any intermediary or any supernatural being, but the Holy One, alone, in solitary glory.

## MAKOT MITZRAYIM – THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

A full cup is the symbol of complete joy. Though we celebrate the triumph of our sacred cause, our happiness cannot be complete because others had to suffer. We shall, therefore, diminish the wine in our cups as we recall the plagues visited upon the Egyptians, to give expression to our sorrow over the losses which each plague exacted.

*(Put a drop of wine on your plate as we name each of the following.)*

- *Dam*, Blood
- *Tzfardaya*, Frogs
- *Kinim*, Lice
- *Arov*, Swarms
- *Dever*, Pestilence
- *Sh'chin*, Boils
- *Barad*, Hail
- *Arbeh*, Locusts
- *Choshech*, Darkness
- *Makat b'chorot*, Death of the First-Born



**Dayenu**

How many are the gifts Adonai our God has bestowed upon us! Had Adonai:

Brought us out of Egypt and not divided the sea for us,

*Dayenu*

Divided the sea and not permitted us to cross on dry land,

*Dayenu*

Permitted us to cross on dry land and not sustained us for forty years in the desert,

*Dayenu*

Sustained us for forty years in the desert and not fed us with manna,

*Dayenu*

Fed us with manna and not given us the Sabbath,

*Dayenu*

Given us the Sabbath and not brought us to Mount Sinai,

*Dayenu*

Brought us to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah,

*Dayenu*

Given us the Torah and not led us into the land of Israel,

*Dayenu*

Led us into the land of Israel and not built for us the Temple,

*Dayenu*

Built for us the Temple and not sent us prophets of truth,

*Dayenu*

Sent us prophets of truth and not made us a holy people,

*Dayenu*

For all these – alone and together – we say

*Dayenu*

*Day, Dayenu, day, dayenu, day, dayenu, dayenu, dayenu dayenu...*

*Ilu hotsi hotsianu, hotsianu mi-Mitzrayim, hotisanu mi-Mitzrayim, Dayenu.*

*Ilu natan natan lanu, natan lanu et ha-Shabot, natan lanu et ha-Shabot,*

*Dayenu.*

*Ilu natan natan lanu, natan lanu et ha-Torah, natan lanu et ha-Torah, Dayenu.*

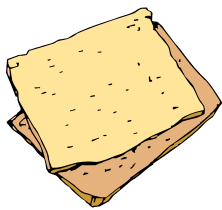
## PESACH, MATZAH, MAROR



### What is the meaning of this pesach?

This bone is the symbol of the pesach lamb. After many years of wandering in the desert, the Israelites came to dwell in their own land, where each year, they would gather together at the Temple to celebrate the Exodus with rejoicing and festivity.

Families would come from all parts of the land for the occasion, and each family would bring a lamb as its special offering in honor of the festival. This lamb was known as the pesach, in remembrance of the time when our ancestors were spared the tragic fate of the Egyptians, whose first-born were slain. For them, the pesach was a reminder that God *posach* – "passed over" – the houses of our ancestors in Egypt during the redemption.



### What is the meaning of this matzah?

There are three matzot, and so the meaning of the matzah is threefold. At the very beginning of the Seder, we learned that the matzah is, first of all, a symbol of the simple bread of poverty our ancestors were made to eat in their affliction, when they were slaves in the land of Egypt. The matzah also reminds us of the great haste in which the Israelites fled from Egypt. So hard did the Egyptians press them that, as we read in the Torah: "They baked unleavened cakes of the dough since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves."

There is a third meaning to the matzah. In ancient times, the Israelites lived in the desert. Like all desert peoples, they lived simply. They dwelt in tents, dressed in plain garments, and ate only the simplest of foods. Even their bread was only an unleavened cake, like the matzah we eat tonight.

When the Israelites settled in Canaan, they became farmers. Soon they prospered; and they began to desire fancy homes to live in, fine clothes to wear, and rich foods to eat. This made them greedy and envious.

The Prophets cried out against their way of life and pleaded with them to return to the simple and modest ways of the desert. So, for one week each year the matzah became the symbol of those early days when all people had little, but none had more--when equality prevailed among the Israelites. Let the matzah be a symbol for us this week. Let it teach us to find delight not in selfish luxuries that excite the envy of our neighbors, but in simple acts of helpfulness and kindness that inspire their respect and love. Luxuries when shared by all are good to have; they add to our enjoyment of life and help to make us happy. But when the few have more than they need, and the many have not even life's necessities, then the plea of the Prophets must be heard. Let us strive to bring about peace with equality and justice for everyone.



### What is the meaning of this maror?

We eat the maror, or bitter herbs, to remind ourselves that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our people. As it is written: "And they made their lives bitter with hard labor at mortar and brick and in all sorts of drudgery in the field; and they ruthlessly imposed all the tasks upon them."

## B'CHOL DOR V'DOR – IN EVERY GENERATION

In every generation, each of us should feel as though we ourselves had personally gone forth from Egypt. Every generation must discover freedom anew. For we read in the Torah: "And you shall explain to your child on that day, it is because of what the Eternal did for me when I went forth from Egypt." Every generation must earn its claim to liberty. It is an ever recurring theme of history. We continue to remember: "It was we who were slaves...we who were strangers."



## THE SECOND CUP – THE CUP OF DELIVERANCE

We raise our cups as we recall the second promise of liberation to the people of Israel:

*(Fill the second cup. The participants lift up their cups of wine.)*

We praise You, Adonai our G-d, Sovereign of all life, who has delivered us and our ancestors from Egypt and brought us here this night to eat matzah and maror. Adonai, our G-d and G-d of our ancestors, help us celebrate future holidays and festivals in peace and in joy.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.  
(All drink the second cup of wine.)*

## MOTZI – A BLESSING FOR BREAD

We are now coming to the Seder meal. As we ordinarily begin with the breaking of bread, we begin tonight with the breaking of matzah. We recite two blessings; first is the regular blessing for bread, then a special one for matzah.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.*

We praise You, Adonai, Sovereign of Life,  
Who brings forth bread from the earth.



## MATZAH – A BLESSING FOR MATZAH

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher  
kidshanu b'mitzvo-tav v'tzivanu al a-chilat matzah.*

We praise You, Adonai, Sovereign of Life,  
Who hallows our lives through commandments,  
and commands us to eat matzah.

*(Eat your portion of the matzah)*



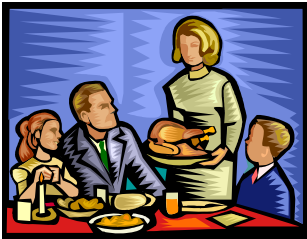
## MAROR – A BLESSING FOR THE BITTER HERBS

Now each of us will take a bit of the maror, the bitter herb, and combine it with the haroset to fulfill the commandment of this night to eat the maror. Thus, we dip our food the second time.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam asher  
kidshanu b'mitzvo-tav, v'tzivanu al a-chilat maror.*

We praise You, Adonai, Sovereign of Life,  
Who hallows our lives through commandments,  
and commands us to eat maror.

*(Eat the maror.)*



## SHULCHAN OREICH – THE MEAL IS SERVED

It is customary to begin the meal with hard-boiled eggs flavored with salt water. The egg is symbolic of new growth, of new life, of hope. The roasted egg on the Seder plate has come to represent the ancient Temple holiday sacrifice in Jerusalem, the holy city.

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## TZAFUN – THE AFIKOMAN IS FOUND AND EATEN

Toward the end of the meal, the guests look for the afikoman, which the leader has hidden. Since neither the meal nor the Seder can be concluded before some of the group has eaten a piece of it, whoever finds the afikoman may demand a reward. Nothing is eaten after the afikoman, so that the matzah may be the last food tasted.

In temple times the Passover sacrifice was eaten at the end of the meal, when everyone was almost satiated. In remembrance of this, we partake of the afikoman as the very last food to be eaten at our seder.

*(Set aside all other food and eat the afikoman.)*



## THE THIRD CUP – THE CUP OF REDEMPTION

*(Fill the third cup.)*

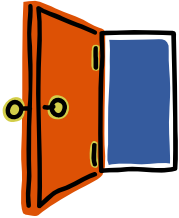
*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
borei p'ri ha-gafen.*

*(All drink the third cup of wine.)*

## KOS ELIJAHU – THE CUP OF ELIJAH

This cup of wine is called "Kos Eliyahu" the cup of Elijah--a cup from which we cannot drink, until all the world is redeemed from pain, injustice, denial of love. In the ninth century B.C.E., a farmer arose to challenge the domination of the ruling elite. In his tireless and 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.

Before he died, Elijah declared that he would return once each generation in the guise of any poor or oppressed person, coming to people's doors to see how he would be treated. By the treatment offered this poor person, who would be Elijah himself, he would know whether the population had reached a level of humanity making them capable of participating in the dawn of the Messianic age.



*(We open the door to the outside.)*

## THE FOURTH CUP – THE CUP OF ACCEPTANCE

*(The fourth cup of wine is poured.)*



As our Seder draws to an end, we once again take up our cups of wine. The Redemption is not yet complete. The fourth cup recalls us to our covenant with the Eternal One, to the tasks that still await us as a people called to holy service, to a great purpose for which the people of Israel live: the preservation and affirmation of hope.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,  
borei p'ri ha-gafen.*

*(All drink the fourth cup of wine.)*

**Next year in Jerusalem!!**