



PASSOVER

We Once Were Slaves...

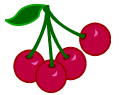
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Prelude:

We once were slaves in the land of Egypt. By miraculous power we were freed. Passover is traditionally a time of celebration, where we recall with joy this transformation. Tonight we will have a Seder where we celebrate the freedom yet to be experienced.

A freedom yet to be experienced...what is meant by that? Are we still enslaved? Who enslaves us? How? I believe I am free. I am free to practice my religion. I am free to wear whatever clothes I want to. I am free to eat upright or reclined. I am free to eat spicy food or mild. I am free to live wherever I please. I am free to snack.

[Pass around a snack]



To some extent you are free. And that blessing should never be forgotten. We should celebrate it generation after generation at this time. But we are enslaved by an idea. We are enslaved by an idea that prevents us from acting in a way that will save our own lives. This idea, which enslaves us, is that the world is infinite in its resources. We know it is false, but as a society we act as if it were true.

So this Seder is recognition that we are still enslaved to this lie. And through this Seder we hope to glimpse the freedom that awaits our redemption from this lie. May the Creator of the universe bring us forth into a sustainable lifestyle that honors all forms of creation. May the chains of our unrestrained consumption melt as our consciousness expands.

[Light the Seder candles]

Baruch atah adoni, Ruach haOlum, asher kiddushanu b'mitzvah tzov, vitzivanu lechodliq nair shel HaYom L'Adamah. Amen.



Blessed are you, Spirit of the world, who commanded us to light the candles on Earth Day.

Traditionally we prepare for Passover by removing all food that has been leavened by yeast. This commemorates how we had to leave Egypt in such haste that we did not even have time to let the bread rise. Leavened food represents our reluctance to change. But change is occasionally forced upon us. To prepare for our liberation from the lie that the world has infinite capacity we will purge our minds of excess. We will have with us only what we need and no more.

Leader:

Close your eyes. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. This is what we keep. This is what we leave behind. Imagine you were suddenly commanded to move from your homes. What would you keep? What would you leave behind? Imagine filling your backpack and just leaving. But do not leave in sorrow. Leave in joy. This is your Exodus. Prepare for freedom. Gather up all that you've left behind; whatever didn't fit into your backpack; this is what you will not take with you. Goodbye. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in what you will keep. Breathe out what you will not keep. Put your hands to your mouth and with a deep exhalation, breathe into your hands all that you will leave behind. Open your eyes. Carefully and conscientiously throw what you will not keep into the candle flames. It is gone. And now your home is free of all leavened food.

[fill the wine glasses]

Kiddush:

We drink four cups of wine during the Seder. Wine is a symbol of gladness. It is also the drink of transition. We distinguish the Holy from the profane with a sip of wine.

Blessed are You, Creator and Spirit of the Universe, Who has created the Fruit of the Vine.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohainu Ruach HaOlom, Borai P'ree HaGofen.
Amen.

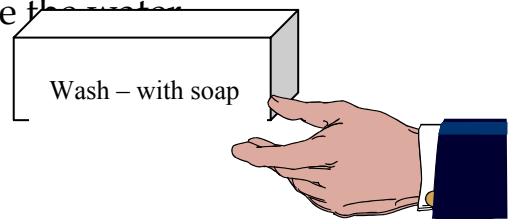


[drink the wine!]

What is the ecological significance of the first glass of wine? In biblical times we offered the first and best fruit to the Holy Source of All Life. With the first glass of wine we acknowledge that the Source of Life is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer. So we drink to the spirit of ecology itself.

Washing Our Hands:

Water is the purifying agent. As our hands become clean, the water becomes dirty. Fortunately, in the wisdom of the Creator, the water does not remain dirty forever. Natural processes can clarify it. We give thanks to the Creator who has given us the benefits of clean hands and a living Earth, which can recycle the water.



[Make matzah and put it in the oven]

Karpas:

The green herb is the coming of Spring. The Earth is reborn. From the cold, dark clutches of winter the flowering plants escape. They erupt in verdant freedom. This is our liberation as well. And in our celebration, we recall the bitterness of bondage. The tears we shed are collected in these bowls of salt water.

These greens are also the symbol of wildlife and forests. We are grateful for the splendor of Creation. Forests are the cathedrals where the Creator has demonstrated miraculous power. We accept the obligation to cherish and protect the natural world. Unfortunately we are still enslaved by a society which is devouring the Earth. We should shed tears for the life that is destroyed needlessly. May we someday rejoice because we have been liberated from our destructive ways.



[Dip the green herb into the salt water twice.]

Blessed are You, Creator and Spirit of the Universe, Who has created the Fruit of the Earth.

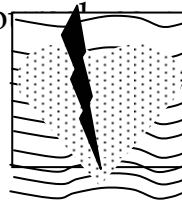
Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohainu Ruach HaOlom, Borai P'ree HaAdamah.
Amen.

Breaking the Middle Matzah:

We expose the three matzah. We select the middle matzah and break it in half. We hide one half and replace the other half. The matzah is the bread of affliction. We must remind ourselves that even though we are feasting others are suffering and in need. The top matzah is for the people who suffer. The bottom matzah is for all the other creatures on Earth who suffer. The middle matzah is for our broken hearts as we acknowledge our role in this tragedy.

However, do not despair. Hiding the other half signifies that redemption is possible. We are required to repair the broken world and we are required to work with broken hearts. We cannot wait until we are whole to begin to repair the world. This task must begin regardless. We are all imperfect and wounded healers. In healing the world we heal ourselves. In healing ourselves we heal the world.

[check the matzah in the oven!]



The Four Questions:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

1) On all other nights we eat leavened bread or unleavened, but on this night only matzah?

- 2) On all other nights we eat either sweets or bitter herbs, but on this night only bitterness?
- 3) On all other nights we don't at all, but on this night we dip twice?
- 4) On all other nights we sit or recline while eating, but on this night we recline?

[check the matzah in the oven!]

[Discuss the answers]

[check the matzah in the oven!]

WHY?

The Wicked Child, The Simple Child, The Child Who Does Not Know & The Wise Child:

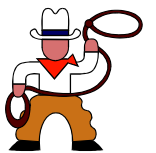


The wicked child asks, "Who cares?" To this child answer that the Earth is a precious gift. If you do not care for it, its treasures will be exhausted before you can enjoy them. The simple child asks, "What's going on?" To this child explain that every action has consequences. If we continue our wasteful and destructive behavior we will surely regret it. To the child who does not understand enough to ask, it is important to set a good example so the child learns how to act appropriately in the world. And to the wise child who asks, "How did we get here? And where do we go from here?" We tell this story.

[check the matzah in the oven!]

Maggid:

Once there was a cowboy. This cowboy grazed his cattle all over Colorado. And when a hillside was barren he just moved on to another hillside. And when there were prairie dogs in his pasture he poisoned them all, because there were a lot of prairie dogs. And when coyotes ate his calves he set traps for them or hunted them

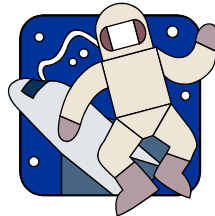


down and shot them. And when the cattle trampled the stream banks and polluted the water with their waste the cowboy would just move on to the next pasture.

One day, while branding his cows with a red-hot branding iron, the cowboy saw something very strange. There was a burning cactus near his camp but the flames did not consume it. The cowboy approached the cactus and was impressed with its beauty. The cactus spoke to the cowboy, saying, "You have been a desecration to my Earth! You act as if the Earth were like this miraculous cactus; that it can burn but not be consumed in the fire."



The cowboy answered the cactus, "You have provided me with a good Earth and wherever I turn there is abundance. Why shouldn't I believe that the resources of the Earth are infinite?" The cactus answered, "Ignorant one, you are speaking like the man falling from



a great height. So far, so good."

Suddenly, the cowboy was placed in the cockpit of a space ship orbiting the Earth. From his window he could see the Earth below. He noticed how it floated in space, detached from the rest of the universe. He also realized that he too was floating in space. The only resources he had to live with were those which were also aboard his craft. All the water he had to drink was that which cycled through his spacecraft's system. All the food he had was what he had or what he could grow. And all the air to breathe was what could be cycled through the system. And it was all powered by a giant solar panel. There was no more than that. There was not a molecule to waste. To pollute this system would be perilous.

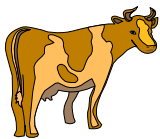


At that moment he realized that this spacecraft was the Earth in miniature. The Earth is a giant spaceship where resources are precious. It is impossible to consume the Earth indefinitely without experiencing severe consequences. He also realized from that perspective that there were no borders between countries. All places on Earth were connected to each other by the planet's wondrous systems. And the miracle of life was given to the whole world. Human beings were not put on Earth to dominate all other life. Humans had to learn to live in harmony with all other life.



Thanks!

Suddenly the cowboy found himself back on his ranch. He was transformed. The first thing he did was to release the calf he had bound with biting ropes. He said to the calf, "I will not harm you. You are free." Then he shouted to all the cows he shepherded, "My heart was hardened. But now I see the harm that I had done. Be free." And the cowboy released all the cows.



The cows thanked him, and wandered off. And the cowboy realized that he himself was just small potatoes. He needed to convince others of his vision. He began his crusade to free people from their shortsighted plunge toward disaster and their cruelty to other beings. The former cowboy was amazed both at how many shared his vision and also at the enormity of the task. But he pursued his new crusade with all his heart for the rest of his life.

[check the matzah in the oven!]

...And then there was this burning cactus, see...And the cactus said to me...



The Ten Plagues:

BLOOD
FROGS
VERMIN

BEASTS
CATTLE PLAGUE
BOILS
HAIL
LOCUSTS
DARKNESS
DEATH OF THE FIRST BORN



[Other plagues]

[check the matzah in the oven!]

[fill the wine glasses]



The Second Cup of Wine:

This cup of wine celebrates our liberation. We drink it in a reclining posture to demonstrate that we are free. We are free to either destroy or restore.

Blessed are You, Creator and Spirit of the Universe, Who has created the Fruit of the Vine.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohainu Ruach HaOlom, Borai P'ree HaGofen.
Amen.

[check the matzah in the oven!]

Wash Our Hands:

We have just been delivered out of slavery. We are reborn and are purer than we ever could have been in bondage. We wash again to claim our spiritually cleansed souls. Let our clean hands be free from causing unnecessary harm.

[wash our hands]

[bring out the matzah]

Matzah:



This is the bread of affliction. It proclaims that we were once slaves and were miraculously freed. In the wilderness we had nothing to eat, but the Creator with infinite mercy provided manna. We are still in the wilderness, and the Creator continues to provide nourishing food. May we gather it from the Earth. And may no blood be shed so that we may eat.



Blessed are You, Creator and Spirit of the Universe, Who has brought forth Bread from the Earth

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohainu Ruach HaOlom, HaMotzi Lechem Meen HaAretz.
Amen.

WASABI:

The bitterness of this herb exposes the harsh reality of slavery. There is no joy --- only misery, tears, and oppression. Eat the bitter root and relive the suffering we experienced as slaves. And feel the suffering we cause in others. May the tasting of bitterness inspire empathy motivate us to do good on Earth.



[eat the wasabi]

SANDWICH:

The holy sanctuary once stood in Jerusalem and was destroyed twice due to our unworthiness. The holy sanctuaries that stand in our day are the ancient forests. There live trees that were alive at the time that the Holy Temple stood. These forests are a home to creatures that can live nowhere else. As we celebrate the existence of these awesome places, we should also mourn their destruction. To symbolize this complex experience we make a sandwich of bitter herbs and sweet harosets.



[make a wasabi and harosets sandwich with the matzah]

The Seder Plate:

[Explain the items on the Seder plate]

The Festival Meal

[eat the food]

Search for the Afikomen

[eat dessert]

Blessing after the Meal

We open the door for Elijah. We each share our gratitude for the bounty of creation. We drink to the promise of redemption.

[fill the third cup of wine]

Blessed are You, Creator and Spirit of the Universe, Who has Created the Fruit of the Vine.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohainu Ruach HaOlom, Borai P'ree HaGofen. Amen.

Songs of Praise

[sing if we feel like it and fill the fourth cup of wine]

Blessed are You, Creator and Spirit of the Universe, Who has Created the Fruit of the Vine.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohainu Ruach HaOlom, Borai P'ree HaGofen. Amen.

Songs of Liberation

[sing if we feel like it and discuss freedom from our own struggles]