

# Haggadah for Passover Seder 2011



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## The Seder Plate:

**Maror** - Bitter Herbs: Representative of the harshness of our wage slavery.

**Karpas** - Green Vegetable: Representative of the spring season, the swerve, and the possibility of new growth including the welcoming of new comrades and friends, and the strengthening of friendships already consummated.

**Charoset** - Mixture of Fruit and Nuts: Representative of how the material means of production, the mortar for the bricks, is also our material means of reproduction.

**Beitzah** - Egg: Representative of the possibility of new forms of life and not simply new life

as such. It is the symbol of the future, after the swerve, after the rupture, after the flood, what-have-you. It is an affirmative form of life, life for life's-sake, not for the sake of life alone.

**Zeroa** - Lamb Bone: The lamb bone is representative of three ideas: 1) It is a instrument of marking, a way of understanding our comradeship as the ancient Hebrews understood theirs. Through this we may understand who is with us, who our comrades are, who our fellow travelers are. While our numbers may be small, our intentions are significant. 2) As an instrument of marking, it gives us great caution and great hope. It represents the danger of marking one as with/against us, but also the possibility of spreading the knowledge that we are privileged to have achieved with the aid of our comrades. Finally, 3) it is a symbol of sacrifice and death, of what is left behind. Of the endings that precede new beginnings, of the drawing closer between us, of our alliance's rebellion against the powers of capitalism's decree for formal, material, productivity.



## Candle Lighting:

BAH-ROOCH AH-TAH AH-DOH-NOI EH-LOH-HEH-NOO MEH-LECH HAH-OH-LAHM AH-SHER KEE-DEH-SHAH-NOO BEH-MITZ-VOH-TAHV VEH-TZEE-VAH-NOO LEH-HAD-LEEK NER SHEL YOHM TOHV.

15 steps:

1. **Kadesh** - Sanctification of the day, marked by blessing the first cup of wine.

There are four mandatory cups of wine on Passover, spaced out over the course of the Seder. One interpretation of them is that they signify God's four promises of liberation to the Israelites. Since God died in the 19th century, and since there were probably no Israelites in Egypt, nor an exodus, we will interpret the four cups as representing the four cardinal virtues required for the revolution in the present moment.

The first cup signifies the virtue of Friendship.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

*Baruch atah adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen*

2. **Ur'chatz** - Washing of hands before the vegetable.

We pass a bowl of water around the table; each person pours water over their neighbor's hands, helping them wash.

3. **Karpas** - We dip a green vegetable in salt water. We take a bite. We discard the rest.

The salt water on our table traditionally represents the tears of the Israelite slaves. The green vegetable usually represents the possibility of new growth. This year, let the salt water remind us of our own wage-slavery, and let the green vegetable remind us of the emancipatory potential, the swerves within it.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה

*Barukh atah adonai, eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adamah*

### 3. Yachatz - Breaking the middle matzah.

We break the matzah into two pieces, and hide one half, called the *Afikomen*. The Afikomen represents the rupture that we seek with the current state of things. This rupture, this break, comes from within the traditions we have, and yet hidden from them as well.

*“From struggles over immediate demands to revolution, there can only be a rupture, a qualitative leap. But this rupture isn’t a miracle. Neither is it the simple realisation on the part of the proletariat that there is nothing else to be done other than making the revolution, given the failure of everything else. “Revolution is the only solution” is just as inept as talk of the revolutionary dynamic of demands-based struggles. This rupture is produced positively by the unfolding of the cycle of struggles which precedes it, and we can say that it still forms a part of it. This rupture is prefigured in the multiplication of swerves within the class struggle between, on the one hand, the calling into question by the proletariat of its own existence as a class in its contradiction with capital and, on the other hand, the reproduction of capital which is implied by the very fact of the proletariat’s existence as a class. The concept of the swerve designates the dynamic of this cycle of struggles, which exists in an empirically verifiable manner.” [Theorie communiste]*

We exist in this rupture.

## 5. Maggid - Telling of the Exodus from Egypt.

Raise the Matzah and say: עֲנִיָּא לְחַמַּא קָא

*Ha Lachma Anya* - Here is the bread of our Affliction

At this point, usually the youngest of the table asks the following four questions.

The 4 questions:

1. Why do we eat Matzah on this night?
2. Why do we eat Bitter Herbs on this night?
3. Why do we dip our vegetables twice?
4. Why do we recline on this night?

Instead, let us ask these four:

1. What does a society without money look like?
2. Why are there states?
3. What's the basis for the gender distinction?
4. Why don't we recline on this night?

The 4 Children:

Usually represent the four personality types of life, to whom we have to explain the story. But tonight they represent the four subjects that emerge in any revolutionary process.

*the Wise* (the critical spirit)

*the Wicked* (the revolutionary potential of overthrowing the prevailing myths, but also the reactionary potential of returning to a formerly or newly repressive form of social organization),

*the Simple* (those who are still clouded by the ideological pervasiveness of the *ancien regime*, the ones who do not question the way in which our society is organized and only ask

how they may attain status within it)

*Silent* (traditionally the youngest, the one who, as yet does not have the power of speech. We may also understand this role as those who have been silenced, or those whose voice is not heard. While it is presumptive to think that we are able to speak for them, it is our responsibility to attempt to hear them).

### *What's the Myth of Passover?*

The 12 sons of Jacob and their families grew to become a great nation 470 years after Joseph died. A Pharaoh arose that “did not know Joseph,” and fearing this huge immigrant population, enslaved them. He put them to work building with mortar and bricks the cities of Pitham and Ramses. But their bitterness only made them multiply. The Pharaoh, fearing this laboring tribe even more, decided to kill all their male children. One Israelite mother put their first born in a wicker basket, and sent them down the Nile. The daughter of Pharaoh drew him out of the water and raised him, calling him Moses (to draw out). He grew up, and one day, seeing the Egyptians beating Israelite slaves, he took a rock and killed one, and fled. He went to Midian and became a desert nomad, but one day he had a vision at Mount Horeb that changed the history of the Israelite people. He saw a burning bush that was not consumed by its fire. God spoke to him: You will lead a great nation to Israel. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and you will reveal me to the Israelites and lead them back to the promised land. Moses: But what is your name? Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh. = I AM THAT I AM. YHWH (Adonai) Moses asked for his brother Aaron to help him. God said ok, You will act like God and Aaron will be your prophet, as I am to you. Moses went back, asked the Pharaoh for their freedom. Pharaoh made them work harder. Moses started doing MIRACLES: River to Blood, Frogs, Lice. Pharaohs magicians were able to do THE SAME thing! But the rest were too much: 10 plagues. The final plague, killing of the first born, made the Pharaoh finally give in. God instructed the Israelites to mark their doors with lambs blood, so that when the angel of death passes

over it will not strike them down. Pharaoh allowed them to leave. They fled, with unleavened bread on their backs, through the Red Sea. Sea split, but then crashed on the Egyptians. The Israelites (600,000) wandered indirectly through the desert for 40 years, made a loop through the wilderness. They reached the mountain where Moses had his first vision, and there God granted Moses the law that they were to keep and returned with Joshua leading them, through Transjordan to Canaan, and destroyed the empires there.

*What's actually happened?*

It's true that there was migration from Canaan to Egypt during the Biblical period. This was because Canaan had frequent droughts and famines, and the only solution was for farmers and pastoralists to travel along the coast to Egypt and settle there for a while. But this occurred not only during the Bronze age (3500-1150 BCE) but throughout the Iron Age as well (1150-586 BCE), well after the Biblical dates.

The only other source of a foreign tribes rise to power in Egypt was written by Egyptian historian Manetho in the third century BCE. He describes a national tragedy, in which the *Hyskos* (egyptianized greek word translated as Shepherd Kings but which meant "ruler of foreign lands") came to rule Egypt with cruelty for 500 years. But archaeological digs have shown that in fact, this was a slow immigration process over centuries from around 1800 BCE to 1600 BCE, where the Canaanite influence in pottery becomes more and more dominant. Manetho's description, written 1500 years later, reflect the times of Egypt warring with foreign tribes in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries more than it does the 18<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

He also accounts for a powerful Pharaoh Ahmose who chased these foreigners to southern Canaan, Gaza, who then formed Jerusalem. Canaanite pottery in Egypt declines after 16<sup>th</sup> century, which corroborates the story. So what happened?

The expulsion of the Hyskos is dated at 1570 BCE, but in the Torah, it should be at 1440 BCE. No mention of Israel has been found in any



document from the Hyskos period, although the Mreneptah Stele, dating in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is the first known mention of Israel, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in which an Egyptian king boasts of routing a people named Israel *in Canann*. Nothing before this time mentions a people named Israel, not in Egypt or anywhere.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> century, we know that the borders between Canaan and Egypt were heavily fortified, monitored, and blocked, for Egypt was facing threats. So if there was an exodus of 600,000 people, it's impossible that it would have gone unnoticed. The Merneptah Stele describes a people already living in Canaan, we have no evidence from any other source of an Israelite people in Egypt prior. It's highly unlikely any group could have fled Egypt in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was at the peak of Ramses II rule. So the only other possibility, barring miracles, is travelling through the wilderness. But archaeological evidence doubts this too. Not a single campsite or sign of occupation from these times have been discovered. Nothing, and archaeologists have the capacity to notice hunter-gatherers from millennia ago! Places where the exodus camps have been located, but no evidence there either.

So what happened? There are lots of related geographical details surrounding the story that are true, but the story itself seems to be false. Remember, there is no mention of any Pharaohs *name* in the story, not Ramses II or anyone. But there are links to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, six centuries after the so-called exodus! Lots of details can be explained in this setting, which was also a peak of Egypt's dynasty. Massive foreign populations, from tribe of Judah, were in Egypt at this period, and massive public works projects occurred at the sites mentioned in the biblical narrative. Even the names of town mentioned in the narrative, like Migdol and Goshen, were minor places in the 13<sup>th</sup> century but large Judahite towns in the 7<sup>th</sup>. All the Egyptian names mentioned in the story were also most popular in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Also, fear of Eastern invasion, cited in the narrative, only become a fear after the Assyrian invasions of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Edom, a kingdom mentioned on the pathway through Sinai, was not a kingdom until the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

All this indicates that the Exodus narrative reached its final form during the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It's many referenes to specific places and events in this period quite clearly suggest that the authors integrated many contemporary details into the story, to maintain relevance to their readers.

But why this century? Was it a Judahite kingdom hearkening back to the Hyskos occupation of Egypt to bolden support for a new kingdom? Perhaps. The 7<sup>th</sup> century was a revival for Egyptian rule in Canaan. In Judah, it was the time of King Josiah, who used the idea of one God to unify all Israelites spread out across the lands, especially north. His dream: to unify all Israelites into one powerful state worshipping one God in one Temple in one Capital-Jerusalem—and ruled by one king in the Davidic lineage.

Egypt's expansion and Judah's hopes were in conflict, and so stories of the path became the way in which to confront their enemies. Exodus can be seen as a directly political and military text, to galvanize disparate peoples against their 7<sup>th</sup> century opponents, using hopes and memories from previous eras to do so. Passover is then not a memory of a single event in history, but an instrument for constructing the will to fight an enemy in one's own time.

### *The Interpretation of Passover*

Not the liberation of a so-called Israelite people from Egypt by means of God, but today, it can only signify the self-liberation of Egyptians from Egypt by means of widespread struggles. Do struggles today need to dress themselves up in ancient garb to motivate themselves to victory?

What do the Plagues signify?

Not the sins of the world, as some activists read it, but rather, *escalation strategies*. Let us go around the table describing the

strategies which they reflect.

1. *Dam* (blood)—All the water was changed to blood
2. *Tzefardeyah* (frogs)—An infestation of frogs sprang up in Egypt
3. *Kinim* (lice)—The [Egyptians](#) were afflicted by [lice](#)
4. *Arov* (wild animals)—An infestation of wild animals (some say flies) sprang up in Egypt
5. *Dever* (pestilence)—A plague killed off the Egyptian livestock
6. *Sh'chin* (boils)—An epidemic of [boils](#) afflicted the Egyptians
7. *Barad* (hail)—Hail rained from the sky
8. *Arbeh* (locusts)—Locusts swarmed over Egypt
9. *Choshech* (darkness)—Egypt was covered in darkness
10. *Makkat Bechorot* (killing of the first-born)—All the first-born sons of the Egyptians were slain by God

### **SECOND CUP of WINE:** Signifies – Courage (Laches)

Courage as standing firm in battle; endurance; wise endurance; knowledge of the fearful and hopeful. Tunisia - Courage as self-immolation. Egypt - Courage as wise endurance - Tahrir Square

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרִי הַגָּפֶן

*Baruch atah adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen*

### **We drink the second cup of wine**

Usually, you sing Dayenu (it would have been enough).

Now, we will sing an Egyptian revolutionary chant:

- إرحل إرحل
- **Leave Leave**
- فرعون يا ارحل
- **Leave, O Pharaoh**
- النظام إسقاط يريد الشعب
- **The youth want to overthrow the regime.**
- الرئیس هی غییر الجیش و الشعب

- **The youth and the army are going to change the President**
- **الرجيم الى اذهب**
- **Go to hell**
- **مصرر الىوم و تونسس أمس**
- **Yesterday Tunisia, today Egypt**

## 6. Rach'tzah - Washing hands before the meal

## 7. Motzi - The Blessing over matzah as food

What does matzah signify? It's traditionally called the "bread of affliction," and is meant to signify the oppression and suffering of our ancestors, their daily absence of food. But, in the context of the myth, what does matzah actually mean? Matzah is the unleavened bread that the Israelites fled with on their backs, when they finally began their exodus through the red sea and across the desert. The matzah is the sign of the hastiness of the event, its rushed timing. The matzah is the objectification of an experience of accelerated time, an experience that is always felt in revolutionary processes. In those processes, the revolutionary time is radically different than the experience of work-time. Moreover, it is a remembrance that the revolution cannot be adequately planned for or organized, its ephemeral nature, and its goals and demands being overcome by the existential process itself. (It is also allegedly made from Christian baby blood.)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

*Baruch atah adonai eloheynu melech ha-olam ha-motzi lechem min haaretz*

## 8. Matzah - The Blessing over matzah as a special

mitzvah

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת אֲמָצָה

*Baruch atah adonai eloheynu melech ha-olam asher kid-shanu  
b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al achilat matzah*

**We eat a piece of Matzah**

## 9. Maror - eating the bitter herbs

We taste the bitter herbs, traditionally, in order to allow more of our senses to experience the things we're talking about. But can we taste the bitterness of (wage)slavery?

According to some philosophers, sensory experience is not simply a passive reception of natural phenomena in which we just “take in” what’s given. Rather, through our learning, language, and social inculcation, our ability to spontaneously conceptualize is nurtured, and our minds contribute concepts to enrich and frame the experience of even the most seemingly passive phenomena like seeing color, hearing sounds, and tasting food. As we taste the bitter maror, allow your minds to operate and bring out the social frameworks within which something like “bitterness” has a meaning.

So let's have someone open up our eyes to the bitterness of slavery.

**Taste some Maror.**

## 10. Korech - eating a sandwich of matzah and bitter herbs

We make a sandwich with both bitter maror and sweet charoset, sometimes called the Hillel sandwich. One interpretation of this ritual is that in our struggles, one of the challenges is to taste the

sweetness of liberation even in the midst of oppression, and another is to remember the bitterness of others oppression even when we feel that we are already free.

Another interpretation is that the path of revolution will itself be double. It is not an overcoming of pain and suffering, but the inclusion of suffering within a human community that is capable of accomodating it. We taste the bitter with the sweet not to remember others, but to know that we ourselves can never escape bitterness and negativity. We are creatures of despair, and the pathway of liberation is simultaenously the pathway of negation.

**Make and eat the korech.**

## 11. Shulchan Orech - eating the festive meal

Before we joyfully eat and practice that ancient tradition of commensality, let us pause for the

**THIRD CUP OF WINE:** This cup designate the revolutionary virtue of PATIENCE. Discipline. Moderation. Self-Control.

As Bordiga once said concerning the Party, which we can read concerning ourselves, the power of any collective is strong

“because it participates in the struggle as an organization possessing a single orientation which derives from its conception of the historical process, form a fundamental programme which has been translated into a collective consciousness and at the same time from a secure organizational discipline.”

Or as Makhno said, “I take revolutionary discipline to mean the self-discipline of the individual, set in the context of a strictly prescribed collective activity equally incumbent upon all.”

Cornel West described this as Revolutionary patience, or aggressive waiting.

With that said, let us raise our glasses again and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן  
*Baruch atah adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen*

**And now let's eat the meal!**

## 12. Tzafun - eating the afikomen.

The afikoman is the last thing eaten at the seder. It's the matzah we've broken apart, hidden, and will now bring back together to eat as a whole. One common interpretation of this part is that it signifies the supposed unification of the 12 tribes of Israel to one whole.

Instead, let us find the Afikoman, and bring it back to the table to show how we cannot survive together without recognizing the divisions, ruptures, and breaks that constitute a human life. The Afikoman, the swerve in our normal daily activities, must be brought out and made explicit.

**We hand around pieces of the afikoman, and eat it**

At this point in the seder, we traditional open the doors to allow the prophet Elijah in to have a cup of wine, to bring his vision to us all to guide us.

Let us face the door, and welcome in *our* prophets \_\_\_\_\_

**FOURTH CUP OF WINE: Practical Wisdom**

## 13. Barekh - Blessing after the meal

Let's sing a Yiddish anarchist song. "Hey, hey, **daloy** politsey!\_(Down

with the Police).

## 14. Hallel – Praise

We praise *geist*, that is, our social bonds, the I that is We and the We that is I, which we make as we are made by it.

## 15. Nirtzah - Conclusion

While a traditional closing to the ceremonial retelling of the myth of Pesach is to exclaim, in unison, “next year in Jerusalem”, we will leave that particular nationalistic sentiment aside and instead discuss shortly a different earthly based tradition that emanates from the story of the Exodus. Throughout the history of emancipatory struggle, the idea of a “return to Egypt” has been symbolic of a return to oppression. The House of Bondage, how Egypt is described numerous times in the Old Testament, looms over all of us at the threat of return, of reaction, of the failure of revolutionary struggle or the potentiality of reactionary forces gaining political power. In our times of both manufactured and crisis-driven austerity, we must be fully aware of this return to bondage becoming a conscious reality for a great many who have considered themselves safe from its terror. While this may lead to the greater possibilities of defensive struggles around the world, we must hope that these struggles supersede their own limited demands or desired compromises and instead find themselves (and ourselves) in that generalized struggle in which we all exist, within and against the bondage of capitalist social organization. It is our comrades in Egypt, successful in their political revolution, but with the fullness of political emancipation still unrealized, from whom we may draw strength. In this most recent wave of political revolution Pharaoh has been deposed. Now, a return to Egypt may no longer be a threat. Instead, it is a promise of the revolutionary potential of the working classes of all nations who may follow in the footsteps of their Egyptian comrades. In other words, it is not enough to leave Egypt, to leave the House of Bondage, and never return (must we limit ourselves to an ascetic slave morality?). But



instead that house, as property, as telluric limitation, as capital, must be abolished along with those relations which force its servants into the maintenance of its grandeur. Thus, we must return to Egypt in our minds, for, in reality, we have never left.