

A Haggadah, silver Elijah's cup and plate with matzah



WHY IS THIS SEDER DIFFERENT?

Questions, poems &
resources for a year
unlike any other



Passover supplement 2025 | 5785

Alternative text is available on photos for accessibility purposes.



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About **WHY IS THIS SEDER DIFFERENT?**

Passover is the most widely celebrated Jewish holiday in North America. It's a home-based holiday, which offers an opportunity for family and friends to gather around the seder table, recalling past memories and creating new ones. Passover's core themes of slavery and liberation resonate deeply within us and each year we bring the lens of our own lived experiences to the seder rituals.

This year, as we come to the seder, we acknowledge how the world has changed since last Passover with political turmoil, ongoing war, rising antisemitism and serious challenges to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Our Ritualwell team has created four new questions to complement our traditional ones, reflecting our current realities. We believe that these questions will foster meaningful conversations among friends, family, and community members, even though we recognize that this can be a challenging endeavor.

About

WHY IS THIS SEDER DIFFERENT?

One way to encourage respectful listening around the table is to use the Hebrew prompts: דְּבַרְתִּי *Debarti* and שָׁמַעְתִּי *Shemati* after sharing. After someone speaks, you can say ‘*Debarti*’, meaning ‘I have spoken’ and everyone else can answer ‘*Shemati*’, meaning, we have listened to you. In this way, you create a circle of listening, even when opinions differ.

May these questions, along with the creative contributions from our Ritualwell writers, encourage profound listening, respectful sharing, and fresh perspectives on our ancient narrative.

Chag Pesach Sameach!

חג פסח שמח!

Close-up view of the 4 Questions, someone's finger points along

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ
אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמַצָּה,
הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מַצָּה

**Ma nishtanah halailah
hazeh mikol haleilot?**

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin
hametz umatzah,
halailah hazeh, kuloh matzah





WHY IS THIS YEAR'S SEDER DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER SEDERIM?

On all other seders we eat matzah, the bread of affliction. **How have the hardships and adversity of this year deepened your connection to the symbolism of matzah?**

וַיֹּאפֹּן אֶת־הַבֶּצֶק אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם עֲגֹת מַצּוֹת כִּי לֹא חֻמֶּץ
כִּי־גִרְשׁוֹן מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְהִתְמַהֵמֶה וְגַם־צִדָּה לֹא־עָשׂוּ לָהֶם:

“They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes [matzot], for it was not leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay; nor had they prepared provisions for themselves”

Exodus 12:39

From the Exodus narrative, matzah is recognized as the bread of affliction. In a year marked by persecution, hunger, and grief, new connections to matzah may begin to unfold.

THIS FRAGILE MOMENT: BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH

by Cathleen Cohen

Tonight we break the middle matzah
of our present world.

We try to still this sweet
and fragile moment together,

but know
we must snap in half

the unleavened bread and hide it,
scattering crumbs.

We pray that our children
will find and return it,

making the moment whole.
Each must search

for wise ways to live
among fragments.

Continued from previous page

THIS FRAGILE MOMENT: BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH

by Cathleen Cohen

Each must learn
from the Exodus story –

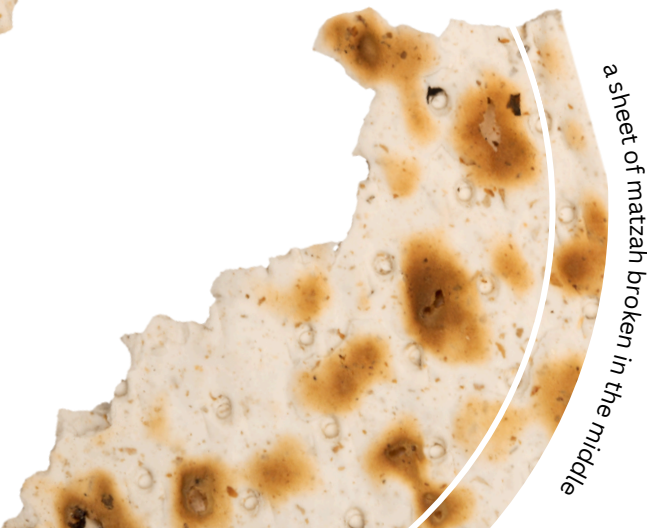
tyrant, slaves, the wandering
migrants, spokesman, a God

of wrath and promises,
of rules and lovingkindness.

Each of us must emerge
from this year, this story

and bring to the table
our pieces

to share what's luminous
among us.



a sheet of matzah broken in the middle

THE RETELLING

by Ellen Blum Barish

At my seder table,
I learned that some stories need to be told more than once
to make us stop, gather together and tell it aloud
though we have heard it many times before
so we remember.

Every spring, we read the same story of our exodus from Egypt
but it is never the same twice.

Every spring, someone is missing for work, move,
illness or death.

Every spring, there's a new mood or geo-political incident.

The annual retelling is like the sharing of all hard stories,
never told the same way twice.
never heard the same way twice.

It is a crossing over a desert of shifting sand
that allows us to see something that we hadn't before
as if for the first time.

YACHATZ: SOME DO NOT GET THE CHANCE TO RISE...

by Rabbi Tamara Cohen

Some do not get the chance to rise and spread out like golden loaves of challah, filled with sweet raisins and crowned with shiny braids.

Rushed, neglected, not kneaded by caring hands, we grow up afraid that any touch might cause a break. There are some ingredients we never receive.

Tonight, let us bless our cracked surfaces and sharp edges, unafraid to see our brittleness and brave enough to see our beauty.

Reaching for wholeness, let us piece together the parts of ourselves we have found and honor all that is still hidden.

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלֵּילוֹת?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלֵּילוֹת אֲנוּ
אוֹכְלִין שֶׁאֵר יִרְקוֹת,
הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה (כָּלוּ)
מָרֹר



**Ma nishtanah halailah
hazeh mikol haleilot?**

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin
sh'ar y'rakot, halailah hazeh
(kuloh) maror



green bitter lettuce

ritualwell
TRADITION & INNOVATION

WHY IS THIS YEAR'S SEDER DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER SEDERIM?

On all other seders we eat maror to remember the hardships of slavery. **How have personal and global events of this year deepened your connection to the symbolism of maror?**

No matter whether you choose horseradish, bitter lettuce, dandelion greens, or another vegetable for the maror on your Passover table, experiencing bitterness in its entirety is a vital aspect of the seder. As we reflect on the symbolism of maror, we consider not only our personal experiences but also the inequalities present in the broader world.

SEDER PLATE POEMS

by Corie Feiner

In honor of maror

I eat a razor thin slice of
horseradish to release
the held in tears hiding
in the parts of my body
still enslaved—
my tight hips,
my hard heart,
my sore throat,
my scared center,
my clenched thighs.
In so many ways,
I have awoken today
as a free woman
whose only bitterness
is in the shame of having ever
let myself be beaten by anyone
including myself.

Continued from previous page

SEDER PLATE POEMS

by Corie Feiner

Bitter, the flavor of fire.
Bitter, the guide to my heart.
Bitter, my ancestor's tears.
Bitter, like the weeds covering
the garden saying, Sometimes balance comes
by being with what is –
and then letting it go.



a seder plate with charoset, egg and bitter lettuce

SEDER PLATE

by Rabbi Diane Elliot

Fiery root sears
the knowing of
how far we
have strayed from
Truth into our
very breath, like
a dry *khamzin**,
hot desert wind
filling nostrils, throats
with dust and
despair. How
many years, how
many incarnations before
we recognize the
thrall that binds
us all, master
and slave, in
the tight fist
of bondage? How
many millennia before
we will perceive
why we came
and what it
means to serve?

*Heat wave

TO PHAROAH

by Alicia Jo Rabins

I never understood
why you couldn't just
let my people go, even as

the plagues approached,
even when holding on now
meant losing everything later.

Now I get it. It's terrible
to separate, to say goodbye
and watch the world drift away

like a sailor leaving shore –
alone, and who knows
for how long? No one

belongs to anyone, Pharaoh,
you were wrong about that.
And yet the opposite

is true too: we all belong
to each other, which is
what makes it so hard
to let our people go.

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

שְׁבֹכֵל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ
מַטְבִּילִין אֶפְלוּ פַעַם
אַחַת, הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי
פַעַמִּים



**Ma nishtanah halailah
hazeh mikol haleilot?**

Sheb'khol haleilot ein anu matbilin
afilu pa'am ehat, halailah hazeh,
shtei f'amim.

WHY IS THIS YEAR'S SEDER DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER SEDERIM?

On all other seders we dip twice, once in something sweet and once in something bitter. **What is one thing you've done this year to ensure you also get to dip into something sweet?**

Haroset, symbolizing the mortar the Hebrew slaves made, can be crafted from a variety of locally sourced fruits and nuts. Ashkenazi recipes often feature apples and walnuts, while Sephardic and Mizrahi versions might include dates, oranges, pistachios, almonds, and other delightful options. Regardless of the ingredients, *haroset* is sweet, and as we dip twice, we experience contrast of bitterness and sweetness.

a seder plate with a shank bones, charoset, egg and bitter lettuce

ODE TO KOSHER-FOR-PASSOVER PUDDING

by Rabbi Annie Lewis

Praise be to
Kosher-for-Passover pudding
in packs of four
cups stacked like cars
on a trailer.

A traffic jam of Kosher-for-
Passover pudding cups
on a tin-foiled shelf,
behind a latch
in a room with a code –
*Hamesh – Echad – Shalosh.**

If you can read and
translate you can
make it inside this
Chai Lifeline safe zone
with the Haimish soda
and the mini bottled waters
labeled *Mayim Chayim*.

If you can crack the code
you can dip into this
oasis of muddy sweetness,

*Five - One - Three

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ODE TO KOSHER-FOR-PASSOVER PUDDING

by Rabbi Annie Lewis

this Kosher-for-Passover pudding,
while your baby breathes
sixty-four times a minute,
while she kicks and dozes
and cries out
from her fevered body,
while you wait for the resident,
for the attending,
for the x-ray,
for the bag to fill with pee,
while you take turns
holding her between
rickety bed rails,
while the people on HGTV
find their tiny dream home,
a whole house the size
of this Chai Lifeline Pantry.
No windows,
no worries,
no regrets
for these Exodused people.
Only Kosher-for-Passover pudding.

HAROSET

by Richard Levy

The haroset, a mixture of apples, nuts, wine and spices,
Represents the mixture of clay and straw
From which in bondage
We made our bricks.
It recalls as well
The women of Israel
Who bore their children secretly
Beneath the apple trees of *Mitzrayim**.
And like the apple tree,
Which brings forth fruit and only then
Sprouts leaves to protect it,
Our heroic mothers bore children
Without any assurance of security or safety.
We recall this beautiful, militant devotion
Which sweetened the misery of slavery

As we dip our bitters
In the sweet haroset.
It is the story of this night:
Bitter and sweet,
Sadness and joy,
Tales of shame that end
In praise
It is the story of our life.

*Egypt

red apples and walnuts in their shells



SEDER PLATE POEMS

by Corie Feiner

Sweet Mud

In honor of charoset

When you spend years mixing
clay and straw, it is hard
to forget how it felt on your feet,
the daily drudgery of being enslaved
like a painful callus that becomes part
of your heels.

Even when you scrape it off, it returns
and feels familiar like a whip, like
the scarred belief that you are not worthy
of being free.

Even when the sea parts before you
saying, Go, go, you will have to walk
through the mud of your enslaved mind.
You will have to curse, and cry, and feel
all of it coming down on you like the waters
crying for all of God's children playing
some awful game.

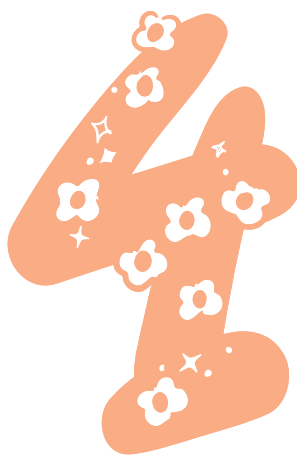
To consume what resembles clay
is to embody the bitterness of slavery
with the sweetness of redemption,
to let our feet be washed clean
knowing miracles can happen at any time.



green apples and a bowl with charoset

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלֵּילוֹת?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלֵּילוֹת אָנוּ
אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין
מְסֻבִּין, הַלֵּילָה הַזֶּה
כָּלֵנוּ מְסֻבִּין



**Ma nishtanah halailah
hazeh mikol haleilot?**

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin
bein yoshvin uvein m'subin;
halailah hazeh, kulanu m'subin.



WHY IS THIS YEAR'S SEDER DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER SEDERIM?

On all other seders we recline as an expression of our freedom and comfort.

What is one thing you have done this year to exercise your freedom and take care of yourself?

For centuries, reclining at a meal was a privilege reserved for free people, while enslaved people or servants stood. When we recline at the seder table, we take on a posture of rest and relaxation that celebrates freedom.



MA NISHTANA: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

by Kohenet Ilana Joy Streit

What needs to change
so the world as it is
can wake up?

What needs to change
so the world as it is
can love us?

What needs to change
right now
so we can breathe?

What needs to change
so our sisters and brothers
can be as free as we are?

And what needs to change
so that we
can be free too?

What needs to change
in our voices, our postures,
our pacing?

Continued from previous page

MA NISHTANA: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

by Kohenet Ilana Joy Streit

What needs to change
in how
we try to change our bodies?

What needs to change
in our newspapers
and in our budgets?

What needs to change
in our language
and in our bedrooms?

What needs to change
in how
we look in the mirror?

What needs to change
in our lovemaking
in every moment?

Continue on next page

a butterfly, egg and chrysalis



Continued from previous page

MA NISHTANA: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

by Kohenet Ilana Joy Streit

What needs to change – tonight! –
so we may wake up
freer in the morning?

What needs to change
next week
to nurture all the Miriams and Moshes?

And what needs to change
so that every Pharaoh
gets twelve hugs a day?

What needs to change
so that I have a voice
and you have ears?

I know what needs to change
and you know what needs to change
and we will be the change.

Amen



silhouette of a woman and child holding hands

MIRIAM'S DAUGHTER

by Selah Bruriah

I am the daughter of Miriam
she taught me how to dance
over my freedom
without stepping on the bodies
of my would-be captors.
She taught me to walk headlong
into impossible waters,
to lead the crowd through the narrow place
with utter faith that it will hold
long enough for us to get free.
She taught me how to tie my sandals
for a long, unknown journey.
And most of all, she taught me
—by doing, more than telling—
how to quietly pack tambourines
in the terrifying dark of night

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MIRIAM'S DAUGHTER

by Selah Bruriah

when we barely have space to carry
sufficient food, water, and blankets
to last us through the miles ahead.
She taught me that it's not enough
to scrape by and survive—
we must also be willing and prepared
to dance with joy when liberation arrives.
We must believe so deeply in our souls
in the arrival of that time
that we place those timbrels in our packs
and pray to the Holy One to send us food.

Selah



brown tambourines with silver jingles

EGYPT INSIDE

by Alden Solovy

This I confess:

I have taken Egypt with me.

I've kept myself a slave to grief and loss,
Fear and anger and shame.

I have set myself up as taskmaster,
Driving myself beyond the limits
Of reasonable time and common sense.

I've seen miracles from heaven,
Signs and wonders in my own life,
Yet I've taken Egypt with me,
Still waiting for the heavens to speak.

G-d of redemption,
With Your loving and guiding hand leaving Egypt is easy.
Leaving Egypt behind is a struggle.
In Your wisdom You have given me this choice:
To live in a tyranny of my own making,
Or to set my heart free to love You,
To love Your people,
And to love myself.

Continued from previous page

EGYPT INSIDE

by Alden Solovy

G-d of freedom,
Help me to leave Egypt behind,
To hear Your voice,
To accept Your guidance,
And to see the miracles in each new day.
Blessed are You, G-d of wonder,
You set Your people on the road to redemption.

two Egyptian pyramids with sunset behind them



EVERY TRUTH SPOKEN IS A STEP TOWARD THE PROMISED LAND

by Alex Carter

When I speak the truth to myself – saying, this is who I am
I take a step out from the narrow place and open a space for
miracles.

My steps take me to the edge of the waters.
Unsure what this journey will bring,
I place my trust in the liberating power, and move forward.

When I speak the truth to family and friends – saying, these are
the ones I love
I join beloved others on the journey.
In the desert, we may know great loss
As we move through unfamiliar terrain.
Yet we continue, seeking to know holiness and ourselves.

Continued from previous page

EVERY TRUTH SPOKEN IS A STEP TOWARD THE PROMISED LAND

by Alex Carter

When we speak the truth to each other – saying, we are united
in our diversity

We create a holy community, an embracing army of lovers.
Truth has brought us here, and we sing our songs of freedom.
The clear waters of the oases reflect our growing strength
And we journey on, refreshed for what may lie ahead.

When we speak the truth to power – saying, this is who we are
We reach back to help those still stifled in *Mitzrayim**, or poised
Uncertain at the shore.

And still we sing, remembering what we have accomplished,
Committing to the work that remains.

We reach forward to create a promised land
For all created in the image of the Eternal.

*Egypt



a family sits around a Passover table, set with seder plate, food and beverages

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