

PASSOVER TOOLKIT 5775

Set the stage for the telling The Great Narrative of Liberation

© Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

for the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council

In this toolkit of rituals and blessings, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb offers a pared down Passover seder with inspiration and room for contemplation. Consider using elements of this kit in your own seder. For a full haggadah, please see the Jewish Voice for Peace 5775 Passover Haggadah.

1. Hadlakat Ha-Nerot: Fire Blessing

It is an ancient custom for women to kindle flames that initiate sacred time. Let us offer the intentions/kavanot that we bring to the seder table, and dedicate the flames to people and communities who stand for justice in our time.

I hope for _____ and lift up _____ who _____
for freedom. (people can call out popcorn style).

Blessed is the flame we kindle to inaugurate the holy day, 'hak-leek ner shel yom tov.

2. Karev Yom: A Day is Coming

It was the custom of Ashkenazi Jews to begin the Great Narrative/hagadah with a chant/dance that expresses our shared longing for justice to manifest 'quickly in our day'. It was accompanied by a hasid dance that united the whole community through embodied movement. Stand, circle around the table in a slow hora that moves to the right while chanting this song/niggun.

Karev Yom (2x) asher hu lo yom v'lo leila (repeat)

Ram hoda (3x) ki lekha ha-yom af lekha ha-liyla (repeat)

Shomrim hafked (2) l'irkha kawl ha yom v'kawl ha-leila repeat

tair (4) tair k'ohr yom kheshkhat leila (repeat)

A day is coming which is neither day or night

A day yearned for by those who seek to take down the walls at the entrances to the city of peace. May that time come quickly in our day.

(<http://www.piyut.org.il/tradition/english/808.html?currPerformance=1052>) musical rendition

3. Steps of the Seder

There are fifteen steps to the Seder, which symbolize the ceremonial journey we are about to take together.

1. **Kadesh** – Sanctification of the gathering
First cup of wine: L'chayim to education!
2. **Ur'chatz** – Washing hands before eating green vegetables
3. **Karpas**- Eating a piece of vegetable dipped in salt water
4. **Yachatz** – Breaking the middle matzah
5. **Maggid** - Telling of the story
Second cup of wine: L'chayim to solidarity!
6. **Rach'tzah** - Washing hands before eating matzah
7. **Motzi** – Blessing over matzah as food
8. **Matzah** – Blessing over matzah as a special mitzvah
9. **Maror** – Eating the bitter herbs
10. **Korech** – Eating a sandwich of haroset & bitter herbs
11. **Shulchan orech** – Eating the festive meal
12. **Tzafun** - Eating the afikomen
13. **Barech** - Grace after meals
Third cup of wine: L'chayim to the BDS Movement!
14. **Hallel** - Praise
Fourth cup of wine: L'chayim to community!
15. **Nirtzah** - Conclusion

Name a step you consider to be part of the liberation process in your life, as you struggle in solidarity or on the front line.

Four Cups of Wine. The four cups of wine symbolize a four part liberation process associated with the Passover story: personal awakening, public education, collective noncooperation, pro-active conflict transformation.

4. FIRST CUP: V'hotzayti~Taking the first steps toward liberation. Oppression is dismantled by rejecting and stepping out of oppressive narratives that claim normative power in our lives. In this stage, we refuse to cooperate with violent and harmful narratives embedded in our culture and society. We make space for the telling of new stories that implant a new norm: equity and dignity for every human being. We begin the healing process by describing what we need to be released from in the past, that oppresses us in the present.

Please insert reading or living witness testimony on the theme you are address in your seder.

5. RAHATZ: Silent Washing of Hands.

6. KARPAS: We honor the healing power of first greens to appear in the spring. We dip spring greens in salt water to express our hope that salt tears of mourning become salt tears of joyous celebration quickly in our day.

Barukh ata adonai eloheinu ruakh haolum, bore pri ha-adamah.

Witness to tears: Testimony from Gaza

by Lena Khalaf Tuffaha

They call us now.
Before they drop the bombs.
The phone rings
and someone who knows my first name
calls and says in perfect Arabic
"This is David."
And in my stupor of sonic booms and glass shattering
symphonies
still smashing around in my head
I think "Do I know any Davids in Gaza?"
They call us now to say
Run.
You have 58 seconds from the end of this message.

Your house is next.
Run.
They think of it as some kind of
war time courtesy.
It doesn't matter that
there is nowhere to run.
It means nothing that the borders are closed
and your papers are worthless
and mark you only for a life sentence
in this prison by the sea
and the alleyways are narrow
and there are more human lives
packed one against the other
more than any other place on earth

Just run.
We aren't trying to kill you.
It doesn't matter that
you can't call us back to tell us
the people we claim to want aren't in your house
that there's no one here
except you and your children
who were cheering for Argentina
sharing the last loaf of bread for this week
counting candles left in case the power goes out.
It doesn't matter that you have children.
You live in the wrong place
and now is your chance to run
to nowhere.

It doesn't matter
that 58 seconds isn't long enough
to find your wedding album
or your son's favorite blanket
or your daughter's almost completed college application
or your shoes
or to gather everyone in the house.
It doesn't matter what you had planned.
It doesn't matter who you are
Prove you're human.
Prove you stand on two legs.
Run.

7. YAHATZ: We break the matzah in half to give witness to our understanding that our story is broken as long as there is injustice. Tonight we give witness to the injustice we see from Ferguson to Palestine.

We learn from Fredrick Douglas:

"Those who profess to favor freedom yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the fact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them by power holders...these practices will continue until they are resisted.

8. Let all who are hungry come and eat! Let us open the door and create a spirit of hospitality, convivencia and the desire to persist in the long walk to freedom, together.

הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים. כל דכפין ייתי ויכל. כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח. השתא
הכא. לשנה הבאה בארעא דישראל. השתא עבדי. לשנה הבאה בני חורין

Ha-lachma anya dee a-kha-lu emotaynu b'ara d'mitz-ry-im. Kawl dikh-feen yae-tae v'yae-khol. Kawl ditz-reekh yae-tae v'yif-sakh. Ha-shata avdei. L'shana d'atya banot horin. (Aramaic)

Es Del Pan de la efresion que comeiron nuestros madres y padres en tierra de ayifto. Todos los que tienen hambre, entre y coman. Todos los que tienen minister entre y pasquan. Este ano aqui, en el ano que vinien, en tierra de libertad, fijos fuerzos, madres con sus fijos alegres, allavar a adonai. (Ladino)

This simple bread reminds to struggle collectively with a full range of languages, cultures, identities. This year we resist racism, Islamophobia, occupation, mass incarceration, police violence and corporate greed. Next year, may our struggle bring us closer to transformation of systems of injustice to institutions and practices that heal our lives and allow us to flourish.

9. FOUR QUESTIONS: "Ma nishtana ha layla ha zeh mi kol ha laylot."

Why is this night different from all other nights? What is different for you?

What is different?

I am different this year.

On all other nights,

I asked only four questions

Tonight I have another question:

How long will the cycle of violence persist?

Chase and be chased, beat and be beaten.

When will this madness end?

How have you changed? How are you different?

I used to be a sheep and a serene little goat.

Today I am a tiger and a ravenous wolf.

I was once a dove and I was a deer.

Today, I don't know who I am.

---Chava Alberstein, Had Gadya, 1989 in response to Israeli Occupation.

QUESTIONS ON OUR MINDS THIS YEAR: What questions do you bring to the table? Turn to a neighbor and share what is on your heart and mind. How have you been impacted by the struggle for justice from Ferguson to Palestine?

Song: Avadim hayinu, hayinu. L'pharoah b'mitzryim, b'mitzryim. Avadim hayin, ata ata b'nai horin, banot horin.

10. Four Children, Four points of View from African American Jewish Voices on the Intersection of Racism and Judaism

a. "Freedom is an act of questioning and dissent, operative as a challenge to arguments based on reason, for the definition of what is reasonable is always suspect when determined by those in a position of authority or power."

---Katya Gibel Azoulay, "Black, Jewish and Interracial"

b. "I am a poet, I am a story teller, I am part of a legacy of survivors. As a writer, I believe I am best at writing when I am telling the truth, expressing my own lived experience. I grew up in a mixed race household: a black protestant dad and a white Jewish mom. I was forced to think about race a lot earlier than many of my mono racial peers. I was always seeing a conversation about race happening within my own family and household. My parents were very open to talking about it. Now it's really deeply ingrained. I focus on identity intersection: the moments when different identities inside of us come into conversation with each other. When race comes into conversation with gender. When sexuality comes into conversation with class. And the conversations inside the conversations, are the most interesting to me."

---Aaron Levy Samuels. Poet

c. "I have long stopped looking for home. Home I have learned is where we sit down and decide to build it. And of course, this is the most profound lesson of the diaspora., one that must necessarily change the shape of the identity narrative. Because if we leave open the question of where and what a home is, if we let it remain a question that has to be asked again and again, and is never entirely answered, we accept that none of us have only one origin, whether ethnic, geographic, or religious. What we have is a more complicated narrative that intersects and intertwines with other citizens of the world, and remains, ultimately forever unanswerable and open. "

---Kyla Wazana Tompkins

d. Add a reading or personal testimony from the community.

11. TELLING THE STORY IN OUR OWN TIME: MAGID

One possible song: Pharaoh by The House Band

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ctVMkIOGGY>

Pharaoh he sits in his tower of steel

The dogs of money all at his heel

Magicians cry, Oh Truth! Oh Real!

We're all working for the Pharaoh

A thousand eyes, a thousand ears

He feeds us all, he feeds our fears

Don't stir in your sleep tonight, my dears

We're all working for the Pharaoh

Egypt Land, Egypt Land
We're all living in Egypt land
Tell me, brother, don't you understand
We're all working for the Pharaoh

I dig a ditch, I shape a stone
Another battlement for his throne
Another day on earth is flown
We're all working for the Pharaoh

Hidden from the eye of chance
The men of shadow dance a dance
And we're all struck into a trance
We're all working for the Pharaoh

Call it England, call it Spain
Egypt rules with the whip and chain
Moses free my people again!
We're all working for the Pharaoh

Idols rise into the sky
Pyramids soar, Sphinxes lie
Head of dog, Osiris eye
We're all working for the Pharaoh

Around his feet the princes kneel
Far beneath we shoulder the wheel
We're all working for the Pharaoh

Ferguson to Palestine

Speakers, presenters, storytellers that addresses the topic: from thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/

Consider reading the list of Ferguson Action Demands, at fergusonaction.com/demands

While the sound of suffering
Sails lost in the listening
As the voices of heartache hail
The power of presence
People as portals
Passports to heaven
Here is a protest in the form of a prayer
---Poet Aja Monet

Read at the Dream Defenders Ferguson to Palestine action in Nazareth, Winter 2014

11. Plagues: Naming Obstacles to Liberation

Rather than telling this story as a revenge tale, we begin liberation by transforming the context of the plagues.

Ten Plagues That Harm People from Ferguson to Palestine

Each one of these could have a two sentence description that can be read by members of the seder.

1. Denial of resources, siege and imposed poverty
2. Gang Injunctions and Forced Ghettoization
3. Water shortage (Detroit to Palestine)
4. Destruction of Farm land and Olive Trees
5. Corrupt mortgage policies and destruction of homes
6. Desecration of holy sites and erasure of history
7. Mass incarceration and mistreatment of children
8. Militarization of Police and armed assault on civilian populations
9. Corporate Greed and profiteering from violence
10. Public silence about massive violations of human rights

12. Naming acts of beautiful resistance and resiliency

We name the beautiful acts of resiliency that have sustain the movement for justice from Ferguson to Palestine.

Seder Plate: Name and describe the symbols

Blessings for marror and matzah with the Hillel Sandwich.

The meal is served.

Third Cup: Tsafon: Dancing for freedom

Songs and wishes for the coming year.

Fourth cup: Nirtzah

Poem or story that expresses our hope for the future.

