



Commonwealth
Jewish Council

THE SEDER HANDBOOK



A GUIDE AND TEXT FOR THE PASSOVER MEAL

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SEDER

ORDER FOR THE PASSOVER EVENING MEAL

1. **KADAYSH** Blessing over the wine to sanctify the festival.
2. **OOR'HATZ** Wash the hands.
3. **KARPAS** Green herbs.
4. **YAHATZ** Divide the middle matza.
5. **MAGEED** Recite the story.
6. **RAH'TZA** Wash the hands.

- 7&8. **MOTZI MATZA** The two blessings over the matza.

9. **MAROR** The bitter herbs.
10. **KOREH** The Hillel Sandwich
11. **SHULHAN OREH** Eat the meal.
12. **TZAFON** Eat the Afikomen.
13. **BOREH** Grace after meals.
14. **HALLEL** Psalms of praise.
15. **NIRTZA** Prayer for acceptance

The above 15 stages, the age-old order or "Seder", have been seen as a reminder of the 15 steps leading up to the Holy of Hollies in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem.

1 KADAYSH - *Blessing over the wine.*

(After pouring the first cup of wine, it is raised and the following blessing is recited together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the vine. Lord, you are blessed, who has chosen us and made us holy with your commandments. Out of your love you have given us the special times for rejoicing including this festival of unleavened bread, the time of our freedom, a time to remember the exodus from Egypt.

(Drink the first cup of wine)

2 OOR'HATZ - *Wash the hands.*

3 KARPAS - *Green herbs.*

(Some vegetable – usually parsley in the UK - is dipped in salt water. Sprigs are distributed to all present who then say together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the earth.

(Eat the parsley)

4 YAHATZ - *Break the middle matza.*

(The middle of the three matzot by the leader's place is broken in two. One half is put back between the other two matzot, the other half, the Afikomen, is set aside and will be eaten at the end of the meal.)

5 MAGEED - *Telling the story.*

(The leader uncovers the matzot and holds them up. All say together . . .)

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want, come and celebrate the Passover. This year we are here, next year we shall be in Jerusalem. Yesterday we were slaves and today we are free.

(The wine is poured out for the second cup)

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

(The youngest person at the table asks the following questions.)

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Why do we only eat matza?

Why do we specially eat bitter herbs?

Why do we dip the herbs twice?

Why do we lean when we eat?

THE BEGINNING OF THE ANSWER

(The leader replies . . .)

We were slaves in Egypt and we were brought forth by God to freedom. If God had not brought our fathers out of Egypt, then we and all subsequent generations would have remained slaves in Egypt. So even if we were all very wise and learned we would have to tell this story of the deliverance from Egypt. Indeed, it is considered right to spend as long as possible telling the story.

SOME EDUCATIONAL ADVICE

The Rabbis identified four different kinds of children - the wise ones, the bad ones, the simple ones and those who cannot even ask a question and they advised on the different ways in which the Seder should be used to teach them.

They say that you should explain to the wise child all the details of Passover, the Laws, the customs and the history.

To the bad child, who doesn't associate himself with the Passover celebrations, they say you should tell him that with such an attitude he would not have been worthy of the gift of freedom.

For the simple child, a simple answer should be given. Just say that God brought us out of the land of Egypt, the place of slavery.

To the fourth child who cannot even ask a question you must volunteer the information. Pointing out the details of the Seder, you should explain that we are doing this because of God's deliverance of us from Egypt.

(Quotations from the Torah are now given to prove all we are learning at the Seder)

PART OF A PLAN

The Egyptian oppression fulfilled the promise that God gave to our father Abraham in Genesis -

"Be certain of this, your descendants shall live in a land which is not their own, in slavery to people who will treat them badly for 400 years, but I will punish the nation that enslaved them and they (the Israelites) shall escape".

THE ETERENAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PASSOVER

This promise has been significant throughout the generations because not only did the Egyptians try to oppress us and plan our destruction, but in every generation, people have tried to destroy the Jews, and God has always finally delivered us from them.

GOD ALONE SAVED THE JEWS

It says in Deuteronomy, "And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us, and oppressed us and enslaved us in terrible bondage, and we cried out to God, the God of our fathers and He heard us and saw our affliction and our slavery and our oppression. And God brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, an outstretched arm and with awesome terrors, and with signs and with wonders."

God sent no messenger on his behalf, he performed the deliverance by himself.

THE TEN PLAGUES

These are the ten plagues which God inflicted on the Egyptians in Egypt.

(At the mention of each plague, a drop of wine is spilt from the cup - we cannot be entirely happy if our happiness is purchased at the cost of others.)

(Say together . . .)

BLOOD

FROGS

LICE

BEASTS

BOILS

BLIGHT

HAIL

LOCUSTS

DARKNESS

SLAYING OF THE FIRST BORN

DAYENU



“IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US”

(A “count your blessings” song to be sung together at a good, jolly pace).

If God had brought us out of Egypt

Only brought us out of Egypt

And hadn't split the sea before us... Dayenu

(Chorus)

If God had split the sea before us

Only split the sea before us

And hadn't dried the sand beneath us... Dayenu

(Chorus)

If God had dried the sand beneath us

Only dried the sand beneath us

And hadn't fed us in the desert... Dayenu

(Chorus)

Only fed us in the desert

And hadn't sent his heav'nly manna... Dayenu

(Chorus)

If God had sent his heav'nly manna

Only sent his heav'nly manna

And hadn't taught the peace of Sabbath...

Dayenu

(Chorus)

If god had fed us in the desert

If God had taught us the peace of Sabbath

Only taught the peace of Sabbath

And hadn't brought us to Mount Sinai... Dayenu

(Chorus)

If God had brought us to Mount Sinai

Only brought us to Mount Sinai

And hadn't granted us his teaching... Dayenu

(Chorus)

If God had granted us his Torah

Only granted us his Torah

And hadn't led us to Israel... Dayenu

(Chorus)

THE PESACH SYMBOLS

(The leaders says . . .)

The ancient teacher Rabbi Gamliel taught, "Whoever does not think about the meaning of these symbols – The Passover sacrifice, the matza and the bitter herbs – has not properly observed the festival."

(The leader point to the roast bone and says . . .)

This bone, a symbol of the Passover sacrifice, reminds us of how God passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, smiting the Egyptians and sparing the Israelites.

(Next, the leader holds up the Matza and says . . .)

This matza reminds us how our ancestors left Egypt in such a hurry that they were unable to allow their dough to rise.

(The leader then holds up the bitter herbs and says . . .)

These bitter herbs remind us of how bitter the lives of our ancestors in Egypt were.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

(Say together . . .)

In every generation, every Jew is duty bound to imagine himself to have personally taken part in the exodus from Egypt. It says in Torah "You shall tell your child on that day that it is because of what God did for **me** when **I** came forth from Egypt." The point is that God did not only deliver our ancestors but He redeemed us as well.

(Raise the glass of wine and say aloud together . . .)

We should therefore thank God and pour out praises to Him who performed all these wonders for our ancestors and us. He brought us from slavery into freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning into festivity, from darkness into light and from bondage to redemption and we will sing Him a new song - Halleluyah.

(Say together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

(Drink the second cup of wine)

6 RAH'TZA – *Wash hands.*

(Say the following blessing together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who has sanctified us with your commandments and commanded us to wash our hands.

7 & 8 MOTZI MATZA - *Blessings over the matza.*

(A small piece of matza is distributed to all present who, before eating it say the following blessings, one for bread in general and one for matza in particular, together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who brings forth bread from the ground.

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who has sanctified us with your commandments and commanded us to eat matza.

9 MAROR - *Bitter herbs.*

(All present take some bitter herbs and haroset and, before eating them, say the following together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who has sanctified us with your commandments and commanded us to eat bitter herbs.

(I suggest you eat the bitter herbs first and then follow up swiftly with the haroset!)

10 KOREH - *The Hillel sandwich.*

(A sandwich of matza and bitter herbs is distributed and before eating it everybody says together . . .)

Rabbi Hillel did this when the Temple was still standing in Jerusalem. He would put together a piece of matza and a piece of the Paschal offering, and some maror and eat them together in order to fulfil the Biblical commandments, "With matzo and maror shall they eat the Paschal lamb".

11 SHULHAN OREH - *The meal is served.*

(This is a full-scale supper with several courses and normal family chat around the table. There is no "religiosity" in the atmosphere. Many families start the meal with a hardboiled egg and a little salt water. The symbolism is powerful and might profitably be discussed at the table. If you don't overdo the salt-water, it can be delicious. It is also customary to avoid roasted food, particularly lamb, to prevent any confusion with the Paschal offering which, of course, can no longer be offered since the Temple was destroyed nearly 2,000 years ago by the Romans.)

12 TZAFON - *The Alikomen.*

(This is the half of the middle matza which was put aside near the beginning of the Seder. In many families, the leader hides the Afikomen during the meal. At this point the children can search for it and it is customary for the child who finds it to hold it for "ransom". The exchange of a bar of chocolate or something should do the trick! The leader then distributes pieces to all present who eat it as a symbol of the Paschal lamb which was eaten at the end of the meal. It is customary to make the Afikomen the last thing to be eaten that evening.)

13 BOREH - *Grace after meals.*

(Pour out the third cup of wine, then read the following aloud . . .)

Give thanks to God for he is good.

His love and kindness last forever.

You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with favour.

Blessed is the person who trusts in God for God will always help him.

God will give strength to his people, He will bless his people with peace.

(Raise the third cup of wine and say together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

(Drink the third cup of wine)

THE CUP OF ELIJAH

(An extra cup is filled with wine and the door is opened for a while to encourage Elijah's arrival.

This arrival would signify the coming of the Messianic Age and the end of all oppression.)

14 HALLEL - *Psalms of praise.*

(The fourth cup is filled and psalms of praise are read or sung-)

Psalm 117 O praise the Lord, all you nations,
Praise Him, all you peoples,
For His mercy to us is magnificent
And His truth is everlasting. Halleluyah.

Psalm 118 Give thanks to God for He is good,
His love and kindness last forever.
Let Israel now proclaim aloud,
His love and kindness last forever.
Let Aaron's priestly house announce,
His love and kindness last forever.
Let all who fear the Lord speak out,
His love and kindness last forever.

(Raise the fourth cup of wine and say together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

(After the cup of wine is drunk, the following is said together . . .)

O Lord our God, you are the blessed King of the Universe whom we thank for the wine and the food and the land which you have given as an inheritance to our fathers. O Lord our God, be merciful to your people, to Jerusalem and to Zion, the place of your glory.

15 NIRTZA - *Prayer for acceptance.*

(Say together . . .)

Our Passover service is drawing to a close. We have repeated its traditional order. We have called upon God with songs of praise. May he stop the tyrants' oppression forever, end all slavery and bring about peace in the world. *(Say together . . .)* Next year may we celebrate the Seder in Jerusalem.

CONCLUDING SONGS - (In keeping with the rest of the Seder, the end exists to entertain the children.

These songs are traditional and their meaning has been variously interpreted. "Who Knows One?" is fairly easily understood, "Had Gadya - One Little Kid" is less obvious. Some suggest it is the Jewish people "purchased" by God with the two tablets of stone, successively over-run by empires that consume each other and finally arriving at the Messianic Age with the vanquishing of Death. On the other hand, it might just be a nursery rhyme . . .) (These translations have been so designed that the songs can be sung to the tunes of "Green grow the rushes oh" and "There was an old lady who swallowed a fly" respectively. To sing them properly, build them up verse by verse.)

WHO KNOWS ONE?

Who knows what one is, now our Seder's finishing? I know what one is:

...One is God for evermore on earth and up in Heaven.

Who knows what two are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what two are:

...Two are the stones of Law on which the Cov'nant's given. One is...

Who knows what three are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what three are:

...Three are the fathers of the Jews, Two are...

Who knows what four are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what four are:

...Four are the People's mothers, Three are...

Who knows what five are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what five are:

...Five are the books of the Torah, Four are...

Who knows what six are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what six are:

...Six are the sections of the Mishnah. Five are...

Who knows what seven are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what seven are:

...Seven are the days of every week.

Who knows what eight is, now our Seder's finishing? I know what eight is:

...Eight is the day to circumcise, Seven are...

Who knows what nine are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what nine are:

...Nine are the months of pregnancy. Eight is...

Who knows what ten are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what ten are:

...Ten are the commandments. Nine are...

Who knows what eleven are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what eleven are:

...Eleven are the stars in Joseph's dream, Ten are...

Who knows what twelve are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what twelve are:

...Twelve are the tribes of Israel, Eleven are...

Who knows what thirteen are, now our Seder's finishing? I know what thirteen are:

...Thirteen virtues God displays, Twelve are...

HAD GADYA – ONE LITTLE KID

My father once brought a sweet little kid;
...Just tuppence he bid to purchase that kid;
That's what he did.

Then came a cat that ate up the kid; That's
just what it did, it ate up the kid.

...The cat ate the kid that father had
brought, Just tuppence...

A dog came along and bit the cat; Fancy
that, to bite a cat! It bit the cat that ate the
kid.

...That father had bought, just tuppence he bid.
The cat ate...

A stick then got up and beat the dog;
Imagine a log just beating a dog!

It beat the dog that bit the cat,
...The cat was bitten that ate the kid.

That father had...

A fire flamed up and burnt the stick. The fire
was quick to burn the stick.

...It burnt the stick that beat the dog.

The dog was beaten that bit the cat,

The cat was...

Some water poured down and put out the fire;
You've got to admire how it put out the fire;
It put out the fire that burnt the stick,
...The stick was burnt that beat the dog. The
dog was...

A cow wandered by and drank all the water;
Without any forethought a cow drank that
water. It drank all the water that put out the fire,
...The fire was doused that burnt the stick, The
stick was...

A butcher arrived who slaughtered the cow; He
clearly knew how to slaughter the cow,
He slaughtered the cow that drank the water,
...The water was drunk that doused the fire,
The fire was...

The Angel of Death then dealt with the butcher;
He ended the future of that little butcher;
He took off the butcher who slaughtered the
cow,
...The cow was slaughtered that drank the
water, The water was...

Then Heavenly God killed the Angel of Death,
He could just use his breath to get rid of Death,
He finished with Death who had taken the
butcher, The butcher was taken who
slaughtered the cow, The cow was...

NOTES