

A RADICAL HAGGADAH FOR PASSOVER

by Arthur Waskow



IN A NATIONAL ATMOSPHERE acrid with charges of black anti-Semitism and Jewish racism, Arthur Waskow has tried to assert a unity—in the form of this Haggadah—between the historic imperative of Jewish liberation and the urgency of today's black rebellion.

The Haggadah is recited on the Passover holiday each spring at a Seder—a dinner/family gathering/religious ceremony commemorating the exodus of the Jews from bondage under Pharaoh in ancient Egypt. The idea of revising the Haggadah is not new; it is a traditional virtue: kol harnarbeh. Nor is it new to universalize its message of freedom. This version, taking the tradition of the Haggadah seriously, does not allow the hypocrisy

of finding the violence of liberation glorious in history but appalling in the streets.

Mr. Waskow, Rev. Channing Phillips (black nominee at the Democratic presidential convention) and a number of Washington rabbis will initiate this Haggadah on April 4 of this year—the third night of Passover and the first anniversary of Martin Luther King's death and the ensuing uprisings and repression. Among others, they will publicly invite—by name—the Jewish merchants and landlords in the black community who seem in particular need of recalling the message of their tradition. "And a stranger shalt thou not oppress, for ye know the heart of the stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Raise the cup of wine and say:

Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-nai e-lo-he-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam bo-ray p'ri ha-ga-fen.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATEST THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

Drink the first cup of wine.

BLESSED ART THOU, O Lord our God, King of the Universe! who hast made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, who didst exalt Mankind by breathing the life of the mind and the love of freedom into him, who didst sanctify us so that we might know and say what was holy and profane, what was freedom and what slavery. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who with love has allowed us to give ourselves and thee solemn days for joy, festivals and seasons for gladness. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who didst allow Israel to imagine this day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the season of our freedom, a holy convocation, a memorial of the departure from Egypt. Blessed art thou, O Lord! who sanctifiest Mankind, freedom, Israel, and the seasons.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who makest distinction between holy and holy; between the holiness of this festival and that of the Sabbath; between the holiness of light and the holiness of darkness; between the holiness of Israel and the holiness of other nations. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast made all peoples holy and hast commanded Israel to be a witness for justice and freedom for them all.

Take pieces of parsley or spring onion, dip them in vinegar or salt water, pass them around the table, and say:

Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-nai e-lo-he-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam bo-ray p'ri ha-a-da-mah.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATEST THE FRUIT OF THE EARTH.

Everyone then eats this piece of parsley. Then, break the middle matzah in two and hide the larger piece somewhere in the house, for an *afikoman*. Uncover the matzah, take the egg and the lamb bone off the dish, lift up the dish, and say:

Lo! This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry eat thereof; and all who are in need come and celebrate the Passover. (Open

door.) As our door is open, may not only the hungry come but also the spirit of the prophet Elijah, that we may tonight think wisely and feel deeply as we celebrate the Passover! For Elijah we set aside this cup of wine. (Pour cup.)

As the tradition says, "*Ha-sha-tah ha-kha; l'sha-nah ha-bah b'ar-ah d'yis-ra-el*. This year we celebrate here, but the next year we hope to celebrate in the land of Israel." And as another tradition says, "*Ubi libertas, ibi patria*"—where there is liberty, that is my country. That is my Israel. For were we sitting tonight in Jerusalem, we should still say, "Next year in Jerusalem." For this year, not only we but all men are slaves and aliens: next year we hope that all men shall be free. This year, all men eat as aliens in a land not wholly theirs; next year we hope all men will celebrate in "the land of Israel"—that is, in a world made one and a world made free.

Fill the wine-cups a second time. The youngest person present asks:

Mah nish-ta-nah ha-lai-lah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-le-lot?

She-b'khol ha-le-lot a-nu okh-lin cha-metz u-ma-tzah. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh ku-lo ma-tzah.

She-b'khol ha-le-lot a-nu okh-lin sh'ar y'ra-kot. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh ma-ror.

She-b'khol ha-le-lot en a-nu mat-bi-lin a-fi-lu pa-am e-chat. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh sh'tay f'a-mim.

She-b'khol ha-le-lot a-nu okh-lin ben yosh-vin u-ven m'su-bin. Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh ku-la-nu m'su-bin.

WHY IS THIS NIGHT different from all other nights? On all the other nights we may eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night only unleavened bread; on all the other nights we may eat any species of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs; on all the other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night twice; on all the other nights we eat and drink, either sitting or leaning, but on this night we all lean.

The reader responds:

Because we were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought us forth from thence, with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm; and if the most Holy, blessed be He! had not brought forth our ancestors from Egypt, we, and our children, and our children's children, had still continued in bondage to the Pharaohs in Egypt; therefore even though we were all wise, all of us men of understanding and experience, all of us having knowledge in the law, it neverthe-

less is incumbent upon us to discourse of the departure from Egypt, and all those who largely discourse of the departure from Egypt, are accounted praiseworthy.

Let us begin our own discourse tonight with the story of Moses and the rebellion of our forefathers against slavery, in the words of the prophet Abraham Johannes Muste:

"Moses lived in a period of dictatorship. His people were slaves.

"When Moses was a young man he became curious about the Hebrew slaves and one day went to the brickyards where some of them were working. The first thing he saw was an Egyptian boss hitting a Hebrew laborer. Moses was a powerful young man. He lost his temper. He hit the boss—and killed him! He buried the body hastily in the sand, and went back to the palace.

"But a fire had been kindled in Moses' heart, a fire of concern about his people and their suffering.

"Only, after a while, God came into the picture. What was the sign that God had come? It was a bush that burned and burned and did not stop burning.

"What was God all burned up about? The voice that came out of the bush said, 'I have seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt and have heard their cry by reason of their oppressors.' It was the physical, economic, and spiritual suffering, the injustice, the degradation to which actual people were subjected here on earth, that caused God concern.

"And the proof that God had entered into Moses, and that Moses had really been 'converted,' was that he had to go back and identify himself with his enslaved people—'organize them into Brickmakers' Union Number One'—and lead them out of hunger and slavery into freedom and into 'a good land, and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

"At the head of the Ten Commandments stand these great words: 'I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the slave-house. Thou shalt have no other God before me'—before this God who is in the hearts of his prophets as the Eternal Flame that will not let them rest where there is injustice and inequality until these have been done away with and men set about building God's House instead of the slave-house.

"To be religious, the Hebrews discovered, is to get out of Egypt into Canaan; to refuse to be slaves or contented draft-horses; to build brotherhood in freedom—because that is what men, the children of God, were created to do!

"And religious leaders are those who identify themselves with the oppressed, so that men may carry out this, their true mission in the world."

Thus wrote the prophet Muste. But many men have seen the Passover as a time to think deeply on other aspects of the question of freedom and the relation of Man and God. They have thought, and they have talked—for the Passover is a time of talking, of conversing, of exchanging thoughts. And thus is it related of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Eleazar the son of Azariah, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarfon, that they once met on the night of Passover in Bene Berak and continued discoursing of the departure from Egypt so far into the night that they forgot what time it was till their students came, and said: "Teachers, it is already time to read the morning Shema."

But there have also been some who thought silence the most eloquent conversation. It is told of Rabbi Mendel of Rymanov, that he "was a very pertinacious man, even stubborn. He did

not incorporate many things into the innermost core of his will; those he did so incorporate were sheltered as nowhere else. Thus long ago, in his youth, he had appointed the *Seder* evening as the time of the great hope of his heart. At no other time than on this night, on which the faring forth of the hosts took place and on which the event was annually renewed, would the great new faring forth be prepared. . . . If there was such a being in the world as the community of man then in this night of *Seder* the wishes of all those flaming souls everywhere must arise and coalesce on high. More was not needed. Nothing was to be commanded or be prescribed. If either were to be necessary, then the one thing needed simply did not exist. 'This is the beaker of salvation for all mankind,' said Rabbi Mendel when he raised up the first cup of the *Seder*. Nothing else has been handed down to us concerning what took place on that night." So reports Rabbi Buber.

May all of us tonight, when we speak, inform our speech from the silence, the stillness, the depth, of Rabbi Mendel; and when we are silent, may we inform our silence from the speech, the conversation, the sharing of Rabbis Akiba, Tarfon, and the rest.

There shall be a few minutes of quiet in which all the lights are doused and the reader says:

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATEST DARKNESS AND COMMANDS US TO MEDITATE IN SILENCE.

Then the reader lights the candles and says:

BLESSED ARE THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATEST THE LIGHT OF THE FIRE AND COMMANDS US TO CONVERSE WITH EACH OTHER ABOUT THE DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT.

BLESSED BE THE LORD OUR GOD, who in the Torah He gave to His people Israel explains how to converse about the Passover with people of different dispositions. The Torah speaks distinctly of four different kinds of children—that is, the wise son or daughter, the wicked one, the simple one, and the one who is so young that he cannot inquire.

The wise child asks: What mean those testimonies, statutes, and judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded us? Then shalt thou instruct him in all the laws of the Passover: even such details as the law that after the paschal lamb no dessert ought to be brought to the table. And as part of instruction in the laws, you shall discuss with him the nature of freedom and justice, and he shall begin to work out his own ideas of the meaning of the Passover. Together with him you may write a new Haggadah from year to year.

The wicked child asks: What is the service to you?—to you, not to him; and because he takes himself out of the collective body, he denies the essence of religion: the unity of God and the community of man. You should, therefore, make his teeth blunt and tell him: This is done because of that, which the Lord did for me, when I went forth from Egypt: That is, for me, but not for him; for had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.

The simple child asks: What is this? And then shalt thou tell him: We are remembering that a long time ago, in another

country, when we and our families were forced to work for other people as slaves, we became free men with the help of the Lord; and we are celebrating our freedom.

But as for the child who is too young to ask questions himself, you should yourself begin to explain without waiting for him to ask, as it is said, And thou shalt tell thy son on that day, saying, this is done because of that which the Lord did for us, when we went forth from Egypt. For out of death, and sorrow, and slavery, He gave us life, and joy, and freedom; and so, tonight we remember both the death and the life; both the sorrow and the joy; both the slavery and the freedom. To remember the sorrow, we eat bitter herbs; to celebrate in joy, we drink sweet wine. And we sing of life because we love you!

We speak to our children of the departure from Egypt because we know that in their generation too it will be necessary to seek liberation. Indeed, even before the sojourn in Egypt, it was necessary to seek liberation. In the first generation of our people, the liberation was one of the mind and spirit. For our ancestors were anciently idolators and worshipped material things, but then the Lord brought us near to His own service: as it is said, Your ancestors dwelt of old time beyond the river Euphrates—even Terah, the father of Abraham—and served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau; and I gave unto Esau Mount Seir for his possession; and Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. And there Jacob's children and his children's children became slaves unto Pharaoh; but they remembered me and clove fast to my promise of justice; and I remembered them.

Blessed be He, who preserves His promise unto Israel; blessed be the Most Holy, who foresaw the end of the captivity, that He might perform what He had promised to our father Abraham, between the parts, as is said: And He said unto Abraham, know for certain that thy seed shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and they shall afterwards go forth with great joy and a new freedom, with food and tools and clothing sufficient to make a decent life, and with a law of justice for all.

Cover the matzah, lift up the cup, and say:

And it is this same promise, of life and freedom, which has been the support of our ancestors, and of us also; for not one only has risen up against us, but in every generation there are some who rise up against us, to annihilate us; but the Most Holy, blessed be He, has delivered us out of their hands.

Drink, set the cup on the table and uncover the matzah.

Search, and inquire, what Laban, the Syrian intended to do to our father Jacob; for Pharaoh decreed the destruction of the males only; but Laban intended to root out the whole; as it is said: "A Syrian had nearly caused my father to perish, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with few persons, and there became a great, mighty, and populous nation."

Search further, and inquire, what our own fathers Moses

and Joshua intended to do to our brothers the Canaanites, for as is said, "We took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed every city, the men, and the women, and the little ones; we left none remaining."

Search still further and inquire in the last generation, what Hitler intended to do; for once again he intended to destroy all Israel and enslave Mankind.

And in this generation, search and demand to know about those who shape the fire of the sun to murder nations and all mankind; for at last those who rise up against us, to annihilate us, make no distinctions of race or belief, but plan to destroy us all, without exception. May the Most Holy, blessed be He, deliver us out of their hand again!

May He do again as He did in the past we celebrate; for it is said: "The Egyptians ill-treated us, afflicted us, and laid heavy bondage upon us. And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers; the Lord heard our voice, and observed our affliction, our labor, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us forth from Egypt, with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm; with terror and with signs and wonders." "And the Lord brought us forth from Egypt," not by means of an angel, nor by means of a seraph, nor by means of a messenger; but the Most Holy, blessed be He, Himself, in His glory; as it is said: "And I will pass through the land of Egypt this night; and I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both of man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment; I am the Lord."

"And I will pass through the land of Egypt," I myself and not an angel; "and I will smite all the first-born," I myself, and no seraph; "and on all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment," I myself and not a messenger; "I am the Lord," I am He and no other.

THESE ARE THE TEN PLAGUES which the Most Holy, blessed be He, brought on the Egyptians in Egypt:

Drop wine from the cup ten times while saying the ten plagues:

BLOOD, FROGS, VERMIN, POISONOUS BEASTS, PESTILENCE, BOILS, HAIL, LOCUSTS, DARKNESS, SLAYING OF THE FIRST-BORN.

The tradition says that we spill wine from our cups in recounting the plagues because it is incumbent on us to reduce our pleasure as we remember the sufferings of the Egyptians. And the tradition also tells us that when the angels rejoiced in the suffering of the Egyptians, the Lord our God, blessed be He, rebuked them—saying, "Are these not my people also, and the work of my hands?" Let us therefore grieve for the sufferings of our brothers the Egyptians.

But let us also remember the lesson of the plagues: the winning of freedom has not always been bloodless in the past. Through the generations, our prophets, our rabbis, and our *shofrim*—men like Micah who spoke the word of God directly to the kings and the people, men like Hillel who worked out the law of justice in daily life, and revolutionary leaders or "judges" like Gideon—have faced the issue of violence in the struggle for freedom.

The struggle was not bloodless when the prophet Micah warned, "Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil

upon their beds! When the morning is light, they execute it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them, and houses, and take them away. Thus they oppose a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus sayeth the Lord: Hear this I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor justice and pervert all equity; the heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest."

It was not bloodless when the people of America announced, "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it," and when the *shofet* Jefferson, that revolutionary judge and leader, added, "Can history produce an instance of rebellion so honorably conducted? God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

It was not bloodless when the *shofet* Nat Turner proclaimed, "I had a vision, and I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened—the thunder rolled in the heavens and blood flowed in streams—and I heard a voice saying, 'Such is your luck, such you are called to see, and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bear it.'"

It was not bloodless

—when the rabbi Thoreau wrote of the prophet John Brown, "It was his peculiar doctrine that a man has a perfect right to interfere by force with the slaveholder, in order to rescue the slave. I agree with him. They who are continually shocked by slavery have some right to be shocked by the violent death of the slaveholder, but no others."

It was not bloodless in the dark months of 1942 when Emmanuel Ringelblum wrote from the Warsaw ghetto: "Most of the populace is set on resistance. It seems to me that people will no longer go to the slaughter like lambs. They want the enemy to pay dearly for their lives. They'll fling themselves at them with knives, staves, coal gas. They'll permit no more blockades. They'll not allow themselves to be seized in the street, for they know that work camp means death these days. And they want to die at home, not in a strange place. Naturally, there will only be a resistance if it is organized, and if the enemy does not move like lightning, as [they did] in Cracow, where, at the end of October, 5500 Jews were packed into wagons in seven hours one night. We have seen the confirmation of the psychological law that the slave who is completely repressed cannot resist. The Jews appear to have recovered somewhat from the heavy blows they have received; they have shaken off the effects of their experiences to some extent, and they calculate now that going to the slaughter peaceably has not diminished the misfortune, but increased it. Whomever you talk to, you hear the same cry: The resettlement should never have been permitted. We should have run out into the street, have set fire to everything in sight, have torn down the walls, and escaped to the Other Side. The Germans would have taken their revenge. It would have cost tens of thousands of lives, but not 300,000. Now we

are ashamed of ourselves, disgraced in our own eyes, and in the eyes of the world, where our docility earned us nothing. This must not be repeated now. We must put up a resistance, defend ourselves against the enemy, man and child." May we remember and honor tonight and at every Passover the bleak and hopeless courage of those who during the week of Passover 1943 began the Ghetto Uprising in Warsaw.

It was not bloodless in our own generation

—when the prophet Bob Moses wrote, "We are smuggling this note from the drunk tank of the county jail in Magnolia, Mississippi. . . . Later on, Hollis will lead out with a clear tenor into a freedom song, Talbert and Lewis will supply jokes, and McDew will discourse on the history of the black man and the Jew.

"McDew—a black by birth, a Jew by choice, and a revolutionary by necessity—has taken on the deep hates and deep loves which America and the world reserve for those who dare to stand in a strong sun and cast a sharp shadow. . . .

"This is Mississippi, the middle of the iceberg. Hollis is leading off with his tenor, 'Michael row the boat ashore, Alleluia; Christian brothers don't be slow, Alleluia; Mississippi's next to go, Alleluia.' This is a tremor in the middle of the iceberg—from a stone that the building rejected."

—or when the *shofet* Eldridge Cleaver (who has gone into exile as Moses did) said, "This nation—bourgeois or not, imperialist or not, murderous or not, ugly or not—its people, somewhere in their butchered and hypocritical souls, still contained an epic potential, which fires the imaginations of its youth. It was all too late. It was too late because it was time for the blacks ('I've got a *Mind* of my own!') to riot, to sweep through the Harlem night like a wave of locusts, breaking, screaming, bleeding, laughing, crying, rejoicing, celebrating, in a jubilee of destruction, to regurgitate the white man's bullshit they'd been eating for four hundred years; smashing the windows of the white man's stores, throwing bricks they wished were bombs, running, leaping, whirling like a cyclone through the white man's Mind, past his backlash, through the night streets of Rochester, New Jersey, Philadelphia.

"[And too late as well because] a young white today cannot help but recoil from the base deeds of his people. On every side, on every continent, he sees racial arrogance, savage brutality toward the conquered and subjugated people, genocide; he sees the human cargo of the slave trade; he sees the systematic extermination of American Indians; he sees the civilized nations of Europe fighting in imperial depravity over the lands of other people—and over possession of the very people themselves. There seems to be no end to the ghastly deeds of which his people are guilty. GUILTY. The slaughter of the Jews by the Germans, the dropping of atomic bombs on the Japanese people—these deeds weigh heavily upon the prostrate souls and tumultuous consciences of the white youth. The white heroes, their hands dripping with blood, are dead.

"The young whites know that the colored people of the world, Afro-Americans included, do not seek revenge for their suffering. They seek the same things the white rebel wants: an end to war and exploitation. Black and white, the young rebels are free people, free in a way that Americans have never been before in the history of their country."

NO, THE MOMENTS OF RESISTANCE have not been bloodless. The blood of tyrants and the blood of free men has watered history. But we may not rest easy in that knowledge. The freedom we seek is a freedom from blood as well as a freedom from tyrants. It is incumbent upon us not only to remember in tears the blood of the tyrants and the blood of the prophets and martyrs, but to end the letting of blood. To end it, to end it!

For as one of the greatest of our prophets, whose own death by violence at a time near the Passover we remember in tears tonight—as the prophet Martin Luther King called us to know: “The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. But the principle of nonviolent resistance seeks to reconcile the truths of two opposites—acquiescence and violence. The nonviolent resister rises to the noble height of opposing the unjust system while loving the perpetrators of the system. Nonviolence can reach men where the law cannot touch them. So—we will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will not hate you, but we cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws. And in winning our freedom we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.”

But even the prophet Gandhi, who made his life a call to nonviolent revolution, warned his people, “Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Unless you feel that in nonviolence you have come into possession of a force infinitely superior to the one you have and in the use of which you are adept, you should have nothing to do with nonviolence and resume the arms you possessed before.”

So the struggles for freedom that remain will be more dark and difficult than any we have met so far. For we must struggle for a freedom that enfolds stern justice, stern bravery, and stern love. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! who hast confronted us with the necessity of choice and of creating our own book of thy Law. How many and how hard are the choices and the tasks the Almighty has set before us!

For if we were to end a single genocide but not to stop the other wars that kill men as we sit here, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to end those bloody wars but not disarm the nations of the weapons that could destroy all mankind, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to disarm the nations but not to end the brutality with which the police attack black men in some countries, brown men in other; Moslems in some countries, Hindus in other; Baptists in some countries, atheists in others; communists in some countries, conservatives in others—it would not be sufficient;

If we were to end outright police brutality but not prevent some men from wallowing in luxury while others starved, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to make sure that no man starved but were not to free the daring poets from their jails, it would not be sufficient;

If we were to free the poets from their jails but to train men's

minds so that they could not understand the poets, it would not be sufficient;

If we educated all men to understand the free creative poets but forbade them to explore their own inner ecstasies it would not be sufficient;

If we allowed men to explore their inner ecstasies but would not allow them to love one another and share in the human fraternity, it would not be sufficient.

How much then are we in duty bound to struggle, work, share, give, think, plan, feel, organize, sit-in, speak out, hope, and be on behalf of Mankind! For we must end the genocide in [Viet-Nam], stop the bloody wars that kill men as we sit here, disarm the nations of the deadly weapons that threaten to destroy us all, end the brutality with which the police beat minorities in many countries, make sure that no man starves, free the poets from their jails, educate all men to understand their poetry, allow us all to explore our inner ecstasies, and encourage and aid us to love one another and share in the human fraternity. All these!

For, as is said,

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken. For let all the peoples walk each one in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST PROMISED US A WORLD OF PEACE, JUSTICE, AND FREEDOM. BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO DOST STRENGTHEN US TO BUILD THAT WORLD! BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO STRENGTHENED OUR FOREFATHERS TO WIN THEIR LIBERTY AND FULFILL THY PROMISE TO END THE CAPTIVITY IN EGYPT.



OUR FOREFATHERS FELT DEEPLY the strength of that promise as the breath of all their work: so deeply that they honored not themselves but the Almighty for conferring upon us His abundant favors of freedom, justice, sustenance, and law. Yet the work was their own; the profound Conversation between the Lord our God, blessed be He, and the people of Israel was the conversation between the Promise and the Work, the Vision and the Creation; freedom, justice, sustenance, and law were all made real by their own hands. As Rabbi Buber has written, only Israel lives life as being addressed and answering, addressing and receiving answer.

“Man, while created by God, was established by Him in an independence which has since remained undiminished. In this independence he stands over against God. So man takes part with full freedom and spontaneity in the dialogue between the two which forms the essence of existence.”

So let us remember that we celebrate both mankind and God; and let us honor our forefathers by reciting as they did the chant that praised and exalted the King of the Universe for kindling the fire that lit their work. Let us remember their song, the *Dayenu*: “It Would Have Been Sufficient.”



WHAT ABUNDANT FAVORS HAS THE OMNIPRESENT CONFERRED ON US!

FOR IF HE HAD BUT BROUGHT US FORTH FROM EGYPT, AND HAD NOT INFLICTED JUSTICE UPON THE EGYPTIANS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD INFLICTED JUSTICE UPON THEM, AND HAD NOT EXECUTED JUDGMENT UPON THEIR GODS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD EXECUTED JUDGMENT UPON THEIR GODS, AND HAD NOT SLAIN THEIR FIRST-BORN, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD SLAIN THEIR FIRST-BORN, AND HAD NOT BESTOWED THEIR WEALTH ON US, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD GIVEN US THEIR WEALTH, AND HAD NOT DIVIDED THE SEA FOR US, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD DIVIDED THE SEA FOR US, AND HAD NOT CAUSED US TO PASS THROUGH ON DRY LAND, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD CAUSED US TO PASS THROUGH ON DRY LAND, AND HAD NOT PLUNGED OUR OPPRESSORS IN THE MIDST THEREOF, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD PLUNGED OUR OPPRESSORS IN THE MIDST THEREOF, AND HAD NOT SUPPLIED US WITH NECESSARIES IN THE WILDERNESS FORTY YEARS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD SUPPLIED US WITH NECESSARIES IN THE WILDERNESS FORTY YEARS, AND HAD NOT FED US WITH MANNA, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD FED US WITH MANNA, AND HAD NOT GIVEN US THE SABBATH, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD GIVEN US THE SABBATH, AND HAD NOT BROUGHT US NEAR TO MOUNT SINAI, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD BROUGHT US NEAR TO MOUNT SINAI, AND HAD NOT GIVEN US HIS LAW, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD GIVEN US HIS LAW, AND HAD NOT BROUGHT US TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

IF HE HAD BROUGHT US TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL, AND HAD NOT BUILT THE TEMPLE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT.

Raise the cup.

How much then are we indebted for the manifold favors the Omnipresent conferred on us!

Lower the cup.

So speaks the *Dayenu*, and the collective wisdom of our fathers. Let us not forget that their *Dayenu* begins with resistance and confrontation, proceeds in travail, and ends with the triumphant creation of a new law and a new arena for the expression of that law.

NOT ONLY IN SONG and story must we remember their struggle, but in the very food that we fuse with our bodies tonight. And so Rabban Gamaliel used to say: Whosoever does not make mention of the three things used on the Passover, has not done his duty; and these are they: the paschal lamb, the unleavened cake, and bitter herb.

Raise the lamb.

The paschal lamb, which our ancestors ate during the existence of the holy temple, what did it denote? It denoted

that the Most Holy, blessed be He, passed over our fathers' houses in Egypt; as it is said: And ye shall say, it is the Lord's sacrifice of the Passover, because He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. And the people bowed their heads and worshipped.

Take hold of the matzah, show them to the company and say:

These unleavened cakes, wherefore do we eat them? Because there was not sufficient time for the dough of our ancestors to leaven, before the Holy Supreme King of Kings, blessed be He, appeared unto them, and redeemed them; as is said: And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough, which they brought forth out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry; neither had they made any provision for themselves.

Take hold of the bitter herbs, show them to the company, and say:

This bitter herb, wherefore do we eat it? Because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt; as is said: And they embittered their lives with cruel bondage, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of labor in the fields; all their labor was imposed upon them with rigor.

It therefore is incumbent on every Israelite, in every generation, to look upon himself, as if he had actually gone forth from Egypt; as it is said: And thou shalt declare unto thy son, on that day, saying, This is done because of that, which the Lord did for us when we came forth from Egypt. It was not our ancestors only that the Most Holy, blessed be He, redeemed from Egypt, but us also did He redeem with them as it is said: And He brought us from thence, that He might bring us to the land which He swore to give unto our fathers.

Cover the matzah, take the cup of wine in your hand, and say:

We therefore are in duty bound to thank, praise, adore, glorify, extol, honor, bless, exalt, and reverence Him, who wrought all the miracles for our ancestors and us: for He brought us forth from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning into holy days, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption: and therefore let us chant unto Him a new song, Hallelujah!

Uncover the matzah, set the cup on the table, and say:

Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be blessed from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof the Lord's name is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, that dwelleth so high; that looketh down so low upon the heavens and the earth? He raiseth up the lowly out of the dust and lifteth up the needy from the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren women dwell in her house as a joyful mother of children. Hallelujah!

When Israel went forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O sea, that thou didst flee? thou Jordan, that thou turnest back? ye mountains, that ye skip like rams? ye

hills, like lambs? At the presence of the Lord—tremble, O Earth, at the presence of the God of Jacob; who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of water.

Cover the matzah and say:

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! Sovereign of the universe! Who hast redeemed us, and our ancestors, from Egypt; and caused us to attain the enjoyment of this night, to eat thereon unleavened cakes and bitter herbs.

O Lord our God! and the God of our ancestors, mayest thou cause us to attain other solemn festivals and seasons, which approach us; that we may rejoice in the building of thy city of justice, and exult in thy service: then we will give thanks unto thee with a new song for our deliverance and redemption. Blessed art thou, O Eternal! who redeemeth Israel.

Blessed are thou, O God! who not only redeemeth Israel but through Israel addresses mankind and invites mankind to address thee unafraid. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! whom we have been creating through mankind's history as thou created us through thy eternity. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! who hast breathed into us the Law that we have written for thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe—the only King that we acknowledge. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe—the King to whom we do not kneel.

Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast commanded us to answer the questions of our children about the departure from Egypt, but who also inspired our forefathers in the tradition to leave some questions unanswered. For as no question is ever fully answered, so the four questions that our young people asked tonight have not been fully answered. May they and we seek out answers for ourselves and, seeking, ask new questions!

The reader pauses. Anyone at the table who wishes to ask a question or comment on the Passover does so, and there is a general discussion for five or ten minutes. Then the reader raises the wine-cup and says:

Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-nai e-lo-he-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam bo-ray p'ri ha-ga-fen.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD! KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO CREATEST THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

Drink the wine while reclining on the left side.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD! KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST SANCTIFIED US WITH THY COMMANDMENTS, AND COMMANDED US TO WASH THE HANDS.

The reader washes his hands.

Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-nai e-lo-he-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam ha-mo-tzi le-chem min ha-a-retz.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD! KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO BRINGS FORTH BREAD FROM THE EARTH.

Everyone at the table takes a piece of the two upper matzah and pronounces the following blessing:

Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-nai e-lo-he-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam a-she-ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu al a-khi-lat ma-tzah.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD! KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST SANCTIFIED US WITH THY COMMANDMENTS, AND COMMANDED US TO EAT UNLEAVENED CAKES.

Everyone eats a piece of matzah.

The reader takes some pieces of bitter herb (slices of raw horseradish), dips each piece into *charoseth*, passes them to the company, and says:

Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-nai e-lo-he-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam a-she-ki-d'sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu ala-khi-lat ma-ror.

BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD! KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO HAST SANCTIFIED US WITH THY COMMANDMENTS, AND COMMANDED US TO EAT BITTER HERBS.

Everyone eats. The reader then breaks off a piece of the undermost matzah for himself and everyone of the company, puts on each piece some ground horseradish, passes them to the company, and says:

In memory of the temple after the manner of Hillel:

Thus did Hillel during the time the holy temple stood: he used to wrap together unleavened cake, and bitter herb, and eat them together, that he might perform what is said: with unleavened cake and bitter herbs shall they eat it.

Everyone eats.

Brothers and sisters, we have been remembering our slavery and our liberation. But just as it was we, not our ancestors only, who were liberated in Egypt, so it is we, not our ancestors only, who live in slavery. Our slavery is not over, and our liberation is not complete. The task of liberation is long, and it is work that we ourselves must do. As the Talmud tells us, we like Moses may not live to complete the task; but neither may we refrain from beginning. We are about to eat; may our dinner give us strength for the work ahead! We are about to drink; may our wine give us joy for the work ahead!

May we give each other strength in the struggle, just as we share this bread.

The reader pauses, takes a whole sheet of matzah, breaks off a piece for himself, and hands the rest to the next person—who does the same until the matzah has circled the table. All then eat.

May we give each other joy in the struggle, just as we share this wine.

The reader pours some wine from his own cup, into that of the person next to him—who does the same until the wine has circled the table, and the last person has poured wine from his cup into that of the reader. All then lift their cups and say in unison:

NEXT YEAR IN A WORLD OF FREEDOM!

All drink.

Supper is then served, and all of the company eat and drink joyfully. The eating should not continue longer than 12 o'clock, for during the time the holy temple stood the paschal lamb was eaten only until midnight. After dinner the company sings songs of freedom and celebration, from *Chas Gad Yah* (One Only Kid) to *We Shall Overcome*. The children search for the *Afikoman*, whoever finds it is rewarded, and there is general merriment.

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