Keeping the Promise

After recalling Abraham’s spiritual journey to God (p. 34) and his ascent to Eretz Yisrael, the Haggadah will recount the descent of his great grandchildren to Egyptian slavery (“The Wandering Aramean,” p. 36). But first the Haggadah reassures us, as God did to Abraham, that there is a Divine pledge to Jewish continuity whatever the ups and downs of history.

The leader:
BLESSED is the One who keeps the Promise to Israel. The Holy One Blessed be He calculated the end of our exile and acted just as promised to Abraham our Father at the Covenant between the Pieces (Genesis 15: 7-17):

“And God said to Abram: You must know that your seed will be strangers in a land not theirs; the people (of that land) will put them in servitude and afflict them for four hundred years. But as for the nation to which they are in servitude – I will bring judgment on them, and after that (your seed) will go out with great wealth” (Genesis 15: 13-14).

Standing Up For Us

1. Cover the matza, raise your cup and sing together, acknowledging God’s commitment to our survival.

THIS PROMISE has stood for our parents and for us in good stead.
For not just one enemy has stood against us to wipe us out.
But in every generation there have been those who have stood against us to wipe us out,
Yet the Holy One, Blessed be He, keeps on saving us from their hands.

V’hee she-am-da,
la-a-vo-tei-nu v’la-nu,
sheli eh-chad beel-vad,
amad alei-nu l’cha-lo-tei-nu
el-la she-b’chol dor va-dor
om-deem a-lei-nu l’cha-lo-tei-nu,
v’ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch hu
ma-tzee-lei-nu mee-yah-dam.

Wandering Aramean,” p. 36). But first the Haggadah reassures us, as God did to Abraham, that there is a Divine pledge to Jewish continuity whatever the ups and downs of history.

ברוח שומר הבשחתה לישראל, ברוח חוא. שחקדוש ברוח היאشب את חוק לישאotate קמה שאמור לארבעה
ארכיינברוח בים התהירים, שצאמר (בראשית ט, יג):
“ויאמר לארבע להל,ṁ מסים וגרו את א高等学校 מחוז שוהה.
ווג יא התוף אשת עבדך رد אנכין.
והאריך כּו אהת, ברך ידולה.”

E. M. Lilien
Rav’s Pesach Story

From Serving Idols to Spiritual Liberation

1. The Haggadah offers two versions of the Exodus story. The Talmudic Rabbi, Shmuel, emphasized political enslavement (“We were slaves in Egypt”). Now we turn to his colleague, Rav, to hear about spiritual servitude.

IN THE BEGINNING our ancestors were idol worshippers. But now God has brought us near to serve Adonai.

The leader: JOSHUA said to all the people: “Thus said Adonai the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors including Terach, father of Abraham and Nachor, lived beyond the Euphrates and worshipped other gods. But I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his offspring. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau . . . Then Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.”

“All: In Reply, the people declared, “Far be it from us to forsake Adonai and serve other gods! For it was Adonai our God who brought us up from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, and who performed those wondrous signs before our very eyes . . . Now we too will serve Adonai, for Adonai is our God” (Joshua 24: 1-18).

2. Rav’s version is drawn from Joshua’s farewell speech to the nation of Israel. Joshua feared that the new generation in Israel might assimilate to the local pagan cultures. So he told them the story of Abraham’s liberation from idolatry.

Jews-by-Choice

Abraham and Sarah were converts who as mature adults made daring spiritual choices. Today many of us are really Jews-by-choice (whether as converts or as born Jews). For we continuously reflect on our life choices and make decisions about how Jewishly to live. Ask several people to share their personal journey as Jews.
Nota Koslowsky, U.S.A, 1944

Jakob Steinhart, Germany, 1923

Lola, U.S.A, 1920

Dick Codor © 1981
The Four Children as Four Books

Clay Children

Rony Oren, Animated Haggadah, Israel, © 1985 Jonathan Lubell, Scopus Films

David Wander, The Haggadah in Memory of the Holocaust © 1988
Four Personalities  
Paul Freeman, U.S.A, 1960

Clashing Cultures  
Siegfried Forst, Europe and U.S.A, 1959
Four Attitudes to the Zionist Dream

Tzvi Livni, Israel, 1955 © Yavneh Publishers
Every Child is a Blessing

I got the idea of representing the children as cards, by the way, from the tradition dating from the Middle Ages of depicting the simple child, or the child who doesn’t know how to ask, as a jester or fool. I drew a book in each picture and positioned it to reflect each child’s attitude to the tradition.

The text of the Haggadah introduces the four children with a short passage in which the word *baruch* (blessed) appears four times. I have designed these two pages to correlate each of these four “blessings” with one of the four children: every child is a blessing.

Diversity, how we deal with it, and how we can discover the blessing within it, is perhaps the theme of the midrash of the Four Children.

*(David Moss, 20th C. artist, U.S.A. and Israel)*

*The Blessing of Diversity,*
David Moss,
The Moss Haggadah © 1996
The artist and calligrapher David Moss explains his depiction of the Four Children:

EVERY CHILD is unique and the Torah embraces them all. The iconography that I’ve chosen here is based on playing cards. As in a game of chance, we have no control over the children dealt us. It is our task as parents, as educators, to play our hand based on the attributes of the children we are given. It is the child, not the parent, who must direct the process. This, I believe, is the intent of the midrash of the four children.

Each child’s question appears on his card, and the Haggadah’s answer appears below the card. The gold object in each picture denotes the suit of the card. The staves, swords, cups and coins used in Southern Europe developed parallel to the more familiar hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades of Northern Europe. The figures are likewise taken from archaic systems of playing cards which included king, knight, page, and joker or fool. The king image here represents the wise child wearing the crown of Torah. The knight represents the wicked child. In almost all old Haggadot the wicked child is shown as a soldier, sometimes mounted, sometimes on foot. The page is the simple child, and the joker or fool is the child who is not even capable of asking.
Eastern European Types

Arthur Syzk, Poland, 1939
The Art of the Four Children

1. **Compare and contrast** the artists’ interpretations of each of the Four Children (p. 18-33).

2. **Which portrayal** is most surprising? most disturbing? most appropriate?

3. **What conceptions** of Jewish values and society are implicit in the various depictions? (See the unabridged version of A Different Night, p. 174-176, for a commentary on each illustration.)

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The Ideal Jewish Girl? Tanya Zion, Israel, 1996
The Contemporary “Four Children”
Which famous person today would be the best representative of the “wise child,” of the “wicked child,” and so on? Suggest candidates and discuss their suitability. Or suggest animals to symbolize the Four Children. (See p. 29.)

A Child’s Perspective
Ask the younger children to describe the behavior of “a bad child” at the Seder.
- What might be causing such behavior?
- Do they approve of the parent’s response in the Haggadah?
- How would they handle the situation?
- Why do they think the “silent child” asks no questions?
- How might that child be coaxed into greater involvement?

Beyond Labels
I DO NOT VIEW labels as static pigeonholes. I believe in the power of the educational act to release locked up potentials. For example, one who does not know how to ask may be silenced by the rules of society. The silence may hide an exceptional, sensitive child whose questions are choked. A parent can “open the child up,” remove the obstructions, enable personal growth and break stereotypes (Yaariv Ben Aharon, Kibbutz author).

Bridging the Generation Gap
The inter-generational dialogues in the Torah explicitly refer to parents who participated in the Exodus addressing their children who have grown up in freedom in the Land of Israel. The parents have undergone an experience of slavery and redemption which is totally foreign to the reality of their offspring.

Discussion #1: What are the generation gaps among us, the participants of tonight’s Seder? Go around the table and have people relate a formative experience which might be difficult for their parents or children to comprehend.

Discussion #2: In the illustration above, who do the characters represent? How do their clothing and body language express the generation gap? Who is the dominant figure at the table?
The Four Children Continued

**Narrator:** What does the simple child ask?

**Simple Child:** “What is this?” (Exodus 13:14).

**Narrator:** And you shall say to that child:

**3rd Parent:** “By a mighty hand Adonai brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

**Narrator:** As for the child who does not know how to ask, you should prompt him, as it is said: “You shall tell your child on that day, saying:”

**4th Parent:** “It is because of this, that Adonai did for me when I went free from Egypt” (Exodus 13:8).

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**The Parent of the Silent Child**

The child does not ask because he is afraid of making a mistake. He does not know how to phrase his question and lacks confidence. Therefore, the parent should try to lead him into a conversation, to encourage him, to strengthen him, to strengthen his confidence. (Marc Angel, Sephardic Haggadah, p. 30)

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**“You shall tell your child”** (Exodus 13:8)

The Rabbis wondered about: “You shall tell your child on that day: ‘It is because of this, that Adonai did for me when I went free from Egypt.’”

Could this verse mean that you should begin to tell the story at the beginning of the month (in which the Exodus occurred)?

No, for the verse explicitly states “on that day” (of the Exodus).

Could that mean that we start when it is still daytime?

No, for the verse explicitly states: “because of this.” “This” refers to matza and marror laid before you (only on Seder night). (Mekhilta)

“This” implies that the parents must point at the matza and marror, using them as visual aids to tell the story. (Rabbi Simcha of Vitri)
THE PASSOVER CELEBRATION is aimed at the child in all of us, allowing us to open our imaginations, to rediscover the lost elements of wonder, pleasure, and hilarity that are captured in this event. Having children at the Seder can help make this happen.

If we make our children unhappy, they will remember Passover, but not fondly. In the British Isles, there is a custom of taking sons out every year to "beat the bounds." Today they use the stick as the boundary markers, but they used to beat the boys at the site of those markers to ensure that they would remember the limits of ancestral property. Beating our ancient heritage into our children's psyches may make them remember, but it is probably the reason so many people remember ritual and ceremony as intrinsically unpleasant.

(Ira Steingroot, Keeping Passover)

The “Wicked Child” – An Unfair Description?

The “wicked” child expresses a sense of alienation from our Jewish heritage. In this age of liberalism and democracy, of pluralistic tolerance for many cultural expressions, should a person who expresses such a feeling be condemned as “wicked” or “evil”?

- Hold a brief discussion on the topic. Would a different characterization be more appropriate to our contemporary sensibilities - such as “the rebellious one,” “the skeptic,” “the arrogant – chutzpadik?”

Is “setting his teeth on edge” the best strategy to deal with such a person?

- Role-Playing: try to “get inside” the personality of the so called “wicked” children and their parents.

Describe the feelings of each one in this tense confrontation described in the Haggadah.

Suggestion: Have the younger participants at the Seder describe the feelings of the parent, and have those who are already parents describe the feelings of the child.
The Four Children as a Screenplay

1. A simple reading of the Haggadah’s midrash of the four children can obscure the fact that it provides the script for a dialogue. Let each character in the dialogue be played by a different Seder participant.

2. The cast is as follows:
- Narrator
- Each of the four children
- Four parents who answer.

3. The reading goes as follows:

Narrator: What does the wise child say?

Wise Child: “What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which Adonai our God has commanded you?” (Deut. 6:20).

Narrator: You must tell some of the laws of Pesach (from the Mishna, for example):
1st Parent: “We do not proceed to any afikoman (dessert or after dinner celebrations) after eating the Pesach lamb” (Mishna Pesachim chapter 10).

Narrator: What does the wicked child say?

Wicked Child: “Whatever does this service mean to you?” (Exodus 12:26).

Narrator: This child emphasizes “to you” and not to himself or herself! Since the child excludes himself or herself from the community and rejects a major principle of faith, you should “set that child’s teeth on edge” and say:
2nd Parent: “It is because of this, that Adonai did for me when I went free from Egypt” (Exodus 13:8).

“Me” and not that one! Had that one been there, he or she would not have been redeemed.

Embarassing your Parents

This difficult child is determined to embarrass us, the parents (in the midst of the Seder before all the guests). He implies that the wine and lambchops are only for our culinary pleasure when he says pointedly, “This service is for you” (not for God). (Don Isaac Abrabanel, Spain, 15th C.)
**Education Through Dialogue**

**A Reminder for Parents**

Thus far the Haggadah has given guidelines to the parent who is full of earnest enthusiasm to pass on an historical and cultural “message” to the younger generation. If ever there was an event which appeals to the parent’s desire to bring their youth-culture-centered children to appreciate the old values of cultural and ethnic pride and identification, the Pesach Seder is it!

Here lies a dangerous pitfall for the parent-educator. The leader of the Seder is likely to concentrate on the text of the Haggadah without sufficiently taking into consideration the audience – the younger generation – and their level of interest. Absorbed with the sales-pitch, the salesperson often forgets the customer!

**“The Four Parents:” Children Label Their Parents**

In the days of the patriarchal regime, we allowed ourselves to categorize our children harshly, accepting only one as positive – the wise one.

The simple, the wicked and the one who knows how to ask questions had to swallow hard and hide their sense of being insulted . . .

Now in our days no child is identified as “the offspring of the parent” and often the parent is identified as “the parent of that child.” We have arrived at an era not of patriarchy or matriarchy but the rule of children. In our age it is then miraculous that our dear, delightful children don’t divide us up and categorize us. At the best, we would be rated “naive or simple minded parents” or “parents who don’t know how to respond to a question.” (Israel Eldad, “The Victory of the Wise Son”)

**The Pitfalls of Labelling**

I instinctively recoil from static stereotypes that label persons simplistically. Therefore, I choose to interpret the midrash of the four children as a diverse set of strategies for addressing four different facets of each and every child. Each personality combines these facets in different ways. For example, the wise and the rebellious facets can be combined for evil. Then the cunning mind is used to inflict pain on one’s parents. Alternatively, the combination can produce a revolutionary chalutz (pioneer) seeking not just to undermine the traditional order but to create new frameworks of meaning. This requires an intelligence which is not conservative like the traditional “wise child” but which looks beyond the horizon, beyond the existing laws and their pat rationale.

(Yaariv Ben Aharon, Kibbutz author)

**Questioning Our Wisdom**

The truly wise question the wisdom of others because they question their own wisdom as well, the foolish, because it is different from their own.

Rabbi Leopold Stein, Journey into the Self (Germany, d. 1882)
The Four Children

1. The Haggadah offers us educational advice about intergenerational storytelling. The midrash of the Four Children invites us to distinguish different character types and to suggest different approaches to our offspring. 

Consider the artistic interpretations of the Four Children, and compare and contrast them.

BLESSED be God
Blessed be He
Blessed be the Giver of the Torah to the people Israel
Blessed be He.

THE TORAH alludes to Four Children:
One Wise, One Wicked, One Simple,
One Who Does Not Know How to Ask.

2. The Rabbis turn the commandment of “v’heegadta” (you shall tell) into a mitzvah of dialogue – with give and take on both sides. Successful dialogue means that each side, and especially the side anxious to “pass on the message,” be keenly attentive to what the other is saying and feeling – to the particular personality and his or her needs.

Istavan Zador, Four Children (Budapest, 1924)
The Longest Seder: The Five Rabbis of Bnai B’rak

A TALE OF Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar son of Azarya, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon: they were reclining at the Seder in Bnai B’rak, and they spent the whole night long telling the story of the going out of Egypt, until their pupils came and said to them: “Our masters, it is time to recite the morning Sh’mah!”

Recalling the Exodus Every Night

RABBI ELAZAR son of Azarya said: “Even though I am like a man of seventy, I had never understood why the going out from Egypt should be mentioned at night-time, until ben Zoma explained it to me from the verse, ‘That you may remember the day when you came out of Egypt all the days of your life’ (Deuteronomy 16:3).

‘The days of your life’ means just the days! BUT ‘All the days of your life’ means the nights as well!”

However the Rabbis explain:

“The days of your life’ means this life!
BUT ‘All the days of your life’ means the days of the Messiah as well!”

Personal Recollections: “My Most Unusual Seder”

| The Seder is as much a family renewal ceremony as a remembrance of ancient Egypt. Sharing family memories with the younger members as well as involving the guests, who may feel homesick, will contribute to the bonding of all participants. | 1. Ask the participants, especially the guests, to share a special Seder memory from home or from their most unusual Seder. (See The Leader’s Guide, pp. 47-54 for great Seders in Jewish history). | 2. Ask the participants, especially the oldest ones, to recall their best or their worst moment at the old family Seder. (For example, the Seder when I had stage fright in the middle of the four questions). |
The Rabbis as Storytellers

Shmuel’s Story: “We were slaves”

When, in time to come, your children ask you: “What is the meaning of the decrees, laws, and rules that Adonai our God has enjoined upon you?” You shall say to your children: “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and Adonai freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Adonai produced before our eyes great and awful signs and wonders in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; and God freed us from there, so that God could take us and give us the land that had been promised on oath to our ancestors” (Deut. 6:20-23).

What if

If God hadn’t taken our ancestors out of Egypt, then we would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt, along with our children, and our children’s children.

Even if all of us were wise, all of us discerning, all of us veteran scholars, and all of us knowledgeable in Torah, it would still be a mitzvah for us to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

The more and the longer one expands and embellishes the story, the more commendable.

(Now adults are invited to retell the Exodus story in their own words, or to read aloud one story about Moshe, p. 87-90.)
In Search of the Four Answers

As often happens after the youngest child recites the four questions, the family and guests applaud but do not bother to answer the questions. Since a young child’s questions should not go unanswered, we shall present one answer to each, but there are many more answers.

ON ONE HAND, the matza and the maror belong to the menu of the slaves and the oppressed:

1. **Why eat plain matza which is hard to digest?**
   Poor laborers and slaves are fed matza not only because it is cheap but because it is filling and requires a long digestion period. The diet was designed by the oppressor to exploit the people efficiently.

2. **Why eat raw, bitter vegetables?**
   Maror is eaten plain only by the most oppressed workers who are given little time to prepare their meals. With more time they would have made these herbs into a tasty salad.

ON THE OTHER HAND, dipping and reclining typify the manners of the leisure class in Roman times:

3. **Why dip twice before eating?**
   On Seder night we are obligated to dip twice – karpas in salt water and maror in charoset – before the meal begins. Even today, finger foods dipped in tangy sauces are typical hors d’œuvres with cocktails (the first cup of wine) at banquets.

4. **Why recline on pillows while drinking wine?**
   The body language of the free reflects their ease and comfort. Reclining on sofas or pillows, everyone – big and small alike – experiences the freedom of the upper classes. On Seder night these foods and these table manners are props and stage directions in the script acted out by all. (based on Don Isaac Abrabanel, Zevach Pesach, Spain, 15th C.)

“Izzy, Did You Ask a Good Question Today?”

**Isidor I. Rabi**, the Nobel laureate in physics was once asked, “Why did you become a scientist, rather than a doctor or lawyer or businessman, like the other immigrant kids in your neighborhood?”

“My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: ‘Nu? Did you learn anything today?’ But not my mother. She always asked me a different question. ‘Izzy,’ she would say, ‘Did you ask a good question today?’ That difference – asking good questions – made me become a scientist.” (Donald Sheff, New York Times, Jan. 19, 1988)

It is an old saying: Ask a Jew a question, and the Jew answers with a question. Every answer given arouses new questions. The progress of knowledge is matched by an increase in the hidden and mysterious.

(Rabbi Leo Baeck, Judaism and Science, Germany, 1949)

“A wise person’s question is half the answer.”

(Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, Spain, 1050)
1. **Pour** the second cup for everyone and let the younger children sing “Ma Nishtana.”

### Ma Nishtana

**How is this night** different from all other nights?

**On all** other nights, we eat either leavened bread or matza, but on this night we eat only matza.

**On all** other nights, we eat other kinds of vegetables, but on this night we eat maror (bitter herbs).

**On all** other nights, we need not dip our vegetables even once, but on this night we dip twice.

**On all** other nights, we eat either sitting upright or reclining, but on this night we all recline.

2. Some people distribute nuts and candies to reward the children’s curiosity.

### Ma Nishtana

**How is this night** different from all other nights?

*Ma nish-ta-na ha-laai-la ha-zeh,*

*mee-kol ha-lei-lot?*

*She-b’chol ha-lei-lot,*

*anu och-leen,*

*cha-metz u-matza*

*Ha-laai-la ha-zeh, ku-lo matza.*

*She-b’chol ha-lei-lot*

*anu och-leen sh’ar y’ra-kot,*

*Ha-laai-la ha-zeh maror.*

*She-b’chol ha-lei-lot*

*ein anu mat-bee-leen,*

*a-fee-lu pa-am achat*

*Ha-laai-la ha-zeh, shtei-p’ameem.*

*She-b’chol ha-lei-lot*

*anu och-leen,*

*bein yo-shveen*

*u-vein m’su-been*

*Ha-laai-la ha-zeh,*

*ku-la-nu m’su-been.*
A Passover Skit

In Egypt the Jews ate quickly and anxiously because they were nervous about the plague of the first born and they were expecting their imminent departure into freedom. Today Jews of Africa and Asia customarily act out the Exodus itself dressing their children (or a dramatically inclined adult) in baggy clothes, a scarf or hat, hiking boots, a walking stick, a belt with a canteen and, most important, the afikoman wrapped in one’s clothes on the shoulder (or perhaps in a backpack).

Try sending the youngest children out of the room (or the house) with a bag of props and the help of an adult to prepare this dialogue. Here is a semi-traditional script that may be used by the “actors” at the Seder.

Knock on the door

Adults - Who’s there?
Children - Moshe, Aaron, and Miriam.

Adults - Come in. Tell us about your journey!
Children - We have just arrived from Egypt where we were slaves to Pharaoh. He made us do such hard work. [Improvise about how bad it was.]

Adults - How did you escape?
Children - God sent Moshe and Aaron to tell Pharaoh: “Let my people go.” When he refused, God sent 10 plagues. [Improvise describing some of the plagues.]
Finally God brought the most awful plague on the first born of Egypt. Then Pharaoh was really scared, so he kicked us out.

Adults - Why are you dressed like that? What is on your shoulder?
Children - We escaped in the middle of the night and had no time to let the dough for our bread rise. The dough that we wrapped in our cloaks and slung over our shoulders turned to matza in the heat of the sun.

Adults - Tell us about your adventures.
Children - Pharaoh changed his mind after releasing us and chased us to the edge of the Red Sea. We would have been caught for sure, but then God split the sea. [Describe how it felt.]

Adults - Where are you going now?
Children - To Jerusalem.
All - La-shana ha-ba-ah Bee’Yerushalayeem!
Maggid: Ha Lachma Anya

Telling the Story: ‘This is the Bread of Poverty and Persecution’

1. **The heart of the Seder** is “Maggid” from the term “Haggadah” meaning storytelling. In words but also in drama we retell the Exodus, beginning with an Aramaic explanation of the origin of matza.

2. **Remove** the cloth covering the matzot so that they are in plain view during the telling of the story, the Maggid. **Raise** the three matzot and point out the broken middle matza. Now the afikoman, the second half of the middle matza, is hidden until dessert.

3. **Some Rabbis** require the Seder plate as well as the matzot to be lifted up, as if they were about to be removed from the table even before the meal has begun. This was originally designed to arouse the children to ask questions.

4. Many Jews from **African-Asian countries** open the Maggid with a **Passover skit**. Experiment with the script (provided on p. 13). **Morrocan Jews** pass the matzot over everyone’s head while reciting Ha Lachma Anya. Some people open the door at this point, as if to offer hospitality to anyone without a Seder.

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**Ha Lachma Anya**

**THIS IS THE BREAD** of poverty and persecution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. As it says in the Torah “seven days shall you eat . . . matzot – the bread of poverty and persecution” (Deut. 16:3) so that you may “remember that you were a slave in Egypt . . .” (Deut. 16:12).

**LET ALL** who are hungry, come and eat

**LET ALL** who are in need, come and share the Pesach meal.

**THIS YEAR** we are still here – Next year, in the land of Israel.

**THIS YEAR** we are still slaves – Next year, free people.

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Ha la-ch-ma an-ya
Dee-acha-lu av-ha-ta-na
B’ar-ah d’meeetz-ra-yeem.

Kol deech-feen, yei-tei v’ yei-chol,
Kol dee-tzreech, yei-tei v’ yee-fsach.

Ha-sha-ta ha-cha,
L’sha-na ha-ba-ah
be-ar-ah d’yis-rael.

Ha-sha-ta ha-dei,
L’sha-na ha-ba-ah
B’nei cho-reen.

---
The word “Karpas” derives from the Greek “Karpos” meaning fruit of the soil. The historical origins of dipping Karpas at the Seder reflect the accepted cuisine of the Greco-Roman symposium. Metaphorically, Karpas, the spring vegetable, represents both the historic birth of Israel out of the womb of Egypt and the rebirth of nature renewed each spring. According to Philo and to Rabbi Joshua the original birthday of nature – the Creation – occurred at Pesach-time, not Rosh Hashana. Similarly, the Italian name for spring _prima-vera_ and the French _printemps_ preserve the sense of the return to the original “first time” of the world._Spring_ (old English) is originally applied to the place of origin from which a stream arises. Later it was applied to the season, the “spring of the year.”
Urchatz

The First Handwashing

1. **The ritual handwashing** prepares us for eating finger foods, Karpas, the hors d’oeuvres of the Pesach banquet. It sanctifies the act of eating.

2. **Ask for two volunteers:** one to carry a pitcher of water and to pour water over each guest’s hands, and one to carry a basin and a towel. No blessing is said for this handwashing.

Karpas

The First Dipping — Spring Greens

1. **Distribute Karpas** (a vegetable) and dip it in salt water, while reciting the appropriate blessing. Some Jews dip in charoset.

2. **While some** medieval rabbis strictly forbid eating more than an olive’s size of parsley for Karpas, you may wish to

For vegetables (like celery, parsley, or potatoes):

**BLESSED ARE YOU**, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Ba-ruch ata Adonai,
Elo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam,
bo-rei pree ha-ada-ma.

Yachatz

Breaking the Matza

1. **Breaking the Matza** is one of many ritual acts that turn the food of the Seder into a symbol of meaning.

2. **Count off** the matzot from top to bottom: 1, 2, 3, naming them, if you wish, “Cohen,” “Levi” and “Yisrael” (the three ritual classes of the Jewish people).

   The top matza is for the usual blessing over bread (motzi). Tonight that blessing is recited over matza.

   The bottom matza is for the Hillel sandwich (korech) made with matza, maror, and charoset.

3. **Break the middle** matza in two and explain that this is for a dual purpose: the bigger portion is to be hidden for the “afikoman” and eaten when retrieved from the children for dessert. It will be the last taste of food at the Seder. The smaller portion will be eaten with the top matza when we say the special blessing over matza at the beginning of the meal.
**From Rags to Riches: A Folktales**

IRAQI JEWS tell the tale that in one country the king was always chosen in a special way. When the old king died, a bird called the “bird of good fortune” would be released. On whomsoever’s head it landed, the people would place the crown making him their next ruler.

Once the bird of good fortune landed on the head of a slave. That slave had been a simple musician who entertained at the master’s parties. His costume consisted of a feathered cap and a belt made of the hooves of sheep.

When the slave became king, he moved into the palace and wore royal robes. However, he ordered that a shack (a kind of sukkah) be constructed next to the palace and that his old hat, belt and drum be stored there along with a giant mirror.

The new king was known for his kindness and love for all his people – rich and poor, free and slave. Often he would disappear into his little shack. Once he left its door open and the cabinet ministers saw him don his feathered hat, put on his old belt and dance and drum before the mirror. They found this very strange and asked the king:

“After all, you are a king! You must maintain your dignity!”

The king replied:

“Once I was a slave and now I’ve become a king. From time to time I want to remind myself that I was once a slave lest I grow arrogant and treat with disdain my people and you, my ministers.”

(The English term, “auspicious day” or “inauguration day” preserves an echo of the Roman custom of consulting the flight of birds as an “augur” for the future.)

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**On Saturday night:**

Havdalah is the blessing over the distinction between Shabbat and the weekdays. The light of the fire is blessed using the festival candles already lit. (No special Havdalah candle or spice box are necessary):

[Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the lights of fire.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who differentiates between the holy and the secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the other nations, between the seventh day and the six days of creation, between the sanctity of Shabbat and the sanctity of Yom Tov (the festivals). You sanctified the people of Israel with Your holiness.

Blessed are You, Adonai, who differentiates between the holiness of Shabbat and the holiness of Yom Tov.]
**BLESSED ARE YOU**, Adonai
our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who creates the fruit of the vine.

**BLESSED ARE YOU**, Adonai our God, Ruler of the
Universe, who has chosen us from among the nations
and the languages, sanctifying us by your mitzvot.
Lovingly, You have given us [Shabbat for rest and] festivals
for happiness, including today –
[the Shabbat and] the Holiday of the
Matzot, the season of our liberation,
a sacred day to gather together and to
commemorate the Exodus from
Egypt. For You have chosen us and
sanctified us among the nations.
You have granted us [lovingly the
Shabbat and] joyfully the
holidays. Blessed are You,
Adonai, who sanctifies [the
Shabbat and] the people of
Israel and the festivals.

**BLESSED ARE YOU**, Adonai our God, Ruler
of the Universe, who
has kept us alive and
brought us to this happy
moment in our lives.

Now be seated, recline com-
fortably leaning to the left on a
pillow, and drink most of the cup.

*First Cup
On Saturday night only, insert Havdalah here (page 9) before Shehecheeyanu.*

*Shehecheeyanu.*

Tully Filmus
Kadesh: Sanctifying Time

**Kiddush**

1. *The Kiddush* sanctifies not the wine, but the holiday. Pesach is dedicated to – “Remember the *Day of your Exodus from Egypt*” (Ex.13:3). (On Shabbat we add the texts in shaded boxes and in parentheses in the body of the Kiddush to commemorate the Creation of the World).

2. *Offer to pour* the wine or grape juice into someone else’s cup. In turn each one is served by another as befits royalty. Having attained the high status of freedom we celebrate it in style, preferably with red wine, because the rabbis considered it more elegant.

3. *Stand* to recite the Kiddush, then *recline* to the left to drink the wine, as befits Greco-Roman nobles who also reclined to the left at symposia (intellectual drinking banquets). If there are no pillows on the chairs, ask the children to bring as many as possible.

"Don’t Cry over Spilt Wine"

A PUBLIC MESSAGE from the Hosts to All Their Guests: “Don’t Cry over Spilt Wine.”

Rabbi Akiba Eiger (Germany, 18th C.) used to be very strict about the mitzvah of hospitality especially on Pesach. Once when he was leading a large Seder, one of the guests happened to spill a cup of wine. The clean white tablecloth was stained. Seeing the guest’s enormous embarrassment, Rabbi Eiger himself bumped the table spilling his own glass of wine. He exclaimed: “Oh, this table must be off-balance.”

**On Shabbat rise and recite from Genesis 2:1-3:**

[There was evening and there was morning, and the sixth day was over. The sky and the earth and all their contents were completed. On the seventh day God completed all the work. God ceased (shabbat) from all activity. God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on that day God ceased from all the work of creation.]
# Signposts for the Seder

1. **The official opening** of the Seder should begin by welcoming all the guests. Make sure to introduce all the participants, so that everyone will be made to feel part of the Jewish family – especially on a night when we recall what it felt like to be strangers in the land of Egypt. You may ask all the participants to say their Hebrew names as well.

2. **We review** briefly the order of the Seder by singing the medieval poem by Rabbenu Shmuel of Falaise (France) that summarizes the Signposts of the Seder (“Kadesh Urchatz”).

3. **You may wish** to give credit to all who have helped prepare this Seder – its foods, its readings and its activities.

## The 15 Steps of the Seder

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<th>Signpost</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>UrChatz</td>
<td>First handwashing (without a blessing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karpas</td>
<td>First dipping: vegetable and salt water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yachatz</td>
<td>Breaking the middle matza</td>
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<td>Maggid</td>
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<td>Rachta</td>
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<td>Matza</td>
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<td>Maror</td>
<td>Second dipping: maror in charoset.</td>
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<td>Korech</td>
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<td>Shulchan Orech</td>
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<td>Tzafun</td>
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<td>Barech</td>
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<td>Hallel</td>
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<td>Nirtza</td>
<td>Concluding prayer and folk songs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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The Agenda of the Seder

- Candle Lighting
- Blessing the Children
- Sign Posts

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The Agenda of the Seder

- Candle Lighting
- Blessing the Children
- Sign Posts
Blessing the Children

The custom of blessing one’s offspring originates with Jacob and his grandchildren. On the eve of Yom Kippur, on Shabbat and holidays many parents lay their hands on the head of each child, blessing them with the priests’ benediction.

A Private Moment of Intimacy with our Children

Rabbi Jacob Emden of Prague (19th c.) recommends that one place both hands on the child’s head, just as Moshe blessed Joshua his successor with two hands – without reservation, without jealousy. The priests also bless the people with two open-faced hands as an expression of love. “Everyone can also take this opportunity to add their own personal blessing to each child according to one’s gift of eloquence” (Siddur Bet El). There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other, wings.

For male children:

MAY GOD make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

(Genesis 48:20 from Jacob’s blessing for his grandchildren)

For female children:

MAY GOD make you like Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

(See Ruth 4:11, the women’s blessing for Ruth the convert)

For all:

MAY GOD bless you and keep you.

May God’s face shine upon you and favor you.

May God’s face turn to you and grant you shalom.

(Numbers 6:24-26, the priestly benediction)

Who is God? Well it is an invisible person and he lives up in heaven. I guess up in outer space he made the earth and the heaven and the stars and the sun and the people. He made light he made day he made night. He has such powerful eyes he doesn’t have millions and thousands and billions and he can still see us when we’re bad. He started all the plants growing. To me I think of him who makes flowers & green grass & the blue sky & the yellow sun. God is everywhere & I don’t know how he could do it.
Candle Lighting

1. **Lighting the candles** marks the beginning of Pesach as well as the end of the frantic work of preparation. It contributes to the transition to sanctity.

2. **Before sunset**, it is traditional to light at least two candles placed on or near the table. Some families light one candle for each family member. Others prepare two candles for each woman over the age of bat mitzvah. Ideally, the candles should be longer lasting than usual, so they will provide light for the length of the Seder.

3. **Usually on Pesach** one first recites the blessing and then lights the candles without covering one’s eyes. However, when Seder night occurs on Friday night, then one lights the candles first, covers one’s eyes and then recites the blessing.

**BLESSING ARE YOU**, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who sanctified us by commanding us to light the [Shabbat and] holiday candles.

Many say the following when lighting the candles, while others recite it together with Kiddush (There is no need to recite this blessing twice).

**BLESSING ARE YOU**, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive and brought us to this happy moment in our lives.

**A Traditional Woman’s Prayer at Candle Lighting**

| May it be Your will, God of our ancestors, that You grant my family and all Israel a good and long life. | opportunity to raise my children and grandchildren to be truly wise, lovers of God, people of truth, who illuminate the world with Torah, good deeds and the work of the Creator. Give me the opportunity to raise my children and grandchildren to be truly wise, lovers of God, people of truth, who illuminate the world with Torah, good deeds and the work of the Creator. Please hear my prayer at this time. Regard me as a worthy descendant of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, our mothers, and let my candles burn and never be extinguished. Let the light of your face shine upon us. Amen. |