5766/2006

Liberation and Occupation

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On other nights, in other years, we remember Mitzrayim – the narrow place, the place of oppression – as a distant memory recalled for the sake of our ancestors, to remind us from where we have come. But this night, this year, we know ourselves to be still in Mitzrayim.

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On other nights, in other years, Pesach brings the joy of liberation close to us. But this year, what can make this so?

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On other nights, in other years, we tell the story of when we were slaves, and rejoice in our freedom. But this year, how can we not also tell the story of the people of Mitzrayim, watching in horror and fear at what their government was doing and at the horrible price they would pay for Pharaoh’s arrogance and hard heart?
Leader:  Tonight, all around the world, Jews and our friends gather in honor of Pesach, the festival of liberation. We are also gathered in honor of Pesach, but with some bitterness and cynicism about what “liberation” means as we watch our government claim to be liberating Iraqis, Afghans, and others. And so, in fine Jewish and feminist tradition, we come together with others to ask questions, to search for answers, to tell stories, and to share our fears and our strengths, and to look to all of our various ancestors for models of how to get ourselves and others out of Mitzrayim.

We begin with closing our eyes, breathing together, letting our minds and hearts catch up with bodies and find a quiet space.

*Draw to your mind your ancestors – genetic or spiritual. Imagine them in the different places they lived, the lands and seas they traveled, by choice and for their lives, in freedom and enslaved.*

Imagine them holding what was precious to them, imagine this gift coming down through the generations to you. Imagine the places they were broken and take a moment to feel the bodies of your ancestors, their stitches and their scars.

Thank them for the parts of your heritage you love and forgive them for the pain. Now visualize yourself as the ancestor of the generations to come. Accept their gratitude for what you can do, and their forgiveness for what you cannot.

All:  We invite into the room the spirits of our ancestors. We honor you and we forgive you. Thank you for bringing us to this moment. May our lives contribute to the healing of all of our peoples, to our beloved planet, and to all of the worlds.

All:

Nizkor et masoret hadorot v’nishzor bah et sarigey hayeynu

Recalling the generations, we weave our lives into the tradition
Reader: Tonight we also honor in particular the recent and current generations of Jewish and non-Jewish wimmin whose ongoing dialogue, reinterpretations and inventions enable us to love the heritage and legacy that has been passed to us, and endeavor to change it at the same time.

Reader: At the beginning of our story tonight, women worked across their differences to free the Hebrew people. The first to scorn oppression, women took the initiative which led to liberation. In times of distant and recent memory, and today, such women have been our models, showing us the way to gain freedom for ourselves and for others, for our own peoples and for the whole world.

<call out women’s names>

Reader: As we begin our journey together this seder night, we invite these women to join us in all of their diversity: the leaders, the dreamers, the organizers and the anarchists, the warriors and the peacemakers, the bitches and the witches and the shameless hussies.

Sing: We’re shameless hussies and we don’t give a damn
We’re loud, we’re raucous and
we’re fighting for our rights, and our sex, and our need to be free
Men call us names that are nasty and lewd
like lesbian, man-hater, witch and prostitute
what a laugh, because most of it’s true.
This patriarchal image of our sex must die
through centuries of silence we are screaming into action
We’re shameless hussies and we don’t give a damn…..

Reader: In honor of the sparks of liberation created by these women and ourselves, we say together the blessing over the festival lights:

<light the white candles >

All:

חַכַּה אֲשֶׁר לְכֶם פְּלַמְלָקָה וַחֲקַיּוֹתָה וַחֲקַיּוֹתָה קָדְשָׁה
חַכַּה אֲשֶׁר לְכֶם פְּלַמְלָקָה וַחֲקַיּוֹתָה וַחֲקַיּוֹתָה קָדְשָׁה

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu, ruach ha’olam, asher kidshatnu
b’mitzvoteha v’izivatnu lehadlik ner shel yom tov.

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who is within us, spirit of the world,
who infuses our lives with holiness
and inspires us to light the festival lights.

Pesach with Otter and Elliott       Philadelphia, PA   2006
Reader: Tonight we also light a rainbow of candles, for many blessings of our lives, and for the special blessing of this gathering, for the richness we create when we choose for ourselves who will make up our family, and create for ourselves the meanings of our traditions.

<light one of the rainbow candles for each blessing>

All: (one blessing for each candle)

Radiant is the light in the world
Radiant is the light in the creatures of the world
Radiant is the light of peace
Radiant is the light of justice
Radiant is the light of community
Radiant is the light of Pesach

Reader: And so, in gratitude that we have all arrived at this place and time to share this seder, and in celebration of the coming of spring, and in honor of the new understanding and traditions that we will create together this evening, we say the Shehechiayatnu, the blessing for beginnings.

All:

ברוחה את שבחיה ברחינה רוח הגלות
שותיחנה וכימיתו והחייתו כלמזו הוה.

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu, ruach ha’olam, shehechiyatnu v’kimatnu, v’higiyatnu la’zman hazeh.

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who is within us, spirit of the world, who has kept us in life, sustained us, and helped us to reach this moment.
Urchatz – washing hands

**Reader:** We wash each others’ hands, casting a circle and readying ourselves for this ceremony. Urchatz also reminds us of the efforts of generations of Jewish wimmin to purify and ready our houses for Pesach, work too long not understood as a sacred act of creation. As the water flows over each woman’s hands, she should name one thing she wants to wash away before beginning this ritual. The group will respond to her:

**All:** *Kayn Yihee Ratzon – So be it.*

< we wash each others’ hands. >

**Reader:** And now, in the spring, the season of Pesach, when the world awakens from winter rest and puts forth new green and flowering things of all colors, we begin telling the story of Pesach. Jewish tradition honors the delicious and the sensual along with the mystical and esoteric, reminding us to honor the delights of the earth.

Blessing for Flowers

**All:**

ברוחה את שכינה בחכמה רוח חכמה שĽלום שĽלום וĽלום המであること בו בריאה וĽלום מעבר טובים כל טובים כל טובים כל טובים כל טובים

בְּרוּךְ אָדָם

*B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu, ruach ha’olam, shelo hesair b’olamo davar, u’vara vo briyote tovote v’elanote tovim l’hanote bahem benai adam.*

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who is within us, spirit of the world, who has made the world lacking nothing, and has produced beautiful creatures and trees which delight us.
Karpas – Spring Greens

Reader: The Karpas is a symbol of spring fruits. The tradition of dipping the Karpas in salt water has several interpretations. Traditionally, it symbolizes the tears we shed when we were slaves in Mitzrayim. Today it also symbolizes the tears we shed when we are exhausted, afraid, hopeless, and grieving. The Karpas and salt water are also the earth and the salt sea, joined together to sustain life.

Blessing for Water

ברכה את עין חיים וחים

B‘rucha at eyn mayim chayim

Blessed is the source of living waters

Blessing for Salt

Reader: Our sage Elana Dykewoman teaches: I had a dream: I spilled a sack of salt in the road. No matter, my friends said, we don’t need salt. But I remembered my grandmother sending me little burlap bags of salt from Florida, and I said: that’s the trouble with us. Salt is an electrolyte, we need it to conduct electricity, the good feelings between us. No wonder we don’t have the connections we need. We don’t have enough salt.

< each turn to the woman next to you and say: “You are the salt of the earth. Pass it on!” >

Blessing for Karpas

All:

ברכה את שלכת בחקמי רווח העלים

B‘rucha at Shekhinah, b‘tocheynu ruach ha‘olam
borayt p’ri ha‘adamah.
Blessed is the Source of Life which brings forth the fruits of the earth.

< dip and eat Karpas >
Kadesh – The Cup of Resistance

Reader: The end of Jewish slavery in Mitzrayim began with an act of noncompliance by those with no social power – the midwives Shifrah and Puah refused to cooperate with the slaughter of Hebrew babies. Then Miriam, acting on her vision, wove together a conspiracy of women to plant her baby brother in a place of privilege from which he might be able to free his people. Moses’ own journey to liberation began when he refused to treat the beating of a slave as the natural right of the powerful. Throughout time, freedom has started as refusal and resistance, as assertions of connectedness and of common humanity.

Reader: This year, our first cup of wine is dedicated to all of the midwives of freedom – to everyone who chooses to be more afraid of injustice than of fear. We do not know if Shifrah and Puah were Egyptian or Hebrew, and this is an important lesson: refusing to cooperate with any act of evil is our task, no matter our race, gender, class, or tribe.

Reader: And so we dedicate this cup of wine to Shifrah and Puah, to Yocheved and Miriam, to Pharaoh’s daughter, to Women in Black all around the world who stand in vigils every week. We also dedicate this cup to all of the Refusers in Israel – the reservists who have publicly said they will no longer commit war crimes, the young men and women who are publicly refusing to be drafted and so are in jail this Festival of Liberation, and those who, quietly, avoid service in the ways they can – all of those who, like Moses, are refusing to participate in following the orders of the powerful.

Reader: We dedicate this cup, too, to those in Israel fighting for justice and an end to militarism, and to those in Palestine bringing their communities together to resist the Occupation, and to the people from all over the world who go to Israel and Palestine to bring aid and bear witness.

Reader: And we dedicate this cup to ourselves and to each other for our every act of courage and resistance!

Pesach with Otter and Elliott     Philadelphia, PA   2006
B'rucha at Shekhinah, b'tocheynu ruach ha’olam, borayt p’ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who brings forth the fruit of the vine.

< drink wine >

All:

You’ve got to stand up, and speak your mind
You’ve got to do it all by yourself
But once you’ve made the move, you’ll feel much better
Cause there are millions, who’ve gone before you
They’re out there waiting, to take your hand
To join their strength with yours to make this a better world

Questions, Questions, and More Questions

Reader: Before we begin opening ourselves up by asking questions, we consider who we are, what our relationship is to the stories we tell tonight. Traditionally, the seder has done this through the description of four sons with different attitudes toward Jewish tradition. Tonight, we describe four adults who reflect the difficult questions we ask ourselves about what it means to live as citizens of Mitzrayim.

Reader: The Angry Adult – violent and oppressive things are happening to me, to the people I love and to people I don't even know. Why can't we make the people in power hurt the way we are all hurting?

Reader: Hatred and violence can never overcome hatred and violence. Only love and compassion can transform our world.
Cambodian Buddhist monk Maha Ghosananda, whose family was killed by the Khmer Rouge, has written:

It is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it. Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions, but means rather that we use love in all our negotiations. It means that we see ourselves in the opponent – for what is the opponent but a being in ignorance, and we ourselves are also ignorant of many things. Therefore, only loving kindness and right-mindfulness can free us.

Reader: The Ashamed Adult – *I’m so ashamed of what my people are doing that I have no way of dealing with it.*

Reader: We must acknowledge our feelings of guilt, shame, and disappointment, while ultimately using the fire of injustice to fuel us in working for change. We must also remember the amazing people in all cultures who are working to dismantle oppression together everyday.

Marianne Williamson said: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of god. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Reader: The Fearful Adult – *Why should I care about "those people" when they don't care about me? If I share what I have, there won't be enough, and if I open myself to try to help, I will end up suffering.*
Reader: We must challenge the sense of scarcity that we have learned from capitalism and our histories of violence and oppression. If we change the way food, housing, education and resources are distributed, we could all have enough. If we learn to work with others, we do not have to be alone and afraid.

Martin Luther King said: "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever effects one directly affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality."

Reader: The Compassionate Adult – How can I struggle for justice with an open heart? How can we live in a way that builds the world we want to live in, without losing hope in the difficulty of the struggle?

Reader: This is the question that we answer with our lives. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: "Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy. And yet being alive is no answer to the problems of living. To be or not to be is not the question. The vital question is: how to be, and how not to be...to [struggle for justice] is to recollect passionately the perpetual urgency of this vital question."

Reader: Each of us bears in our own belly the angry one, the ashamed one, the frightened one, the compassionate one. Which of these children shall we bring to birth? Only if we can deeply hear all four of them can we truthfully answer the fourth question. Only if we can deeply hear all four of them can we bring to birth a child, and grow a people, who are truly wise.
The 4 Questions

Reader: All stories begin with questions. And so we begin tonight, with four questions about the symbols of our liberation. All are free to ask, free to question, free to learn the answers of tradition, free to add new answers of our own!

Mah nish-ta-nah ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, mi-kol ha-lay-lot, mi-kol ha-lay-lot
Sheh-b’khol ha-lay-lot, a-nu okh-leen, ha-metz u’matzah, ha-metz u’matzah
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ku-lo ma-tzah (repeat line)

Sheh-b’khol ha-lay-lot, a-nu okh-leen, sh’ar y’ra-kot, sh’ar y’ra-kot
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ma-ror (repeat line)

Sheh-b’khol ha-lay-lot, ayn a-nu mat-bee-leen, a-fee-lu pa-ahm eh-khat, a-fee-lu pa-ahm eh-khat
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, sh’tay f’a-meem (repeat line)

Sheh-b’khol ha-lay-lot, a-nu okh-leen, bayn yosh-veen u-vayn m’su’been, bayn yosh-veen u-vayn m’su’been
Ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ha-lai-lah ha-zeh, ku-la-nu m’su’been (repeat line)

Pesach with Otter and Elliott  Philadephia, PA  2006
All: Why is this night different from all other nights?

Reader: On other nights we eat bread leavened or unleavened:
All: on this night unleavened only!

Reader: On other nights we eat all kinds of herbs:
All: on this night, bitter herbs!

Reader: On other nights we do not dip herbs at all:
All: on this night, twice!

Reader: On other nights we eat sitting upright or reclining:
All: on this night, all recline.

Many Answers

Reader: We first look for answers to our questions in the symbols we use to remind us of what our ancestors – living in bondage and oppression and working towards freedom – saw, smelled, touched, and ate.

Beitzah – The Egg of Life

Reader: The egg symbolizes life and growth and the cyclical nature of living. It is both a symbol of life and of death – the egg is traditionally eaten by mourners upon return from the cemetery – reminding us that what is born must die, and what dies nourishes life in some form or other.

Reader: Eggs also teach us a way to be able to truly come out of Mitzrayim – living under oppression can trap us in the hard shell we build to survive. But we have within us the tools we need to break free, like a chick has an egg tooth, and we can use these tools to learn to live as free people.

< eat eggs >
Pesach – the shank bone

Reader: The shank bone represents both the lambs that were traditionally sacrificed for the spring festival, and the lamb’s blood that was used to mark the houses of the Hebrews in Mitzrayim. Today, we too often think of sacrifice in emotional or financial terms, forgetting that it was a bloody, public action. In light of those sacrificed this year by the powerful to hold onto their power, Starhawk, writing from occupied Nablus, calls to us:

Reader: “And if I could, I would send you a bone. Not to call you to war, but away from it. Something you cannot avoid seeing, touching. Something to make the blood on our hands visible, unmistakable. A limb, a shoulder, a hunk of flesh dripping real blood, from the rubble beneath the bulldozer, the doorstep, from the child shot dead in the gunfight or buried under the house, from the bomb shelters of Baghdad and from the bloody busses of Tel Aviv. A bone red with blood to say:

All: This is what colonization requires: blood soaked sand, holy earth defiled with death, human sacrifice.”

The Olive – A New Symbol

Reader: This year, our seder plate has a new symbol – an olive. Why an olive?

Reader: Because, for slavery to truly be over, for a people to truly be free, we must have known that we can feed ourselves and our children, today, tomorrow, and into the following generations.

Reader: In the lands of Israel and Palestine, olive groves provide this security. When olive groves are destroyed, the past and the future are destroyed. Without economic security, a people can much more easily be conquered, or enslaved.
Reader: Since the beginning of this Intifada through this February, hundreds of thousands of olive and fruit trees have been destroyed in Palestine. Many have simply been uprooted and sold for a huge profit (to the seller) to Israelis and settlers. And so livelihood and wealth have gone, once again, from the powerless to the powerful.

Reader: And so this year, we eat an olive, to make real our understanding of what it means each time a bulldozer destroys a grove. Without the taste of olives, there will be no taste of freedom.

All:

בָּרוֹכָּה אַחַת שְׁפִיָּה בַּתוֹּפָהּ רוּחַ הָעֵלָה
בָּרוֹכָּה בְּרִי הָעֵלָה.

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu, ruach ha’olam, borayt p’ri ha-eitz

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who is within us, spirit of the world, who brings forth fruit from the trees

<eat olives>

Ha Lachma

All:

הָא לַחָמָא שֶבֶּא עָנָא יִי אָכַל שְׁפִיָּה בַּתוֹּפָהּ בָּרָא

Ha lachma anya di achalu av’hatana b’ara d’Mitzrayim.

Kol dichfin yeitei v’yeichol.
Kol ditzrich yeitei v’yifsach
All: This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Mitzrayim. Let all those who are hungry come and eat, all those who are in need, come and join the Passover meal. This year we are oppressed, next year may we be free.

Reader: This is Matzah, the bread of oppression and rebellion that our foremothers baked and ate at a time when they had to be organizing and preparing and resisting and running. There was no time for the bread to rise. Each year we eat matzah to remind ourselves of their struggle, and that our struggle continues.

Reader: When we bake in the fierce heat of our own personal Mitzrayim, mechanically and joylessly, as we do the dull and degrading tasks which are laid upon us by a patriarchal, violent, racist, woman hating society, then we are slaves. When we transform our matzah into journey bread and learn to turn our survival skills towards our goal, our dream, then we become free women.

All: (holding matzah) This is matzah, the bread of affliction.

Reader: For the times when we do not know which way to go but move forward anyway;

Reader: For the times when immediate action is required, and we are able to act swiftly;

Reader: For the times when immediate action is too easy an answer, and we wait and let the truth ripen;

Reader: For the times when we let our intuition guide us;

Reader: For the half-thought dreams, our visions, the farthest reaches of what we think we can become;

Reader: For movement, despite our fears, despite obstacles and delays, in times when movement means growth and life;

Reader: To all these times we dedicate this matzah.

All: This is matzah, the bread of affliction, but, carried out of Mitzrayim, the bread of liberation. Let all who are hungry come and taste freedom.
All:

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu ruach ha’olam, hamotziah lechem min ha’aretz.

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who brings forth bread from the earth.

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu ruach ha’olam, asher kidshatnu b’mitzvoteha, v’tzivatnu al achilat matzah.

Blessed are you who makes us holy with your mitzvot and requires us to eat matzah.

<eat matzah>

Yachatz

Reader: Eating matzah joins us with our own people and with all who are in need, with those imprisoned, those under occupation, those being bombed, and those forced to live in the streets.

All: For our liberation is bound up with the deliverance from bondage of people everywhere.
Reader: It is the custom to divide the middle Matzah in two. One part we keep here with the rest of the matzot. The second part, called the afikoman, we hide. When we hide the afikoman we are reminding ourselves that the Exodus from Mitzrayim was only the beginning of the process of redemption and that a part of our redemption is hidden and up to us to make manifest.

Reader: This year, we also break the matzah to acknowledge those who must flee their homes without even the time to make unrisen bread. In Palestine, families must flee with only a few moments notice and watch as their homes are destroyed. In our country, thousands of families have been torn apart when fathers are detained and deported, on no notice and with no recourse.

Reader: After the meal, we will hunt for the afikomen and the finder will demand a reward. When the hidden part is found, we will put the two halves together again, and this will be a sign that what is broken can be repaired through our hard and necessary work.

< hide the afikoman >

Maror

Reader: Now we each will take a bit of the bitter herb to fulfill the obligation this night to eat the bitter herb which represents and reminds us of the bitterness of slavery and oppression.

Reader: When our mouths are full of bitterness, our sage Susan Griffin reminds us: “where we see no images of justice, the word injustice reminds us of what we want.”

Maror

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu ruach ha’olam, asher kidshatnu b’mitzvoteha, v’tzivatnu al achilat maror.

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who makes us holy with your mitzvot and requires of us the eating of bitter herbs.

< eat maror >

Pesach with Otter and Elliott Philadelphia, PA 2006
Korech

**Reader:** We now eat the Matzah combined with the maror.

**Reader:** A wise woman asked: Why do we eat the matzah, which represents freedom, before the maror, which represents slavery? After all, the historical order was just the opposite.

**All:** Only after we had a taste of freedom could we begin to understand the full bitterness of being enslaved.

< eat matzah and maror >

Charoset

**All:** from the sage Marge Piercy--

Moist and red
the female treat
nothing at all like clay
for bricks, nothing
like mortar.
No, you are as sweet as
a mouth kissing,
You speak of pleasure
in the midst of remembered pain.
If much of what we must
recall is bitter, you
are the reminder that
joy too lights its candles
tonight in the mind.

<eat charoset>
Hillel Sandwich

Reader: Now we eat the matzah and maror combined with the charoset, which represents the sweetness of liberation and freedom from oppression. The pattern of our celebration is the mixture of the bitter and the sweet, sadness and joy, of tales of shame that end in praise. We learn that we will always carry with us the taste of having been in bondage, so that we will always celebrate the taste of freedom. We acknowledge the tragedies of our own time, and we sweeten this bitter taste with the thought of the liberation that is to come.

Reader: as our sage Hillel taught:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
But if I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now, when?

Reader: and as our sage Adrienne Rich expands:

And if not with others, how?

< eat matzah, maror and charoset >

(pour second cup of wine)

Maggid – The Story Begins

Reader: There are many questions. Now we begin to answer.

< Together we tell the story>
Plagues

Leader: The people of Mitzrayim suffered because of their leader, who is in part set up by an angry god eager to demonstrate his own superiority. In our story, all of this was necessary for freedom. Jews have been troubled by this for generations and generations, and so, before we drink to our liberation, we mark how the suffering diminishes our joy by taking a drop of wine out of our cup of joy for each of the ten plagues visited on the people of Mitzrayim:

- Blood
- Frogs
- Lice
- Wild beasts
- Murrain – a sickness of cows and oxen
- Boils
- Hailstones
- Locusts
- Darkness
- Murder of first-born children

Reader: This year we ask a hard question about these plagues. While it is one thing to talk of the suffering as if it were inevitable, it is another to think of what happened as collective punishment, as acts of violence against a people based on their identity, their nationality.

Reader: This year we also ask a hard question – is freedom at any price still worth it if the Jews are no longer the enslaved, but are the rulers creating a Mitzrayim for another people? What happens to us – as Jews and as US citizens – if our leadership rules by decree and violence, with a stiffened heart and an arrogant sense of ownership, self-righteousness, and superiority?

Reader: This year we take ten more drops from our own liberation for the plagues of violence and despair inflicted by the Israeli government in the name of claiming to protect Jews:
Readers:

- collective punishment of an entire people
- widespread destruction of homes and neighborhoods
- assassination of suspected militants and anyone around them
- establishing, tolerating, and encouraging armed settlements of extremists who live outside of civil law
- laying siege to towns, denying entire populations food, water, education, and work
- theft of resources – destroying the Palestinian economy, exploiting Palestinian labor, and stealing water, fertile land, and olive trees.
- false democracy – denying civil rights to all non-Jews through apartheid laws, while claiming to be a democracy
- erasing history – hiding and denying the ancient history and culture of Palestine to generations of Israeli and Palestinian children
- blockades and checkpoints – subjecting Palestinians to daily humiliation and violence by denying access to work, medical care, school, and seeing their families and loved ones.
- trading the bantustans of checkpoints and blockades for the creation of vast prison camps by surrounding territory with a 30 feet high, six feet thick wall, dotted with posts of guards who shoot to kill, a wall that cuts people off from their farm lands, their markets, schools, hospitals, wells, and futures.

Readers: Each drop of wine we pour is hope and prayer that people everywhere will cast out the plagues that threaten everyone, everywhere they are found, beginning in our own hearts:

- the making of war
- the teaching of hate and violence
- destruction of the earth
- perversion of justice and of government
- fomenting of violence and crime
- neglect of human needs
- oppression of nations and peoples,
- corruption of cultures
- subjugation of science and learning to fundamentalism
- erosion of personal freedoms

2nd Cup of Wine - The People of Mitzrayim

Reader: While Torah and history generally portray the people of Mitzrayim only as complicit in the enslavement of the Israelites, tonight we take a moment to honor the complexity of their position and experience. We know that some of them left Mitzrayim with the Israelites. We know that some gave to the fleeing slaves goods and riches to sustain them in their exodus. We pause to consider the citizens of Mitzrayim whose experiences of the transformation of their society remain among the stories NOT told.
Reader: What was it like for them to be suddenly facing a new future – with their lands and families and children and livestock ravaged by plague, friends and neighbors gone, a substantial labor force disappeared overnight, their military drowned in the sea, their leader defeated?

Reader: What can we imagine about these people? Were they also victims? Were they complicit? Were they resisters? Were they witnesses? We are reminded that there are still important lessons to be learned from this story, and new questions to be asked. This cup prompts us to reflect on our own experiences as citizens of a modern-day Mitzrayim. What story do we want our future generations to tell about us?

All:

ברכה אוח שלמה בהנהלת רוח חוקלה
בנחלת ערי הגלות.

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu ruach ha’olam, borayt p’ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who brings forth the fruit of the vine.

<finish story up through red sea and going into the desert>

Dayeinu

Reader: In traditional haggadot, the Dayeinu (meaning "it would have been sufficient") expresses gratitude for all that was done for our people from the time we fled Mitzrayim until the Temple was built in Israel -- that is, as we moved from slavery through the wilderness to the promised homeland.
Reader: In the spirit of Dayeinu, each of us is invited to share the name of those people to whom we are grateful for all they’ve done this year to lead the world out of Mitzrayim. After each individual speaks, we will all answer with "Dayeinu"

<names>

Reader: By explaining the Matzah, maror and pascal lamb, we have fulfilled the obligation of the traditional haggadah. However, in our battle for liberation as women and as lesbians, freedoms not imagined in the original haggadah, we continue to create new symbols and stories for our new struggles. And so the maggid grows, as it will until the last member of the last generation to teach hatred has passed from this beloved earth.

A Crust of Bread

Once, in the city of New York, my mother, my sisters, women friends and I were preparing for the Seder. I still remember the dry, hot smell of freshly baked Matzah, can still taste the tangy, sweet charoset that I licked from my fingers. We talked of Matzah and bitter herb while we worked, of the affliction of our ancestors, and of the many plagues God brought down on the people of Mitzrayim.

Such thoughts occupied our minds when my sister, Puah, walked in with the bad news.

Only a few days before, Puah had gone to speak to the most prominent Rabbi in New York, the Fabrente Rebbe.  
"Rabbi, I have a question of great importance to ask you." Puah was only a girl of about sixteen at the time, but she had the determined spirit that many twice or even three times her age don't reach.

"Ask, my daughter, ask," said the Rabbi.
"This is a difficult and unusual question."
"No question is too difficult or unusual for our Torah."

Now this Rabbi loved talking dearly, but he preferred to discuss questions like, what should one do if the tiniest piece of chometz falls into the stew, or how it was derived that we must eat a matzah the size of an olive. He did not enjoy discussing difficult philosophical or moral questions. He blew up when asked, and earned the title of the Fabrente Rabbi-- the fiery Rabbi.
"Rabbi, tell me what is the place of a lesbian in Judaism."

Naturally our good Rabbi did not expect such a question. He jumped from his seat and grabbed my sister's shoulders, which is forbidden to an orthodox man, but so excited was he, he failed to even notice.

"There is as much place for a lesbian in Judaism as for chometz at the Seder table."

And so angry was the Rabbi that he called the New York Post to tell them.

"There is as much place for lesbians in Judaism as for chometz, leavened bread, at the Seder table. That is what I, the great Fabrente Rabbi, say."

As Puah announced the Rebbe’s proclamation, we all stopped working. The sound of the tambourine, accompanying the chopping of the maror, the mixing of the charoset, the baking of the matzah stopped. We sat on the floor keening and weeping as our ancestors did, feeling like strangers in a strange land. We sat like that for many hours crying until my mother said, "Come, it is late. We must begin the Seder."

None of us wanted to rise.

This would be a Passover of mourning and not rejoicing, of slavery, not freedom. For as we would eat the Matzah, each of us would be thinking that our lesbian sister, Puah, had no place in Judaism, as chometz had no place at this Seder table.

We brought wine and Matzah to the table, and the Seder plate of bitter herb, charoset. My sister Puah was about to begin to ask the four questions. She seemed to brighten. She stood and lifted up her voice, and I thought I could hear Miriam calling the women to dance.

"Why is this night different from all other nights, and this Passover from all other Passovers? For until this Passover, there was no place for chometz on the Seder table, but this night, this Passover, there will be room for chometz, for a crust of bread. This Passover, there will be a place for lesbians in Judaism-- for it is said: There are pharaohs in every generation, and in every generation, a woman must leave her own Mitzrayim."

And with that, she placed a crust of bread on the Seder plate.

**Reader:** For Puah and for ourselves, we also have a piece of bread, chometz, on the seder plate, for all who have been condemned and excluded because of fear or ignorance. In doing this we hope that the distinctions we make between the sacred and the profane will always grow out of consideration and compassion, and that the justice we seek will never be limited only to ourselves.

Pesach with Otter and Elliott  Philadephia, PA  2006
All:

בברך את עין ההאים, מอย่างยิ่งר איומנות ו.Clampה,
שUIImage שיר חדש, מクトר התקומן עולמ.

N’vareykh et eyn hahayim, m’kor emunah v’tikvah,
ma’yan shirah hadashah, m’kor tikan olam.

Let us bless the source of life, source of faith and daring,
wellspring of new song, and the courage to mend.

Shulchan Orech

All: And, so, having come out of Mitzrayim, having tasted affliction and freedom,
having studied and learned, it is now time to eat!

(CHOW DOWN, HUNGRY DYKES!)
Tzafun  <find the afikoman and reward the finder>

All:  (holding up restored matzah) And so what was lost is found, what was broken is restored.

Reader: Traditionally, the afikomen, once found, is the final bite of the meal, the ultimate dessert.

Reader: How can matzah - dry and dull - be dessert? This matzah becomes sweet when we taste in it our pledge to repair what is broken.

All:  צדק צדק נרדוфф  

Tzedek tzedek nirdoff  
Justice, Justice We Shall Pursue!

<divide and eat afikoman>

Barech - Birkat Hamazon

Nodeh l’eyn hahayim hazaneh et hakol.
Al ha’aretz hatovah v’har’hayah nishmor na, v’hi t’kay’meynu,
unvakeysh mazon l’hasbi’a bo kol yosh’vey teyveyl.

Let us acknowledge the source of life, source of all nourishment.  
May we protect the bountiful earth that it may continue to sustain us,  
and let us seek sustenance for all who dwell in the world (Marcia Falk)

Hallel – Songs of praise...
Miriam Hanevi’ah (Miriam the Prophet)
words by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner, sung to the traditional Eliahu Ha Navi
Miriam hanevi’ah oz vezimrah beyadah.
Miriam tirkod itanu lehagdil zimrat olam.
Miriam tirkod itanu l’taken et ha’olam.
Bimhera beymeynu hi tevi’eynu
el may hayeshua.
Miriam the prophet, strength and song in her hand
Miriam will dance with us to increase the eternal harmony
Miriam will dance with us to repair the world
Speedily in our life she will bring us
To the waters of redemption.

Shekhinah Mishkani (Susan Rothbaum)
Shekhinah mishkani, Ani mishkan Shekhinah
Shekhinah is my dwelling place,
I am the dwelling place of Shekhinah.

Hava Nashira
Hava nashira, shir hal-le-lu-a
Come let us sing, sing halleluia

Freedom is Coming (South African)
Freedom, oh freedom, oh freedom
Freedom is coming, oh yes I know

Eli, Eli (text by Hannah Senesh)
Eli Eli, sh’lo yigameyr la’olam
Hachol v’hayam, rish rush shel hamayim
B’rak hashamayim, T’filat ha’adam.
My God, my god, I pray that these things never end...
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
The crash of the heavens, the prayers of us all.

Remember (Susan Rothbaum)
Remember....Remember. Remember, we once were strangers
Remember...Remember. We also fled, we fled from danger
Let these memories remind us we are called to deeds of kindness (2X)
that each soul may have a home in the shelter of shalom. (2X)
Remember...

Miriam’s Cup
(pour water into glasses)

Pesach with Otter and Elliott       Philadelphia, PA   2006
Reader: Traditionally, a cup of wine is left on the table for Elijah the Prophet, and after the meal, the door is opened for the spirit of Elijah to enter. Tonight, we dedicate Elijah’s cup to the young Israeli men and women who are spending this Pesach in military prisons, and those on trial facing prison sentences, because they have refused to participate in the degradation and humiliation of the Palestinian people. If Elijah is abroad on earth tonight looking for righteous people, may he visit them and comfort them!

Reader: On our table sits kos Miriam, the cup of Miriam the Prophet, so long belittled by the religion and culture she helped birth.

Reader: The story has always been told of a miraculous well of living water which has been available to the Jewish people since the world was spoken into being. In the time of the exodus from Mitzrayim, the well came to Miriam, in honor of her courage and action, and stayed with the Jews as they wandered the desert. Upon Miriam’s death, the well again disappeared.

Reader: Miriam was a leader of great courage and vision. When she was a child, the order came from Pharaoh to kill all Hebrew male babies. Miriam’s father, in despair, ordered that Hebrew men and women no longer lie together, that no more babies be born. Miriam confronted her father, saying that he was worse than Pharaoh, for Pharaoh had doomed only the boys, whereas her father was dooming all of the Israelites. He knew she was right, and so rescinded his order.

Reader: On our table tonight, kos Miriam, the cup of Miriam’s well and vision, again sits waiting for us to fill it. Can we remember how to call the living waters to us? When the well is empty, from where do we draw the wisdom to fill it? Surely, through acts of every day courage, as when Miriam herself sang the well into being, each of us could find within ourselves this song and sing it out, as Miriam sang the women to action.

(each woman names an act of courage or resistance that she has done in the past year, and pours into the communal cup until it overflows)
Leader: [holding up full cup] And so it is that we enact again one of the most important lessons we’ve learned as women organizing together – that sharing and celebrating our small victories and our daily courage enables us to inspire and sustain each other, and generates an overflowing well of strength and wisdom. Let us each drink from this, our own incarnation of Miriam’s Well. Remember its image and the faces of these women around you, for surely these will sustain you as you go out of Mitzrayim, surely these will begin the repair of the world.

Sing: Come Come Sisterhood
author unknown

Come come sisterhood, I'll dance nimble steps
Come join eternal I'll be a Miriam
Our love is mystical, Leading the women
our love is carnal across the waters.

(pour third cup of wine)

The Third Cup of Wine – to Perseverance and Vision

Reader: Our tradition obligates us to connect personally with this story – to understand that we ourselves would still be slaves if our ancestors had not acted.

All:

בכל דור ודור חייתי את אחת את עם עאתי
האמים tiểu הנה ימינו.

B’chol dor vador chayavim anu lirot et atzmeinu
k’ilu yatzanu miMitzrayim.
In every generation each of us is obligated to see ourselves as if we ourselves had left Mitzrayim

Reader: This year, surrounded and pressed-down by Mitzrayim, we still seek the intimacy of our connection to the story. As the situation grows more dire around us, we watch, wait, speak, dream, act, connect, withdraw, plot, plan, despair, and plot and plan again.
Leader: As our journey together tonight draws to an end, please close your eyes and consider what sustained your ancestors as they struggled, and what sustains you. Bring to mind something that feeds you, spiritually, emotionally, politically......
Now imagine, what sustains that which sustains you? What lies behind the person, force, or power that enables you to continue acting in the world? ........
Pause to offer thanks and praise to this person, this force.....
Then draw a deep breath, here in the wide open space of our community of resistance, and think about how you can move forward from here....
What changes can you bring about between and next Pesach? What vision can you, like Miriam, nurture and sustain?
When you are ready, open your eyes, and translate your vision into words, making a pledge to yourself, to the past and the future, to find a way to keep moving forward.

< each womon writes her pledge on a slip of paper and deposits it into the tzedakah box >

All: As we are taught

Lo aleichen ham’lacha ligmor, v’lo aten b’not chorin l’hibateil mimena....
It is not upon you to complete the work, neither are you free to desist from it....

Reader: The third cup of wine we dedicate to our hopes and dreams for the future. We drink it in celebration of the power of our actions and the power of our visions.

All: 

B’rucha at Shekhinah, b’tocheynu ruach ha’olam, borayt p’ri hagafen.
Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who brings forth the fruit of the vine.

L’chaim!
To Life!

Pesach with Otter and Elliott       Philadelphia, PA   2006
Nirtzah – Conclusion

Reader: At the end of the seder, Jews have always vowed to one another *L’shana haba-a bi-Y’rushalayim* / Next Year In Jerusalem! Why does the seder end with this vow?

Reader: For Jews, forced into diaspora two thousand years ago, wandering always in countries which were sometimes safe harbors and sometimes nightmares, the dream of Jerusalem was more than the city itself.

Reader: To dream that next year we would be in Jerusalem is to dream of a land and a time of autonomy, safety, self-determination, the right to one’s own culture and language and spirituality, to live on land that can’t be taken from you by the whim of an outside power, to live with the basic right to be who you are.

Reader: Jewish oral legend tells the story that Abraham built an altar there, and wanted to call the city *Yireh*, to mark it as a place of service to God. But Shem and his people, who already lived in the city, called their home *Shalem*, Place of Peace. God wanted to include both people, and both visions, so united the two names and called the city *Yerushalem*.

Reader: This dream of shared city of peace and wholeness has been distorted to a nightmare of apartheid. Still, when we look for the sparks of resistance, we see them everywhere.

Reader: This week, in the very shadow of the “Separation Wall,” a new group called Combatants for Peace held a meeting to honor Pesach and Palestinian Prisoners’ Day. Composed of former fighters from both sides, they say of themselves, “In the past we used weapons against one another, we saw each other only through weapon sights - now, we are working together for peace and justice. The Liberation Gathering marks the hope and longing for the freedom and independence of both peoples.”

ALL: In the name of all of these people, and in the name of our dreams and actions for wholeness, we say:
לשלמה הבהה בירושלים

L’shana haba-a bi-Y’rushalayim
Next Year In Jerusalem!

לשלנה הבהה בשלום בשלום

L’shanah ha-ba’ah b’olam b’shalom!
Next year may we all live in a world of peace!

ישרו שלום, טובות וברכה, וæreיך ורוחמים בווניה, בימינו וראות ישראל, בימים שלחט ישראל, ו إطار ושלום חכב.

Yishru shalom, tovah uvrakah, heyn vahesed v’rahamim beyneynu, beyn kol adot yisra’el, beyn kol adot yishma’el, uveyn kol yosh’vey teyvel.

May the blessings of peace and kindness, graciousness, goodness and compassion flow among us and all the communities of Israel, and all the communities of Ishmael, and all the inhabitants of the earth.