

IMMIGRATION JUSTICE: THE NEW FREEDOM SEDER, 2015

First question: “Mah nishtanah haSeder hazeh miKol Sedarim? Why is this Seder different from all other Seders?” (responses)

WISDOM FOR THE JOURNEY “I felt as if my legs were praying.” — Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, coming back home from the voting-rights March in Selma, Alabama, 1965

Passover celebrates the redemption of the Jews from enslavement in Egypt. This traditional story of defiance against brutality and slavery has inspired countless men and women to achieve freedom in our own times.

As the haggadah says, “B'khol dor v'dor chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatza mi'Mitzrayim,” – “from generation to generation, each of us is obligated to see ourselves as though we personally had just been freed from slavery.” We must remember the past to understand today and to protect our tomorrows. Therefore, in each generation and each year, we retell the story of the exodus to our children and to our grandchildren, in order that they, too, will understand the pain of slavery and the value of freedom. Our story is the story of all people who have ever been in bondage, and this story compels us to work toward freedom for those who remain physically, spiritually or economically enslaved.

Candlelighting (2 candles)

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Ruach Haolam, asher kidishanu b'mitz'votav v'tzivanu l'had'lik neir shel Shabbat ve Yom Tov.

(Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who brings us the mystery of light)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, ruach ha'olam Shehecheyanu v'kiymanu v'higi'anu laz'man hazeh. (Amen)

(Blessed are you, Yah, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who has breathed life into us, lifted us up, and carried us to reach this moment)

DAYENU: MANY STEPS TOWARD FREEDOM

In Ferguson and throughout the nation, people are demanding police be accountable to their communities. Dayenu!

The US is finally normalizing relations with Cuba: Dayenu!

300,000 people demanded environmental justice in the People's Climate March in New York City last September: Dayenu!

Same-sex marriage is now legal in 35 states: Dayenu!

Ballot measures raising the minimum wage have passed in five states and six municipalities: Dayenu!

Due to a strong immigrant rights movement, President Obama issued an executive order stopping five million people from being deported: Dayenu!

The people of New York have banned fracking: Dayenu!

Electricity generated by wind and solar continues increasing every year: Dayenu!

Dai, dayenu, dai Dayenu, dai dayenu - ׀Dayenu dayenu

WE TAKE INTO OURSELVES THE FOODS & MEANINGS OF THE SEDER

A. First Cup of Wine or Grape Juice

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Ruach Haolam, borey p'ree hagaffen. Amen

(Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine)

B. Urchatz - Washing hands

Wash your hands by pouring water on your right hand 3 times, then 3 times on your left hand, but don't make the blessing!

C. Take sprigs of parsley, dip them in salt water, pass them around the table, and say:

Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-heinu Ruach Haolam Borei Pri Ha'Adama.

(Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who creates the food of the earth.)

Question: Why do we eat these greens, and why do we dip them in salt water?

“Because the Earth is green and fertile, but with salt tears we mourn its wounds.”

“Humans are Earth's way of knowing itself. With the tongue of a human being, Earth tastes itself. In a human's search for meaning, it comes to know its own mysteries. In a human's loving attention, Earth rejoices in its own beauty. It's one thing to be. It's quite another to know that and to pronounce it good, That is what a human brings to the world - the ability to take notice, to be grateful and glad, glad for the river swinging by, for the sun warming my shoulders, for the breeze lifting the hairs on a butterfly's back.” - Wild Comfort - The Solace of Nature by Kathleen Moore

D. Eat hardboiled eggs dipped in salt water

Eating an egg is a reminder that the more the Egyptians "cooked" us, the stronger we became. The egg is an anomaly. Most foods become softer the longer they are cooked. The egg, on the other hand, becomes harder. So with oppressed people - the more they are oppressed, the stronger they become. The egg also represents birth and springtime.

E. Blood-red beet. Pass around pieces & say: Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who creates the root of the earth. (eat)

Question: Why do we eat this blood-red beet? "To remember the sacrifices, deaths, and woundings of those who have struggled for justice."

"I have been to the mountaintop. ... I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land! Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

(Invite other names of those who have been killed in their work for justice.)

Our common legacy, like the Exodus, is a story of hope within struggle. It is a story of community, a story of freedom, and a story of people struggling to hold on to who they are while emigrating to make a better life. Tonight, as we share this liberation story of the past we will hear from community members here with us this evening who are involved in a liberation struggle of today, that of immigrants in the United States. Before we start we would like to recognize that not all of us are immigrants and not all of us came to the U.S voluntarily. We must recognize and honor First Nations people who lived here first, and have struggled against oppression to maintain their culture and way of life. We must also recognize that some people were brought here against their will, many in chains, and honor the organizing and pursuit of freedom by African Americans in the United States.

The light of Passover is the light of freedom; the hope of Passover is the hope of freedom. Our ancestors suffered in the darkness of slavery and dreamed of their liberty; today, too many immigrants suffer in the darkness of oppression. (We light the candles in a celebration of liberty; it is the light that gives freedom, the light that gives life.) The Passover Seder is an opportunity for Jews and friends to come together to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt and to share experiences and goals we have in common. Our people are descended from slaves, from people who staged a successful slave rebellion. Ever since, our people have kept alive this story of liberation, and the consciousness that cruelty

and oppression are not inevitable facts of life but conditions which can be changed.

How did the Israelites come to be slaves in Egypt? Like many immigrant families in our own time, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt in search of food during a great famine in their homeland. They sought only to find a way to support themselves. But, they were seen as strangers in their new land, and were forced to labor and were oppressed. The stories of our ancestors are reflected in many of the stories of people who now travel to new lands to find a new life.

"When you are written out of history as a people, when you are given no choice but to accept the "majority" culture, you are denied an aspect of your own identity...We must affirm that every human life is a reflection of divinity, and every act of injustice mars and defaces the image of God in man." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Matzah is called "lechem oni" – the bread of our affliction. In breaking the matzah in half, we remind ourselves that as long as anyone in the world is afflicted, none of us can be whole. The division of the matzah also reminds us of the forced division of communities and families due to disappearances, detentions, and deportations of immigrants that are carried out in the name of national security.

F. Matza: We break a whole matza into two parts. The larger piece will represent the afikomen and the smaller piece we'll eat in a little while.

Now we will hide one half of this piece of matzah. The hidden piece of matzah, the afikomen, represents the horror hidden from our view - the treatment of those making food for us to eat, workers, and those detained and prevented from speaking with their families, friends, or even lawyers. The disappeared are doubly blocked from our sight, physically separated in jails and detention centers, but also wrapped in a blanket of fear of further disappearances and legal attacks, fears intended to silence their communities. Until these divided parts are made one again, our Seder cannot truly be ended. Until workers are not mistreated and families and communities are reunited, we have not yet achieved our freedom.

Activity: We are encouraged to bring our own questions to the Seder. Today, we ask you to pair up with your neighbor and share your own, or your family's own, immigration story, or a story about a worker issue. If you don't have an immigration story, share about your work experiences in this country or those of your family. We will take these stories and create a labor and immigration quilt to collectively tell the stories of all of us in the room. Here is how we will do it:

Pair up with your neighbor. One person in the pair shares an immigration or labor story from their life, or their family history (take 3 minutes then switch, repeat.)

Next, after hearing your partner's story, each person individually will take one sheet of construction paper and a crayon from their table and draw something that symbolizes the story they just listened to – this can be an image, a symbol, a word, a scene, etc. (take 3 minutes) Bring the finished drawing to the back of the room and lay it face-down on the floor.

(As the Seder continues, volunteers will assemble our drawings into a labor and immigration quilt that tells our collective stories.)

G. Second Cup of Wine (leaning to the left) We have told our personal stories and so we bless them by drinking a second cup of wine or grape juice:

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Ruach Haolam, borey p'ree hagaffen. Amen

(Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.)

H. The Plagues

The ten plagues of the Exodus story were all ecological disasters. We interrupt the foods that mark our Seder to address the plagues at this point in the Seder because they interrupted the flow of food to human beings and other life-forms, in the ancient past and in the present. The Plagues were not lightning-bolts flung by a Super-Pharaoh in the sky, but eco-disasters brought about by the arrogance and stubbornness of a top-down, unaccountable ruler, Pharaoh. Today, what Plagues are our own "pharaohs," the wealthiest, the global corporations, bringing on our Earth?

As we recite the Plagues, we grieve for the Earth and human beings who have suffered from these Plagues by diminishing our pleasure in the fruit of the vine. For each Plague, we drop some grape-juice from our glasses.

*Bloody rivers: Undrinkable water poisoned by fracking.

*Asthma: Our children suffering from coal dust and gasoline fumes.

*Suffering and death for fish, birds, vegetation, and human beings from the oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico.

* Leveled mountains and dead coal-miners in the lovely hills of West Virginia.

*Unheard-of droughts in Africa, Russia, Texas, and Oklahoma.

*Unheard-of floods in Pakistan, putting one-fifth of the country under water.

(Participants add other Plagues of today.)

“If the people speak and the king doesn’t listen, there is something wrong with the king. If the king acts precipitously and the people say nothing, something is wrong with the people.” Sister Joan Chittiser

I. The Story

Now the king said to the midwives of the Hebrews, whose names were Shifrah & Puah: “When you help the Hebrew women give birth, if he be a son, put him to death; but if she be a daughter, she may live.” But the midwives held God in awe, and they let the children live. God dealt well with the midwives. (Exodus 1: 16-21).

“God came into the picture. What was the sign that God had come? A bush that burned and burned and did not stop burning.

“What was God all burned up about? The voice said, ‘I have seen the affliction of my people in the Tight & Narrow Place and have heard them cry out because of their oppression.’”

.“And the proof that God had entered into Moses, and that Moses had really been affected 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 (one), a land flowing with milk and honey.’ (A. J. Muste, 1943)

Song: Let My People Go

When Israel was in Egypt’s land, Let my people go;

Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go!

(Chorus:)

Go down, Moses,

’Way down in Egypt’s land; Tell ol’ Pharaoh, Let my people go!

Miriam: The Red Sea

High above shores and times, I on the shore

forever and ever.

Moses my brother

has crossed over to milk, honey, that holy land.

Building Jerusalem.

I sing forever on the seashore.

I do remember

horseman and horses / waves of passage poured into war,
all poured into journey.

My unseen brothers have gone over, chariot

deep seas under

I alone stand here ankle-deep

and I sing, I sing, until the lands sing to each other.—Muriel Rukeyser

J. Third Cup of wine or grape juice:

We have told the story of the Exodus, and so we drink our third cup of wine.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Melech Haolam, borey p'ree hagaffen. Amen

(Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine)

Why do we drink this fruit of the vine?

— Because grapes grow not alone but in clusters, and we must work for freedom and justice and peace not separately but in clusters.

K. The Four Children:

The simple child asks, what is this? What problem exists?

Our tradition calls upon us to stand up for and join in solidarity with immigrants and workers. Today, as we face a broken immigration system that uses raids instead of fixing policies, immigrants are negatively impacted by fear and a lack of justice. Raids separate families, violate due process laws, hurt the economy, criminalize innocent people, waste taxpayer money, misuse local police and threaten the basic human rights of citizens and non-citizens alike. Many undocumented workers also face employers ready and willing to exploit the broken immigration system, violate U.S. labor laws and ignore basic norms of dignity and respect.

The fearful and angry child asks, what does this have to do with me? With you?
With each of us?

Passover teaches us that our liberation is connected to the liberation of all peoples. Many of us have our own histories of immigration and worker struggles. Our traditions tell us that we are commanded to welcome the stranger, and to treat workers with dignity. The consequences of our current immigration system affect all of us. Family and friends face deportation unless immigration laws are changed to provide a path to citizenship and permanent residency. Our history compels us to stand up for justice whenever it is being threatened. As Jews, we are also in a unique position to advocate for improved working conditions for documented and undocumented workers in the kosher food industry – we have a responsibility to make sure the people who make the food we eat are respected and treated with dignity.

Then there is the child who does not know to ask.

For this child, we must begin the conversation. Many people in this country do not know the facts about immigrants and their contributions to this country. They listen to the myths and false stories that create fear, division, and isolation. We must turn to our friends, family, coworkers, fellow students, and neighbors to help them understand why we need to end raids, pass humane comprehensive federal immigration reform, and uphold the dignity and just treatment of workers. We must also help everyone unite in solidarity to solve these problems together.

Finally, the compassionate child asks, what can I do about it? How can I help?

We are responsible for the actions taken by our country in our names. We must support our immigrant brothers and sisters by urging President Obama to end immigration raids. We also must help Congress understand the urgency of passing immigration reform and fixing our broken immigration system. At the same time, we must join together to make worker justice a reality and ask “How can we be better allies with workers and immigrants to create a better world for all?”

L. Rachtza - handwashing before meal

Wash your hands a second time, just like you did in the beginning – only this time , we say the blessing over washing our hands!

Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-heinu Ruach Haolam Asher Ki-d'shanu Be-mitzvotav Vetzivanual Netilat Yadayim.

Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, Who has commanded us to wash our hands.

M. MOTZI MATZA

Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-heinu Ruach Haolam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

(We praise You, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.)

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Ruach ha- olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvo-tav v'tzivanu al a-chilat matzoh.

(We praise You, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who hallows our lives with commandments, and enjoins us to partake in eating matzoh.) (Eat a bit of each matzoh)

N. Maror: Give everyone a piece of raw horse radish.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Ruach Haolam asher kidishanu b'mitz'votav v'tzivanu al achilat maror

(Blessed are you, Breathing Spirit of the Universe, who commanded us to eat the bitter herb.)

Why do we eat this Bitterness?

“So the Tight Place made the Godwrestlers subservient with crushing-labor; they embittered their lives with hard servitude in clay and in bricks and with all kinds of servitude in the field, all their serfdom in which they made them subservient with crushing-labor. (Exodus 1: 13-14.)

“Look,” one Nicaraguan free trade zone worker says, “some people might say, What are you all complaining about? ‘Wouldn’t you rather work in a factory even if the conditions are bad and you don’t get paid much, than have no job at all?’ No. I support my family and I like working. But that doesn’t mean that gives other people the right to come and we always have to say, yes, yes, yes, for everything, and we’ll have to be beaten and hit, just like a dog when it gets hit and it just moves its tail and it comes back. No, we’re not going to do that. That’s like slaves. That’s past time. We came to the point where we said, It’s enough. And that’s why we formed the union.” — Source: National Public Radio, August 18, 2000.

Why else are we bitter today? (responses)

O. Charoset: Why do we eat charoset? — Because by mixing apples, apricots, raisins, nuts and cinnamon, wine and cloves, it embodies the tastes and smells of the Song of Songs, the earthy poem of love - the springtime, when flowers rise up against winter, and the night-time of history gives way to the sunlight.

Come with me, my love, come away, For the long wet months are past, The rains have fed the earth

And left it bright with blossoms. Birds wing in the low sky,

Dove and songbird singing
In the open air above,
Earth nourishing tree and vine, Green fig and tender grape,
Green and tender fragrance.
Come with me, my love, come away.

Do-di li va-a-ni lo; Ha-ro-eh ba-sho-sha-nim (Repeat)

P. Hillel Sandwich: 2 pieces of matzah with charoset and horseradish (yum!):

Two thousand years ago, Hillel faced the challenge of replacing the destroyed temple. He ate a little lamb, a little piece of maror and matzah. He wrote: "with matzah and bitter herbs they shall eat it."

We put the bitter and the sweet together, as all of life holds both of them.

Q. Orange. Why do we eat an orange? Answers: The orange was first used because it had NOT been on the traditional Seder plate.

Fannie Lou Hamer, leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, when the President of the United States offered the MFDP two symbolic seats at the Democratic National Convention instead of recognizing the whole MFDP as the legitimate delegation: "We didn't come all this way for no two seats when all of us is tired."

Before entering Miquat (where you get ready to start the Hajj [Pilgrimage to Mecca]) which is the beginning of a great change and revolution, you must declare your intention. It is the intention of a "transferral" from your house to the house of people, from life to love, from the self to God, from slavery to freedom, from racial discrimination to equality, sincerity and truth, from being clothed to being naked, from a daily life to an eternal life and from selfishness and aimlessness to devotion and responsibility. — Ali Shariati, Hajj

R. The Meal - Eat!

S. Tzafun - someone finds the afikoman and splits it up for all to eat.

T. Barech - blessing after the meal (open)

U. Elijah's Cup & Final Glass of Wine

We join at the time of Passover to connect our separate stories in the telling of new freedom. Our telling cannot end tonight. We must name and number the different tribes to carry on the journey. We have a wilderness of change to cross before we can enter a new time of greater justice, greater freedom, greater peace, and deeper healing.

What needs press upon us today? (open)

(Pour juice from the Cup of Elijah, sitting untasted in the center of the table, into each person's glass. This is the fourth cup of wine.)

Song: Eliyahu Hanavi

Eliyahu hanavi Eliyahu hatishbi, Eliyahu hagil'adi -

Bim'hera yavoh eleinu,
im mashiach ben David. (x2) (Elijah the prophet
Elijah the returning,
Elijah the giladi -
May he soon come to us,
with the messiah son of David.) {All say together:}

I take responsibility to become the Prophet Elijah, turning the hearts of the parents to the children and the hearts of the children to the parents, lest the earth be utterly destroyed."

V. (Drink final cup of wine or grape juice)

"It is not enough to teach our young people to be successful...

so they can realize their ambitions, so they can earn good livings,

so they can accumulate the material things that this society bestows.

Those are worthwhile goals. But it is not enough to progress as individuals while our friends and neighbors are left behind.

Perhaps we can bring the day when children will learn from their earliest days that being fully man and fully woman means to give one's life to the liberation of the brother/sister who suffers.

It is up to each one of us. It won't happen unless we decide to use our lives to show the way." - Cesar Chavez

Note: Compiled from The New Freedom Seder 2012 by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, JCUA Justice and Freedom Seder 2010 & Traditional Seder Material by Joanie Levine - jlevinehummingbird@gmail.com
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Portland, Oregon. Please share and use freely!