



This Broken Matzah: Pesach 2024

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Yachatz - Come and Break Me

The Seder is teaching
That nothing stays
Whole,
Clean, and
Innocent.

Crumbs everywhere in the house we just cleaned.
Always a word or two too much is spoken.
The red drops of wine dripping heavily from our fingertips.
And also, among others, the moment we reach under the blanket, beautiful and kosher,
For the ones
Protected, and
Dry, and
Hidden, and
Break their middle apart.

This year, come and break me.
Break me into crumbles.
Spread and hide my crumbles in every corner of my house.
Tell everyone to start searching
Even before the end of the dinner, for each single piece,
Especially the little ones, of this matzah once-whole.

This year, I am taking this matzah,
The broken matzah, a symbol of sin and
A symbol for—eventual—peace,
And I am crying, my tears wetting the matzah,
The wetness turning a ritual into something mushy, and
I am crying because of the sins bringing about this mush and this breaking, and
The frailty of the hope to become whole again.

And I believe.
I drip the wine.
I hide the matzah.
I read the words.
I live as if I knew what's on the next page.

I live as if there was peace—even just for this one night.
This night is the night of protection,
In the midst of what is broken,
It is a night for our children,

It is a statement of believing,
Of not giving up on the hope to heal.

Baruch atah Adonai, Rofeh haSh'vurim.
Praised are You—you will put me together again.

Rabbi Sonja K. Pilz, PhD

I Believe



Art by Joanne Fink



Why Do We Tell This Story?

Why do we tell this story?
To remember when we were slaves
So that we have compassion for others' pain
And we do not enslave others.

Why do we tell this story?
To remember how we got to Sinai and Torah
So that we can recognize righteous struggle
And have patience for the long hauls.

Why do we tell this story?
To remember joy and bitterness with savory and sweet
So for that we eat matzo brei, gefilte fish and brisket
And charoses and marshmallow twists.

Why do we tell this story?
To remember and endlessly discuss its meanings
So that we can ask questions and then question the answers
Because that's what we like to do.

Why do we tell this story?
To remember this narrative that creates a people
So we can cherish our myth
And hope repetition somehow makes it true.

Why do we tell this story?
To remember when we were underdogs and heroes
So that we can study the times when we are not
And do the right things when we should.

Why do we tell this story?
To remember what it felt like when we told it last year
So that we can remember the year before that
And the years before that.

Trisha Arlin



Symbols, This Year

The shankbone is for houses across Israel and Gaza
where the Angel of Death has not passed over.

Maror for the hot tearful bitter sharp pain
of hostages held underground and children imprisoned.

Haroset, for mortar: Gaza bombed to rubble.
The egg is roasted like charred kibbutz walls.

.
Everything is dipped in tears like the sea that closed
when God rebuked, "My children die, and you sing praises?"

Matzah: cracker of liberation and affliction. (Gazans
approaching starvation know only one of these.)

There's no place on the seder plate for ambivalence,
survivors' guilt, history's persecutions telescoping into now.

In every generation trauma traps us in Mitzrayim.
Will this be the year we begin to walk free?

R. Rachel Barenblat

Mah Nishtanah

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

Mah nishtanah halaila hazeh mikol haleilot?

Why is this night different from all other nights?

By tradition the youngest at the Passover seder recites the four questions of *mah nishtanah* - what makes this night of Passover different from the rest of the year. Since October 7 everything feels different. All of us around the seder table, younger and older, have questions.

On all other nights we eat leavened products and matzah, and on this night only matzah.

What does this year's matzah symbolize? The horrors of October 7th? The agony of hostages still in captivity, and Gazans unable to escape war? Mourning families throughout Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank? The suffering of those displaced by the war, in the south and in the north of Israel and Gaza? The virulent antisemitism unleashed online and offline? Fear that our social connective tissue is breaking down? The challenge of holding on to hope, praying for peace?

On all other nights we eat all vegetables, and on this night only bitter herbs.

What does captivity taste like in the tunnels under Gaza and the rubble above-ground? Not like horseradish, one traditional bitter herb. Outside the seder, horseradish is known for its healing properties. This year so much healing is needed. May the bitterness of the maror enliven us, awaken us, and renew us to heal each other, even and especially through all the bitterness.

On all other nights, we don't dip our food even once, and on this night we dip twice.

At the seder we dip karpas (greens) in salt water and dip maror (bitter herbs) into charoset. The salt water represents the tears of our captivity in Egypt. How many rivers can be filled with the tears shed since October 7th? Yet charoset, symbolizing the mortar used by the Israelites for bricks, is sweet. No matter the recipe, it is tasty, alive, hopeful. This year, may our double dipping be inspired by Jeremiah, "וּקְרָאתֶם אֵתִי וְהִלַּכְתֶּם וְהִתְפַּלַּלְתֶּם אֵלַי וְשָׁמַעְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם" "When you call Me, and come and pray to Me, I will give heed to you," and may we find trust that there is a Divine plan for our welfare, for peace, and for a hopeful future (Jeremiah 29:12, 11).

On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining, and on this night we only recline.

How can we even think of reclining this year as our people suffer? Our tradition teaches: once we were slaves, now we are free. Do we sometimes forget our freedom? Do we get stuck, held captive to our biases and positions? Perhaps, then, we recline to shake things up, to change our perspective. Only then can we save each other.

R. Dara Lithwick



Hungry

“This is the bread of affliction” lands differently
As desperate Palestinian parents make bread from animal pellets¹
To feed their starving children.

And how can we say, “Let all who are hungry come and eat,”
As Gaza descends into famine and aid can’t get through,²
While Hamas leaders hide, safe underground?

Now people go hungry. Next year may all be fed.
Now we are crushed by the vice-grip of grief.
Next year may all of Abraham’s children be safe and free.

R. Rachel Barenblat

Before We Eat

Blessed Holy Wholeness,
As we sit here at our Seder table
To celebrate our gathering and our wonderful meal,
We note the bombing deaths of the seven World Central Kitchen volunteers
Who only wanted to feed the hungry.
We hate the war that brought them to Gaza
And we mourn all the starved,
And the bombed out and the dead.
May all these memories be for blessings.
And may those sitting at this table
Take responsibility for this world and
Do more to emulate the seven volunteers:

May we seek peace
And pursue justice
And house the homeless
And feed the hungry.
Amen

Trisha Arlin

¹ *Animal pellets*. See [Boiling Weeds. Eating Animal Feed](#), NPR.

² *Aid can’t get through*. See [Why Isn’t More Aid Getting to Gazans](#), NYT.

Four Cups

Our Sages taught that we drink four cups of juice / wine during the Passover seder based on an interpretation of Exodus 6:6-7, which uses four different expressions for the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt: "I will bring you out / וְהוֹצֵאתִי ... I will deliver you / וְהִצַּלְתִּי ... I will redeem you / וְגָאַלְתִּי ... and I will take you to Me for a people / וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם." Here are kavanot (intentions) for each cup, rooted in what's unfolding in Israel and Gaza now.

Cup 1: וְהוֹצֵאתִי / I Will Bring You Out

May it be Your will, Divine One, to free the hostages safely and speedily from Gaza, to enable a just lasting ceasefire, and to inspire all to work for a peaceful tomorrow.

Cup 2: וְהִצַּלְתִּי / I Will Deliver You

May it be Your will, Saviour of all, to deliver the hostages safely into the arms of their loved ones, and to enable all Israelis and Palestinians displaced by the war to return home in safety.

Cup 3: וְגָאַלְתִּי / I Will Redeem You

May it be Your will, Creator of all beings, to free us from the hatred in our midst, surrounding us, even within us. In releasing hatreds, may we experience redemption.

Cup 4: וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם / I Will Take You To Me For A People

May it be Your will, Holy Redeemer, to renew our covenant with You and to help us connect in covenant with all peoples, as we renew our faith in You and in each other.

R. Dara Lithwick



All Four (Are One)

Today the Four Children are a Zionist,
a Palestinian solidarity activist, a peacenik, and
one who doesn't know what to even dream.

The Zionist, what does she say? Two thousand years
we dreamed of return. "Next year in Jerusalem"
is now, and hope is the beacon we steer by.

The solidarity activist, what do they say?
We know the heart of the stranger. To be oppressors
is unbearable. Uplift the downtrodden.

The peacenik, what does he say? We both love this land
and neither is leaving. We're in this together.
Between the river and the sea two peoples must be free.

And the one who doesn't know what to even dream:
feed that one sweet haroset, a reminder that
building a just future has always been our call.

All of us are wise. None of us is wicked.
(Even the *yetzer ha-ra* is holy—without it
no art would be made, no future imagined.)

We are one people, one family. Not only
because history's flames never asked what kind
of Jew one might be, but because

the dream of collective liberation is our legacy.
We need each other in this wilderness.
Only together can we build redemption.

R. Rachel Barenblat

No art would be made. Talmud shares a parable that when the "evil impulse" was imprisoned, no eggs were laid – no generativity was possible. (Yoma 69b) *History's flames never asked.* See [Free. Together.](#) R. David Markus.

Not Okay



Steve Silbert

Plagues

We cannot drink a full glass of joy while others suffer.
As we recite each plague, we spill a drop of wine from our cups.

דם	Dam	Blood
צפרדע	Tzfardei'a	Frogs
פנים	Kinim	Lice
ערוב	Arov	Wild Beasts
דבר	Dever	Cattle Plague
שחין	Shehin	Boils
ברד	Barad	Hail
ארבה	Arbeh	Locusts
חשך	Hoshekh	Darkness
מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת	Makat b'khorot	Death of the Firstborn

Across Israel, communities have known terrible loss, and Israeli hostages remain captive in Gaza. We spill additional drops of wine for innocent blood spilled at:

פסטיבל רעים	Festival Re'im	Re'im Music Festival
קיבוץ ניר עוז	Kibbutz Nir Oz	Kibbutz Nir Oz
כפר עזה	Kfar Azah	Kfar Aza
קיבוץ חולית	Kibbutz Holit	Kibbutz Holit
קיבוץ בארי	Kibbutz Beeri	Kibbutz Beeri
שדרות	Sderot	Sderot
נתיב העשרה	Netiv Ha-Asarah	Netiv Ha-Asara
מטולה	Metulah	Metula
קיבוץ עלומים	Kibbutz Alumim	Kibbutz Alumim
קרית שמונה	Kiryat Shmonah	Kiryat Shmona

Talmud records that during the miracle at the Sea of Reeds, the angels sang songs of praise—and God rebuked them, saying, “The works of my hands are drowning, and you sing Me praises?!” We spill drops of wine for the suffering of innocents in Gaza, including in:

مدينة غزة	Madinat Ghaza	Gaza City
بيت حانون	Beyt Haanoun	Beit Hanoun
خان يونس	Khan Younis	Khan Younis
جباليا	Jabaaliya	Jabaliya
دير البلح	Deir al-Balah	Deir al-Balah
مخيم النصيرات	Mukhayyam al-NuSeirat	Camp al-Nuseirat
مخيم المغازي	Mukhayyam al-Maghazi	Camp al-Maghazi
البريج	al-Bureij	Bureij
بني سهيلا	Bani Suheila	Bani Suheila
رفح	RafaH	Rafah

God, open our hearts. Help us to build new paths to freedom so that safety never again comes at such a cost. So that liberation can be for all of us, safe and flourishing, together.

R. David Evan Markus & R. Rachel Barenblat

The Third Law

For every contraction
there is an opposite
and equal creation.
For every enslavement
there is an opposite
and equal exodus.

Just last Friday evening
I was reminded
of two things
I seem to have forgotten:
זְכוֹר לַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית³
that the creation
is embedded
in all things and
זְכוֹר לִיציאת מצרים⁴
that when I get stuck
there is a way
to get free.

For every forgetting
There is an opposite
And equal remembrance.
And so, at the next full moon
we'll gather for a meal,
remember our story,
and say **בְּסֵדֶר** *b'seder*,
"All is in order."

R. David Zaslow

³ *Zikaron l'ma'aseh b'reishit* - "A remembrance of the work of creation," from the Shabbat Kiddush

⁴ *Zekher l'y'tziat Mitzrayim* - "Remembering the Exodus from Egypt," also from the Shabbat Kiddush.

About Us



Co-created by members of Bayit's Liturgical Arts Working Group, 2024.

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