



From the Depths

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Once again, Passover approaches amidst some anxiety and uncertainty. Many of us are living in Mitzrayim / *meitzarim* / constriction. And once again, Pesach comes to remind us that our tradition's quintessential message of freedom rings out even (or especially) in times like these. Pesach promises us a future that is better than our past. These poems, prayers, and artworks express some of what's on our hearts as we prepare for seder this year. We hope they offer you some of what you need, including hope that together we can find our way to liberation.

– The Builders at Bayit



Multitude

We are a mixed multitude: some frozen in trauma,
some burning with grief. Each of us carries
at least one image of a child's unjust death
seared into our hearts. How do we walk free?

Tell me the story again of how God said,
"My children are drowning and you sing praises?!"
Every human being is a child of God,
even the ones on the other side.

This year nobody's cup of joy is full.
Our souls feel as fragile as matzah.
Even if we and our children and our children's children
aren't certain what freedom would feel like,

maybe we can agree that this state of brokenness
isn't it. I want to believe we can get there from here.
Maybe the only way is as a mixed multitude
holding hope for each other until we can feel it again.

R. Rachel Barenblat



Bricks Without Straw

This year
Pharaoh has declared
That we must make our bricks
Without straw!

That we must be happy
Without truth

That we must be poor
Without healthcare

That we must be gendered
Without a say

That we must be Black
Without equity

That we must be women
Without choices

That we must be old
Without help

That we must live
Without housing

That we must be prepared
Without science

That we must make war
Without conscience

That we must breathe
Without air

That we must be refugees
Without asylum

That we must be content
Without democracy

That we must obey
Without question.

Moses said to Pharaoh,
Let my people go.
And this year, what do you say?
Say it now!

Trisha Arlin

Exodus

There is no word for Exodus
in the book of Exodus.
The word used is יֵצֵא
and means “getting out.”
The same word in Hebrew
means exit, departure, and way out.
There’s no Exodus
with a capital E.
Our departure from Egypt
and redemption from slavery
4,000 years ago was a departure,
one of many,
and would come to signify
all events of departure
from some restriction
to a state of liberation.
The same root is used
when we say הַמּוֹצֵא, the *motzi*
blessing over bread.
Even bread makes a departure
and experiences an exodus of sorts
when it leaves the realm of wheat
and gets harvested,
ground up, and baked
to become the staff of life.
So it is with us.
We too leave some original realm
when we are born.
We too experience restriction
after restriction
yet somehow also undergo
liberation after liberation.
Bad experiences, even terrible ones,
have led us to new revelations.
That’s one meaning of Passover!

To paraphrase our latter day psalmist Paul Simon:

“The problem is all inside your head,”
She said to me,
“The answer is easy if you take it logically
I'd like to help you in your struggle to be free
There must be fifty ways to leave Mitzrayim.”

R. David Zaslow



Pass, Over.

Like an old, worn out actor I lift this cup
Already slightly drunk,
I mumble the words,
Mig'nut l'shevach. (from despair to praise)

I am very tired,
After too many nights I stayed up,
One sip of wine will do its job.
I can barely lift my head.

You can catch my tears
And pour them into a bowl of water.
You can grind my heart into
A scoop of horseradish.

Here is my burnt egg,
For our lost temple, for the cities and houses,
For the empty cribs.
I want to throw up.

And here is the matzah,
Dry and stale, and it crumbles.
I feel sad and fragmented like
This bread made of dust.

I try eating some Charoset
But it does not belong.
We have seen it. Stop lying.
Feed us the bitter truth. Get off.

I plant my face on the ground
And smell earthworms and water,
I smell grass and lettuce,
I let myself drop.

This year, I am not walking upright to Zion.
I am creeping and crawling, and on my belly.
Powerless, dirty, and numb.
To the top.

I am not prepared to be a part of this Seder.
I am tired. I am empty. I almost give up.
I sit here, with the entire family, and we are trying.
This year, we might need to

Just make it up.

*Baruch Atah Adonai,
M'chayeh haMetim.*
Blessed are You, I whisper,
Who revives the dead.

R. Sonja K. Pilz, PhD

Resisting Pharaoh / How This Moment Feels



Flash Rosenberg



The Blood On The Doorposts

Listening for messages
From angels and autocrats
Offering mysterious futures,
Random threats,
And freakish opportunities,
Slaughtering lambs and
Smearing their sacrifices on doorposts
As if that will save us from death.
Heeding pundits and prophets while
Hiding our true selves,
Preparing to run just in case,
Grabbing the dog and the family photos.

A lintel dripping with blood
Documents terror and intimidation
And offers only metaphorical salvation.
The plagues are real and
This time they're directed at us.
So what are we going to do?
Go through the red viscous portal
And then what?
It might not be too late
But even if it is
There's always the Sea of Reeds
And whatever's on the other side.

Trisha Arlin



Orange **For Ariel and Kfir**

*This year, I am placing the oranges on the Seder plate
With the hands of a mother.
I am putting two.*

In rabbinical school, I was taught the story
Of Susannah Heschel,
Of female rabbis,
Of LGBTQ rights,
And I said Amen. But I never liked the color orange.
And it does not belong to spring.

They don't fit this year either.
But I am placing them there, slowly,
Careful not to scratch their skin,
Like two alien etrogim
In a wild crib
Of leafy greens.

I have been trained to do this.
To receive a tradition. To say Amen.
To place these oranges, to protect their skin.
To tell the same story, each year anew.
To add a new line to the Kaddish list.
To fill a sixth cup, in the midst of the Seder,

With the orange, sweet, bitter,
The most expensive, orange juice.
Baruch Atah Adonai
Sh'hakol n'heyeh bid'varo.
Blessed are You,
Who brings it all into being.

R. Sonja K. Pilz, PhD

A Psalm 118 for Now

"From the depths I call to You--"

From the tight straits, from the Narrow Place
from the weary grind of the terrible news...

מִן־הַמִּצַּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה

But that's not the end of the psalm.
The heart's cry is just the beginning.
Darkness comes before the dawn.

"You answer me with Your expansiveness!"

When we cry out, You lift us up
like mourners rising from life's ashes.

עָנָנִי בְמִרְחֵב יְהוָה

That we're still here is a miracle.
Gladden our hearts. Make us bloom
like meadows of wildflowers in the spring.

R. Rachel Barenblat



Passover – Pesach / פסח

Pesach, Passover in Hebrew means “leap.”

Not look before you leap,
but leap before you look.

Take a chance.

In Fall

we slow down, analyze,

take our time

looking at this and that

in our lives.

Not so for Pesach.

In spring we don't scrutinize –

we gambol and leap.

As in nature

the gamboling lambs,

we leap and skip over

that which holds us back,

and enslaves us.

It's a leap of faith –

the first step

on the journey to Sinai.

R. David Zaslow



Pesah Hope

Sometimes though
people are wonderful.

And the sun is warming our skin,
and the skies are still blue.

Seeking freedom is like birth:
painful, but necessary.

Contraction, release, contraction –
Our people's birthing dance.

Ensemble

About Us



Co-created by members of Bayit's Liturgical Arts Working Group, 2025.

At Bayit, we empower Jewish community by developing innovative tools and resources that foster spiritual connection, education, and growth. Together our visionary teams of clergy, liturgists, artists, game designers, and educators create, test, refine, and share tools for a Jewish future always under construction.

Find our collaborations here: [Liturgical Arts Working Group](#)

And our bios here: [Builder Biographies](#)