

What you need for the seder

To prepare for the seder, the following is needed:

- **Sufficient wine or grape juice for the Four Cups.**
- **Three matzot to place before the seder leader, under a festive cover of some kind, as well as extra matzot for the table.**
- **A large dinner napkin or pouch in which to place the broken piece of the middle matzah.**
- **An optional fourth matzah, to be placed beneath the other three and separated in some way (either by the cover, or a napkin). The reason for this matzah is explained in the text.**
- **A seder plate, with all of the necessary “ingredients”: a roasted egg, a roasted shankbone (or chicken wing), a bitter herb (maror), a vegetable to serve as karpas, salt water, and your favorite charoset.**
- **A separate wine goblet set aside for Elijah.**
- **E-mailing this haggadah to your virtual participants, in you are doing a virtual seder rather than just an in-home one. Also, for the in-home seder, enough copies for all family members who will be present.**

SEDER LEADER

Welcome to our seder, when we fulfill the mitzvah, the commandment, to study the Exodus from Egypt, and its meaning then and now—for us and for our world.

READER

"Seder" means order. It involves 15 steps in all. Because this night is different from all others, though, we'll mention the steps, but we won't do them all.

READER

Step 1: Ka-desh, sanctifying the festival over a cup of wine.

READER

Step 2: R'chatz, a ritual washing of the hands, without a blessing.

READER

Step 3: Karpas, dipping a small piece of vegetable into salt water

READER

Step 4: Yachatz, dividing the middle matzah into two parts.

READER

Step 5: Maggid, retelling the Exodus from Egypt.

READER

Step 6: Rawchtzah, a ritual washing of hands, but with a blessing.

READER

Steps 7 & 8: Motzi and Matzah, blessing bread and eating matzah.

READER

Step 9: Maror, eating bitter herbs.

READER

Step 10: Korech, eating matzah and maror together.

READER

Step 11: Shulchan Orech, eating the festive meal.

READER

Step 12: Tzafun, eating the Afikoman, the seder's "dessert."

READER

Step 13: Barech, the grace after meals.

READER

Step 14: Hallel, singing songs of praise to God.

READER

And, finally, *Step 15: Nirtzah*, the conclusion of the seder service.

SEDER LEADER

This, then, is the seder—the *agenda* for the evening. There's a purpose to it. Since we can't physically experience the Exodus, this allows us to relive it vicariously. In that way, we make it a part of our own personal memories.

READER

Step 1 is reciting the kiddush. After we recite it, we lean a little to the left, so that we drink the wine the way free Romans did 2,000 years ago.

ALL

Behold, we are prepared to fulfill the first of the Four Cups.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

[Baruch ata ado-nai elo-hei-nu me-lech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.]

Praised are You, Adonai, our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Praised is Adonai, who sanctified us through His commandments. With love, He gave us festivals for joy, seasons and holidays for happiness, among them this day of Pesach, the season of our liberation, the day commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. Praised are You, Adonai, who sanctifies [Shabbat and] the People Israel and the festival seasons.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

*Ba-ruch ata ado-nai, elo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam,
she-heh-cheh-ya-nu, vi-ki-ye-ma-nu, vi-hig-gee-ah-nu la-ze-man ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, King of the universe,
who has granted us life and sustenance
and permitted us to reach this season.

SEDER LEADER

Why are there normally four cups of wine at the seder? Each cup is said to symbolize an aspect of what God promised regarding the Exodus: “And I will bring you out,” He said; “And I will save you”; “And I will redeem you”; “And I will take you.” This first cup we just drank symbolizes “And I will bring you out.”

READER

At this point in our abbreviated “agenda,” we eat a vegetable dipped in salt water. The vegetable symbolizes spring and fruitfulness, but it also symbolizes our hope that as the world is “redeemed” each spring, so will the people living in this world be redeemed. The salt water is meant to remind us of the centuries of tears and torment that led up to our rescue at the Exodus.

ALL

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

[Baruch ata ado-nai elo-hei-nu me-lech ha'olam, borei pri ha'adamah.]

Praised are You, Adonai our God, King of the Universe,
creator of the fruits of the Earth.

READER

We have three matzot before us. We break the middle matzah in two and wrap the larger piece in a napkin. We do that because matzah is called “poor person’s bread,” including slaves. A poor person can’t afford a whole loaf, and the broken matzah symbolizes that. We hide a piece because slaves are never given enough food to eat, so they’d often hide food for later.

READER hands the wrapped matzah to SEDER LEADER.

SEDER LEADER

A broken matzah also symbolizes that our redemption is incomplete because our world is incomplete. People still make war. People still hate. People still live in poverty and despair. So we break the middle matzah to remind us of why we were freed from Egypt: to work towards tikkun ha’olam, repairing the world. I now take this wrapped-up piece of matzah, which is called the afikoman, and hide it, just as slaves would hide some food.

SEDER LEADER puts the matzah aside.

ALL

Behold, we are ready to fulfill the mitzvah to retell the story of the Exodus.

READER

Maggid, the retelling of the Exodus story, is why we have a seder. Before we begin that retelling, however, we’re called upon to remember that we ourselves are not totally free just yet. We’re also called upon to remember that regardless of our station in life, there are always people out there less fortunate than we are, and we have an obligation to them, as well.

ALL

All who are hungry, let them come and eat; all who are needy, let them come and celebrate Pesach with us. This year, our world remains troubled; next year, may we live in a repaired, a world that has been redeemed.

SEDER LEADER

And now, the big question: Why is this night different? Mah nish-tanah?

ALL

מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֶמֶץ וּמִצָּה. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלוּ מִצָּה:

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יְרָקוֹת הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מָרוֹר:

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מִטְבִּילִין אֶפְילוּ פְּעַם אַחַת. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים:

שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כָּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין:

Mah nishtanah ha-lai-la ha-zeh mi-kol ha-lay-lote? Sheh'b'chol ha-lay-lote ah-noo och-leen chametz oo-matzah, ha-lie-la ha-zeh, koo-lo matzah. Sheh'b'chol ha-lay-lote ah-noo och-leen she'ahr ye'ra-kote, ha-lie-la hazeh, maror. Sheh'b'chol ha-lay-lote ayn ah-noo maht-bee-leen ah-fee-loo pa'am eh-chat, ha-lie-la hazeh, sh'tay feh'ah-meem. Sheh'b'chol ha-lay-lote ah-noo och-leen bayn yosh-veen oo-bayn m'soo-been, ha-lie-la ha-zeh, koo-lah-noo m'soo-been.

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all nights, we eat all kinds of bread; tonight, only matzah.

On all nights, we eat all kinds of herb; tonight, only a bitter herb.

On all nights, we don't usually dip our foods; tonight, we dip twice—a vegetable in salt water and maror in charoset.

On all nights, we eat sitting or leaning over; tonight we lean over.

ALL

Our answer is “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but Adonai our God took us from there with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.”

READER

Why did God let us become slaves in the first place? It's because Jacob's children left Him no choice. They needed to become the People Israel, God's kingdom of priests and holy nation, called on to teach all people by the example of their—our—lives the lessons of equality and brotherhood. But Jacob's sons couldn't do that. They had sunk so low morally that they even sold their brother Joseph into slavery. So they, too, became slaves.

READER

At Mount Sinai, we were told that, because "I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," we may not defraud anyone, we may not steal from anyone, we may not lie about anyone, we must treat everyone as our equals, we must protect the environment, and we must respect the possessions of others. Throughout the Torah, these rules are expanded upon.

READER

Because "I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," we must help those who fall on hard times. If they need food and can't afford it, we must provide them food. If they need shelter, or clothes, and can't afford it, we must provide them with shelter and clothes. If they can't afford the kind of medical care we want for ourselves, we must provide them with that medical care. We must provide them the resources to help themselves.

READER

Because "I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," we must honor our parents, and respect them. We must "rise before the aged and show deference to the old." We can't simply ignore the needs of the aging and the infirm. We can't dismiss them as no longer relevant to society.

READER

Because "I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," we are commanded "not [to] deal deceitfully or falsely with one another," and "not defraud your fellow." We must not speak about others behind their backs, and we must not mislead others by giving them false information.

READER

Because “I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt,” we must not “deal basely with [our] fellow,” whether he or she is a counter clerk in a store, or a person with whom we are doing business, or someone who asks for help. We must promptly pay those who do work for us, because they have their own bills to pay, especially for food and shelter.

READER

Because “I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt,” we must not “stand idly by the blood of [our] fellow”; we must be proactive in helping to correct the wrongs we see in society. We must be proactive, too, in creating courts of justice that are truly just, in which all people are judged fairly and equitably, and we must give everyone the benefit of the doubt.

READER

Because “I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt,” we not only must “love your fellow as yourself,” but we must also “love [the stranger] as yourself.” This includes those fleeing from oppression and persecution, based on this command: “You shall not turn over to his master a slave who seeks refuge with you from his master. He [or she] shall live with you in any place he [or she] may choose among the settlements in your midst...; you must not ill-treat him.” Someone fleeing from oppression and persecution is a slave in every sense of the word.

READER

Because “I, the Lord, am your God who freed you from the land of Egypt. You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My rules: I am the Lord.” Therefore, we must respect everyone’s right to privacy; we must not engage in unfair business practices; we must not wantonly destroy anything that can be of use to anyone or anything—animal, vegetable, or mineral. We must not mistreat our animals in any way, and we may not even sit down to our own meal without first seeing to it that they are fed. We even must consider that all creatures have feelings, and must not do anything to hurt those feelings.

READER

All of these laws are in the Torah. Slavery in Egypt was not our degradation, it was our on-the-job training. Over the millennia, no matter how those around us mistreated us, or sought to destroy us, our enslavement gave us the courage to fight for justice and equality time and again. We survived Egypt; we can survive anything. As a people, we even survived the Holocaust, the Shoah, only to rise up from the ashes, a nation reborn, with a renewed spirit and dedication.

Raise the cup of wine and uncover the matzot.

ALL

The promise made to our forefathers holds true for us also. In every generation, they rise against us and seek our destruction. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, saves us from their hands.

The cup of wine is set down; leave the matzot uncovered.

ALL

“And Adonai took us out of Egypt, with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders.” Our story has come full circle. The enslavement ends and we’re set free.

SEDER LEADER

The sage Rabban Gamaliel used to say: Whoever hasn’t explained these three things on Pesach hasn’t fulfilled the mitzvah: the Pesach offering the matzah; and the maror.

READER

Why did we eat a Pesach offering in Temple times? The Torah commands it, as it says: “It is a Pesach offering for Adonai Who passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Egypt....”

SEDER LEADER

Why do we eat matzah? Because “they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened bread....”

READER

Why do we eat this bitter herb? Because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors by enslaving them.

ALL

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר תֵּיב אָדָם לְרֵאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ כְּאֵלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם.

**[Bi-chol dor va-dor cha-yav ah-dahm lir-ote eht atz-mo
ki-ee-lu hu ya-tza mi-Mitz-ra-yeem.]**

In every generation, we must see ourselves as having personally gone out of Egypt. It was not only our ancestors whom the Holy One redeemed from slavery; we, too, were redeemed with them, as it is written: “He brought us out from there so that He might take us to the land which He had promised to our ancestors.”

The matzot are covered and the cup is lifted while the next paragraph is recited:

ALL

Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise, pay tribute, glorify, exalt, honor, bless, extol, and acclaim Him Who performed all these miracles for our ancestors and for us. He brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from grief to joy, from mourning to festivity, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption. Let us, therefore, recite a new song before Him! Halleluyah!

READER

So far tonight, we’ve ignored the person who led us out of Egypt. Why? By leaving him out, we’re saying it’s not a strong leader who brings about freedom. Freedom comes from God, but He helps those who help themselves. If we want freedom, we have to work to win it, and then work to keep it.

SEDER LEADER

As Maggid concludes, we see ourselves as free people, entitled to make a blessing. We’ll follow it with the second cup of wine, which symbolizes the second aspect of the promised Deliverance —“And I will save you.” Let’s together recite these blessing together.

ALL

Praised are You, Adonai, Master of All that Is, who redeemed us and our ancestors from Mitzrayeem, and brought us to this night, on which we eat matzah and maror.

Enable us, as well, Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, to reach other anniversaries and feasts, may they come in peace, joyous in the building of Your holy city and exultant in Your service, there to sing to You a new song for our redemption and our salvation. Praised are You, Adonai, Who has redeemed Israel.

ALL

Behold, we are prepared to fulfill the second of the Four Cups.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch ata Adonai, Elo-hei-nu Melech Ha'olam, boreh pri ha'gafen.

READER

In our abbreviated seder, we've come to the point of eating matzah. We still have two complete matzot in front of us. We take a piece from both, put them together, recite these two blessings and eat the two pieces.

ALL

Behold, we are prepared to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ:

Ba-ruch ata adonai, elohenu melech ha'olam, ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו

וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה:

Baruch ata adonai, elohenu melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu ahl achilat matzah.

Praised are You, Adonai, Master of All that Is,
Who brings forth bread from the earth.
Praised are You Adonai, Master of All that Is,
Who sanctified us with His commandments
and commanded regarding eating matzah.

SEDER LEADER

The maror, the bitter herb, symbolizes the bitterness of slavery. We eat it with charoset, which represents the mortar used to make bricks.

READER

The sweetness of the charoset tempers the bitterness of the maror, because our enslavement had its “sweet side”: Egypt was the proving ground for our mission as God’s “kingdom of priests and holy nation.”

ALL

Behold, we are prepared to fulfill the mitzvah of eating maror.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר:

*[Baruch ata adonai, elohenu melech ha'olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotavv'tzivanu ahl achilat maror.]*

Praised are You, Adonai, Master of All that Is,
Who has sanctified us with His commandments
and commanded us regarding the eating of bitter herbs.

SEDER LEADER

This is the point at the seder when we usually eat our dinner before continuing. Tonight, we'll eat a hard-boiled egg, then continue. We'll eat a full meal afterward. Let's eat the egg, and then go to our third cup of wine, honoring the third aspect of the Deliverance, “And I will redeem you.”

After the egg is eaten, this next paragraph is recited:

ALL

Behold, we are prepared to fulfill the third of the Four Cups.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch ata Adonai, Elo-hei-nu Melech Ha'olam, boreh pri ha'gafen.

The wine cups are filled a fourth time.

READER

At this point, we'd normally invite Elijah the Prophet into our homes and offer a prayer that all who would stand in the way of the peaceful world God envisioned will be vanquished. Let's offer that prayer now.

ALL

We pray for the day when there are no terrorist states and organizations, no totalitarian regimes, all of whom demonstrate a total disregard for human life and human dignity, who seek to subdue and dominate and enslave. We pray, as well, for the Final Redemption—a Redemption in which the only wars are on poverty, disease, and helplessness; where all live together as brothers and sisters; when all of us act as the stewards of God's creation, not its masters or its tormentors. In other words, we pray for a perfect world.

SEDER LEADER

We bless the wine one last time, honoring "And I will take you."

ALL

Behold, we are prepared to fulfill the fourth of the Four Cups.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch ata Adonai, Elo-hei-nu Melech Ha'olam, boreh pri ha'gafen.

READER

Now, we thank God for what we've consumed up to this point.

ALL

Praised are You, Adonai, our God, King of the Universe, for the vine and the fruit of the vine, and for the produce of the earth. May we live to rejoice on this the Festival of Matzot for many years to come, in health and well-being.

Praised are You, Adonai, for the land and for the fruit of the vine.

SEDER LEADER

We have completed the seder, the “agenda” for the evening, in its modified form to meet the circumstances of the moment. Those circumstances, however, require one more prayer. Let’s recite it together:

ALL

Adonai, our God, merciful and compassionate as You have always shown Yourself to be, in this dangerous time, we pray to You. Grant us the strength we will need to bring us in health of body and mind to better, safer days.

Grant to those who now tirelessly work to stem the tide of illness and death the knowledge they need to swiftly succeed in their sacred task.

Grant to those who put their own lives at risk to care for and save others the endless compassion, patience and resolve they will need, and keep them and their loved ones from all harm.

Grant to our leaders the wisdom and understanding required to avert future calamities of whatever magnitude.

In Your abundant mercy, grant ample health-giving sustenance to all who will suffer hardships and deprivations because of loss of income, or lack of sources of food, or lack of vital resources of any kind.

Grant us who are confined in our homes, love and understanding, patience and compassion, that we may not know strife in this trying time.

If we fail to recognize Your presence at this time, help us to see that You are with us now and always.

Help us, Adonai; strengthen the goodness and the humanity within all of us. Help us to treasure what is worthwhile in our lives, and to focus on these.

Help us to see beyond this pandemic to a brighter future for us and for all humankind.

May we be undisturbed by sadness, by sorrow, or by sighing during the holy hours of this Shabbat and every Shabbat from now on, and in all the days that come in between. Let the sounds of agony and anguish pass, so that again we may hear the sounds of joy and jubilation. Show us the path of life, the full joy of Your Presence, the bliss of being close to You forever. Amen.

READER

Thank you all for being a part of this with us. Our abbreviated seder completed. For those of you who are leaving us, thank you for participating. And we hope all us stay safe and stay healthy, not just in the days ahead, but all the time. Now let's eat.