

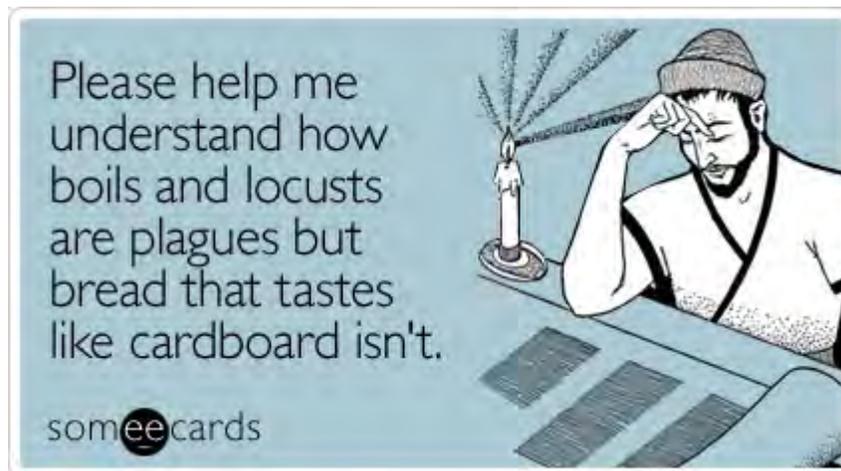


JWC SEDER 5774/2014

# The Differences that Connect Us

Sunday, April 20, 2014/21 Nisan 5774

Written/compiled by Laura Horowitz



Welcome to the 21st annual JWC Women's Seder.

Let's sing together, celebrating the masculine and feminine.

הָיָה מָאָה-טוֹב וּמָאָה-נְעִים,  
שָׁבַת אֲחִים גַּם יָחַד.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאֹר, כִּי-טוֹב; וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ.

*When God began to create heaven and earth — the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water — God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day. Bereshit 1:1-5*

וְהִיַּיְתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים, כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה; וְאַבְדַּלְתֶּם אֶתְכֶם מִן-הָעַמִּים הַיּוֹתֵל לִי.

*You are to be holy to me, for holy am I, YHWH; I have separated you from the (other) peoples to be mine! Vayikra 20:26*

The idea of separation is a key one for Jews. The very first thing God does is start making divisions in the unformed void of the universe. God sees that making separations is good. And God sees that the products of these separations are good. In the first chapter of Bereshit, all of creation, in its infinite diversity, is very good. Everything is necessary, everything is valued equally—that is, until humans are created.

Before Adam, God does not call any of creation evil. The concept would have been meaningless, because God is above evil, and the rest of creation is unable to appreciate moral differences. It is only after humans have been created that God brings forth the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Once the inevitable happens and Adam and Chavah eat from the forbidden tree, the task of humanity is to learn the difference between good and evil. Making distinctions is not uniquely human, of course. Knowing who poses a threat and what is safe to eat is the way animals survive. But only we assign moral values to the distinctions we perceive.

When we comprehend differences, we emulate God. But when we arbitrarily assign worth on the basis of value-neutral differences, we bring evil into the world. On this night which is different from all other nights, let us consider the notion of difference. Separation, distinction, classification: on what basis do we make these decisions? Would we do better to pretend that real differences don't exist? Or can we learn to acknowledge those differences without assigning value to them? How do

we hold on to our individual and group identities while still respecting those of other individuals and groups? And how can Judaism help us appreciate both the comfort of sameness and the necessity of difference?

## ***THE ORDER OF THE SEDER***

<i>Kadesh</i>	<i>Recite the kiddush</i>	קדש
<i>Urchatz</i>	<i>Wash the hands</i>	רחצו
<i>Karpas</i>	<i>Eat a green vegetable</i>	כרפס
<i>Yachatz</i>	<i>Break the middle matzah</i>	יחצ
<i>Maggid</i>	<i>Tell the Pesach story</i>	מגיד
<i>Rakhtzah</i>	<i>Wash the hands</i>	רחצה
<i>Motzi / Matzah</i>	<i>Say the blessing for matzah</i>	איצום/מצה
<i>Maror</i>	<i>Eat the bitter herb</i>	מרור
<i>Korekh</i>	<i>Eat bitter herb with matzah</i>	כורף
<i>Shulkhan Orekh</i>	<i>Serve the festive meal</i>	שולחן עורך
<i>Tzafun</i>	<i>Eat the Afikoman</i>	פון
<i>Barekh</i>	<i>Say the grace after meals</i>	ברך
<i>Hallel</i>	<i>Recite the Hallel</i>	הלל
<i>Nirtzah</i>	<i>Conclude the seder</i>	נרצה

## **WELCOMING EACH OTHER**

*We introduce ourselves by saying our names in English and/or Hebrew along with the names of our mothers. As you introduce yourself, feel free to invite your absent mothers, daughters, friends-any women with whom you would wish to share this women's ritual.*

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת מַעְיָן חַיֵּינוּ

שֶׁהַחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיּוּמֵנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה

*N'vareykh et ma'yan hayeynu shehecheyanu v'kiy manu v'higi'any laz'man hazeh.*

Let us bless the flow of life that revives us, sustains us, and brings us to this time.

## ***THE FIRST CUP***

*Pour wine for the person on your right, acknowledging our common humanity with our neighbor.*

... וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלַת מִצְרַיִם:

*V'hotzeiti etchem mitachat sivlot mitzrayim.*

I will bring you out from beneath the burdens of Mitzrayim. (Exodus 6:6)

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Nevareh et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri hagafen.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Let's start with the basics: people are different from one another, and human beings are highly attuned to noticing and evaluating those differences. Diversity within a species is a good thing from an evolutionary point of view, as it dilutes weaknesses and allows for the development of adaptive traits. But what is healthy for the species as a whole has created conflict within and among groups from the time we started recording our history. We understand the usefulness of working with our blood relatives and reproductive partners to make our genetic survival more likely. Fear and aggression are perhaps inevitable by-products of a struggle for scarce resources. But why do we react this way when resources are not scarce? And why, instead of consciously working to defuse this dynamic, do we continue to use difference to create hostility among groups who are not a threat to each other's existence?

**We dedicate our seder tonight to the memory of Rivka Haut, one of the mothers of Jewish feminism, who died last month. In addition to her ongoing work with agunot, Rivka inspired us to find our public voices by founding Women of the Wall in 1988. May her passion and courage inspire us always.**

*We begin with shame and end with praise.  
We begin with degradation and end with glory.*

## ***MIRIAM'S CUP***

*As we read, we pass Miriam's Cup around the table,  
each of us pouring water from our cup into hers.*

For centuries, Jews read about Miriam. We learned to admire the little girl whose pluck and commitment to her brother and her people made it possible for us to have a future. We celebrated her as a prophet-well, in those days, we called her a prophetess, of course. We revered her as a leader-of women. But then she decided that she had the same right of access to God as her brothers, and the same duty to uphold divine standards as Aharon. Then we remembered that she was no more than a volatile, presumptuous woman and we agreed that she deserved what she got.

When men tell our stories, they own the power to decide the endings. Feminism means telling our own stories and deciding our own fates.

**זאת כוס מרים כוס מים חיים. זכר ליציאת מצרים.**

*Zot kos Miryam, kos mayim chayim. Zeicher litziat Mitzrayim.*

*This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. May we, like the children of Israel leaving Egypt, be guarded and nurtured and kept alive in the wilderness, and may You give us wisdom to understand that the journey itself holds the promise of redemption.*

### ***The Water in the Well***

***Debbie Friedman***

*Spring up oh well  
And sing ye into it!*

***Chorus: Oh the water in the well  
And the healing in the well  
The women and the water  
And the hope that's in the well***

***When the world was created  
There was heaven and dry land  
And all the waters gathered***

***It was in Miriam's honor  
That the first well came to be  
To celebrate her music***

*Upon hearing God's command  
There was a bit of water  
That was left, or so they tell  
That was the water that became  
The water from the well*

*Her dance and prophecy  
And the people turned to Miriam  
When their spirits rose and fell  
She nourished all their visions  
With the water from the well*

*Chorus*

*Chorus*

*For the memory of the women  
For the memory of the well  
For the ones who came before us  
Their stories we must tell  
We are searching for the waters  
Where we wander, where we dwell  
For Miriam and all of us  
Who thirst to find the well!*

*Chorus*

## ***URCHATZ – WASHING*    **וְרַחֲצֵי****

Washing our hands before a meal is normal behavior for us. What, then, makes this washing different? And why do we wash twice?

These washings are not for the sake of hygiene. They are steps into our own Seas of Reeds. We prepare to undertake the seder journey, dividing before from after, dividing slavery from freedom, dividing mere existence from living with purpose and intention. These steps can be scary-walking into the unknown always is. So we look to our sisters on the journey to impart their strength to us. We don't have to plunge into the Sea alone. We enact our mutual support as we wash each other's hands.

*Pour a bit of water from Miriam's Cup into the bowl of water for washing.*

*This washing is done in silence, without a blessing*

## ***KARPAS – GREENS*    **כַּרְפָּס****

How do you turn a potato into a green vegetable? By putting it on a seder plate! Some of us may have grown up with the Eastern European tradition of dipping a boiled potato into salt water for karpas. We look at a plain white potato and we see and taste the green of spring. The potato hasn't changed, but our experience of it has. Perhaps identity is not as immutable as we think...

*Dip greens or potato in salt water and say:*

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה.

*Nevareh et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri ha'adamah.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who creates fruit of the earth.

Where does identity come from? Who gets to decide how any individual or group is labeled? For most of human history, we had no choice in our identity. Most people stayed in the geographical area in which they were born, retaining the same language, religion, and culture through generations. Someone who wanted to create an individual identity was seen as a threat to the cohesion of the group, and cohesion was the best way to find safety.

Today the power of group identity is collapsing at an increasingly rapid rate. People around the world are generally able to leave their homelands and move wherever they choose, making national identity a choice rather than an unchangeable fact. We can join and leave religions freely in many places. Language barriers continue to fall as thousands of regional languages dwindle or disappear under the power of a few dominant, mostly Western, languages. The increasing ease of accessing media erases differences in local cultural cohesiveness as we increasingly share our books, music, art, and movies with the world, and they with us.

Identity blurring and confusion can cause social tensions. Whereas identity was once something that was imposed on an individual by parents, communities, religions, and governments, it is increasingly something that individuals choose for themselves. Identities that have been sources of shame for centuries are now claimed with pride, to the bewilderment and anger of those who see that pride as an attack on the values and culture they know. What one person sees as joyous and fulfilling, another sees as rejecting and disrespectful.

**YAHATZ יָחַץ**

## ***BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH***

In this cover are 3 pieces of matzah. In appearance, they are small variations on a basic theme. They came out of the same box. They will all taste the same when we eat them. But one is separated out, given an identity, and prized over the other two. The matzah didn't choose to be special. We made it special because we needed to, not because the middle piece was inherently different from the other two. Yet once we make the separation, we relate to the broken piece differently than we do to its companions. This process doesn't teach us anything about the matzah. But maybe it teaches us something about us.

**הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיא**

# HA LACHMA ANYA

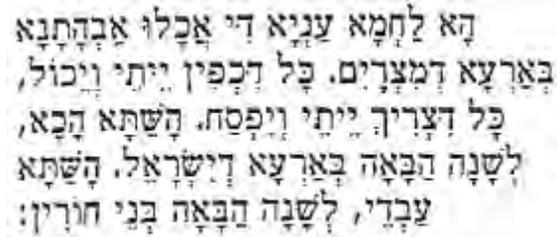
This is the bread of affliction, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.

Let all who are hungry come and eat.

Let all who are in need, come and celebrate Passover.

Today, we are here. Next year, in the land of Israel.

Today, we are slaves. Next year, we will be free.



הָא לַחְמַא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֹתָנָא  
בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כּוֹל דְּכַפִּין יִיתִי וַיִּכּוֹל,  
כּוֹל דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וַיִּפְסַח. הַשְׁתָּא הָבָא,  
לְשָׁנָה הָבָא בְּאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל. הַשְׁתָּא  
עֲבָדִי, לְשָׁנָה הָבָא בְּנֵי חוֹרִין:

*Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b'ara d'mitzrayim.*

*Kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichol, kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach.*

*Hashatahacha, l'shanah haba-ah b'ara d'yisra-eil.*

*Hashata avdei, l'shanah haba-ah b'nei chorin.*

Ha Lahma Anya refers to the matzah, but then goes on to address people who aren't even sitting at the seder table, who may not be Jewish at all! Why start the seder, a chance to recall our history, with this stirring but unrelated call to feed the hungry? What does this have to do with Pesach?

These words remind us that we are still in galut, still in exile. Not only because we don't live in a redeemed Land of Israel, but because the world is still so distant from the vision of the Torah, still alienated from the attainment of harmonious and compassionate living. Too many go to bed hungry each night, too many still die of illnesses for which there are cures and too many suffer the deadening blows of bigotry and prejudice from their fellow human beings.

All who are hungry may come and eat, but only if we live our lives and structure our society in such a way that the entire human family is cared for. Sadly, that is not the case today. In celebrating the liberation from Egyptian slavery, we need to look to ourselves, to recognize that we too often play the role of Pharaoh in the lives of others—as individuals by not welcoming those different than ourselves; as a community by not extending ourselves to the outcast, impoverished and hungry; as a people by not honoring other cultures and faiths as we would hope to be honored. (adapted from Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson)

**MAGGID**      מַגִּיד  
**TELLING THE STORY**

בְּכָל-דּוֹר וְדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת-עַצְמוֹ, כְּאִלוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם,

*B'chol dor v'dor chayav adam lirot et atzmo ki'elul hu yatzah m'mitzrayim*

Every religion and culture has a foundational myth. The Pesach story is ours. It is where we learn the difference between the Jewish people and all other peoples. Naturally, we are the heroes of our story, and where there is a hero, there must be a villain. Torah treats moral difference as though it were physical: inborn, evident, and unchanging. Once we human beings learn to separate people in this way, it seems that we cannot stop doing it, even when circumstances do not justify such judgments.

## ***THE FOUR QUESTIONS***

On seder night, we work hard to create a ritual meal that is dramatically unlike any other meal we eat during the year. On seder night, differences are meant to be noticed, questioned, honored, and enjoyed. They need not be feared or ignored. The seder reminds us that difference is part of the world God made. As we celebrate this night of difference, let us carry that lesson into our interactions with those with whom we share this world.

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?  
שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה. הלילה הזה כולו מצה.  
שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות הלילה הזה מרור.  
שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת הלילה הזה שתי פעמים.  
שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין ובין מסבין הלילה הזה כלנו מסבין

*Mah nishtanah halaila hazeh mikol halaylot!*

*Shebakhhol halaylot anu okhleen khamaytz u'matzah, halaila hazeh kulo matzah.*

*Shebakhhol halaylot anu okhleen sh'ahr y'rakot, halaila hazeh maror.*

*Shebakhhol halaylot ayn anu matbeeelen afeelu pa'am akhat, halaila hazeh sh'tay f'ameem.*

*Shebakhhol halaylot anu okh'leen beyn yoshveen u'vayn m'subeen, halaila hazeh kulanu m'subeen*

How different this night is from all other nights!

On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread, why on this night do we eat only matzah?

On all other nights, we eat vegetables of all kinds, why on this night must we eat bitter herbs?

On all other nights, we do not dip vegetables even once, why on this night do we dip greens into salt water and bitter herbs into sweet charoset?

On all other nights, everyone sits up straight at the table, why on this night do we recline and eat at leisure?

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים.

## *Avadim hayinu l'Pharoah b'mitzrayim*

We begin with degradation and end with dignity. We begin with shame and conclude with praise. We were slaves in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. Had not the Holy One liberated our people from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children would still be enslaved. Therefore, we tell the story and teach it to our children. And even if all of us were wise scholars, we would still be obligated to tell the story. And even if all of us were sages, experienced in the ways of the world, we would still be obligated to tell the story. And even if all of us were knowledgeable in Torah, we would still be obligated to tell the story. Whoever expands upon the story of the Exodus from Egypt is worthy of praise.

בעבדות היינו עתה בנות חורין

*B'av-dut ha-yi-nu* we have been enslaved.  
Tonight, we vow: May we always be free!

*Sing together:*

*B'av-dut ha-yi-nu a-ta b'not chorin.*

Once we were enslaved, but now we are free.

## *THE FOUR CHILDREN*

כנגד עהארב בנים תורה דברה: אחד חכם,

ואחד רשע, ואחד תם ואחד שאינו יודע: לשאול

*K'neged arba banim di'bra Torah:*

*Echad Hacham, Echad Rasha, Echad Tahm, V'echad Sheh'eino Yodeah Leeshol.*

*The Torah speaks of four types of children: one is wise, one is wicked, one is simple, and one does not know how to ask.*

*The wise one asks: "What is the meaning of the laws and traditions God has commanded?" (Deuteronomy 6:20) You should teach her all the traditions of Passover, even to the last detail.*

*The wicked one asks: "What does this ritual mean to you?" (Exodus 12:26) By using the expression "to you" this child excludes himself from his people and denies God. Challenge his arrogance and say to him: "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt..." (Exodus 13:8) "For me" and not for him -- for had he been in Egypt, he would not have been freed.*

*The simple one asks: "What is all this?" You should tell her: "It was with a mighty hand that the Lord took us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 13:14)*

*As for the one who does not know how to ask, you should open the discussion for him, as it is written: "And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'" (Exodus 13:8)*

There were four children at the seder. One continually interrupted the ritual to ask trivial, self-important questions. Another wondered aloud what the ritual meant to the others around the table. A third wanted to know about the origins of each component of the seder. The fourth was focused inwardly, experiencing the seder as a spiritual practice, and said little to anyone else. Which one was wise, which wicked, which simple, and which unable to ask? Or...were the labels more a reflection of those who assigned them than of those who bore them?

*My family never intended to wander from their home. They had lived in the same place as long as anyone could remember. But then-drought, famine, war, economic collapse-and they found themselves in a new, strange land where no one looked like them or spoke their language or celebrated the same holidays. They worked hard and kept to themselves. Because their new land was in need of cheap labor, the local people grudgingly accepted their presence. We never forgot our homeland, and many of us hoped that this was only a sojourn, a temporary dislocation. But over time, others from our homes came to the new land too. And our numbers grew.*

*Then the leaders of our new land became worried that the newcomers were becoming too noticeable. They consulted each other, saying, "Those people are forgetting their place. Let us then deal shrewdly with them, lest they become more powerful, and in the event of war, join our enemies in fighting against us and gain control over the region." So they took steps to divide themselves from us. They referred to us by insulting labels rather than our names. They said we looked and smelled and spoke in ways no decent person would. Their children attacked ours on the way to and from school. They wrote laws restricting our ability to live and work where we chose. They tore down our neighborhood and forced us into housing developments. They attacked us for using our own language and made it illegal for us to marry their children. If our new country got into hostilities with our old country, we changed our names to hide our origins, and we were treated like spies and herded into camps if we could not.*

*We cried out to the God of our ancestors to see our plight, our misery, and our oppression. But God did not answer. And as soon as a new group arrived, as ragged, hungry, frightened, and desperate as we had been, we showed what we had learned by treating them the way we had been treated.*

*All raise their cups of wine.*

And God said to Abram, "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end they shall go free with great wealth. (Genesis 15:13-14)

*All replace their cups untasted.*

## ***V'HI SHE'AMDA***

*Sing together:*

וְהִיא שְׂעֵמְדָה      V'hi she'amda  
לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וּלְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ.      la'avoteinu ul'imoteinu velanu.

And She stood by us and She protected us, and gently guided us to this day.

It is this promise that has sustained our ancestors and sustains us. For neither once, nor twice, nor three times was our destruction planned; in every generation they rise against us to destroy us, and in every generation a Divine Power delivers us from their hands into freedom.

We have been the beneficiaries of God's love and care. If we learn hatred from our story, we have failed God, ourselves, and all of humanity. Shekhinah, soften our hearts and the hearts of our enemies. Help us to dream new paths to freedom, so that the next sea-opening is not also a drowning; so that our singing is never again their wailing. So that our freedom leaves no one orphaned, childless, gasping for air. ([www.ritualwell.com](http://www.ritualwell.com))

## ***THE TEN PLAGUES***

God brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great awe and with signs and wonders.

*We recite the plagues, removing a drop of wine from our cups for each plague. "If your enemy falls, do not exult. If your enemy stumbles, your heart should not rejoice." (Proverbs 24:17)*

God brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians and they were:

Blood

Dam

דָּם

Frogs	<i>Tzfarde'ah</i>	צְפַרְדֵּיִעַ
Lice	<i>Kinim</i>	כְּנִים
Insect swarms	<i>Arov</i>	עֲרוֹב
Cattle plague	<i>Dever</i>	דֶּבֶר
Boils	<i>Sh'chin</i>	שִׁחִין
Hail	<i>Barad</i>	בָּרָד
Locusts	<i>Arbeh</i>	אַרְבֶּה
Darkness	<i>Choshech</i>	חֹשֶׁךְ
Death of the First-Born	<i>Makat B'chorot</i>	בְּכוֹרוֹת מַכַּת

*Sing together:*

***None of us are free till all of us are free***

We bring plagues of discrimination upon ourselves, and they include:

### **Racism**

“People are just people.” “I don’t see color.” “We’re all just human.” “Character, not color, is what counts with me.”

“Colorblindness” negates the cultural values, norms, expectations and life experiences of people of color. Even if an individual white person can ignore a person’s skin color, society does not. Claiming to be “colorblind” can also be a defense when someone is afraid to discuss racism, especially if the assumption is that all conversation about race or color is racist. Color consciousness does not equal racism. White people are allowed to be proud of our ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Yet we deny the same experience to people of color. (adapted from A. Moore in the Atlanta Black Star)

### **Sexism**

Recently, Rabbi Ari Hart, of the Orthodox social justice organization Uri Tzedek, published a piece on HuffPo in which he attempted to explain how he justifies reciting the “shelo asani isha” bracha,

the daily blessing thanks God for not making the praying person a woman. His argument was that in saying the bracha, he reminds himself every day how women are disadvantaged in our society and in our religion. In this way, he preserves Jewish tradition while challenging his own privilege.

Is this a convincing argument?

Dvora Meyers, writing on Jewcy.com, says, “The problems with the blessing...cannot be explained away. In a small way, “shelo asani” contributes to all of the ills that Hart opposes and even some others, like homophobia, since the blessing implies that the worst thing a man can be is feminine. It’s not just a locker room taunt—it’s written into our liturgy. We have to do better than finding a more palatable explanation.

What’s so disappointing about the Huffington Post defense of “shelo asani” is the source. Hart has made a **career** out of helping the poor and aiding workers, out of taking action against injustice, out of doing something. Of course, helping those groups doesn’t fundamentally disrupt the halachic system...We are supposed to perform acts of charity and treat the goy in our midst with kindness and dignity. We are not allowed to mistreat workers and deprive them of pay or even make them wait for their money. But when Hart is confronted with the idea of change that could be disruptive to the Orthodox status quo—addressing women’s status and treatment—he doesn’t respond with the same verve. He seems to feel powerless to do anything, even amending or omitting a blessing.”

Despite halachic approval, we have managed to eliminate slavery and polygamy from our Jewish practice. Why is eliminating sexism so far out of reach?

## **The Gender Binary**

A parent of an infant sits in the park with the baby in a stroller. People walk by and smile, and some stop to chat. “Your baby is beautiful! Is it a boy or a girl?” “I don’t know yet. All I know is what body parts it was born with. But, you know, biological sex doesn’t necessarily correlate to gender identity. So we’re waiting for the baby to tell us!”

We have just started learning about gender identity and how it comes about. For many of us, the idea that there can be more than two genders violates common sense. But sex, which is defined by body parts, is not gender, which is defined externally by social norms and internally by what every individual feels themselves to be. Challenging the gender binary can create profound fear and anxiety in many people. But since when is it required that you understand someone else in order to respect that person? As a poster on the blog DearCisPeople said, “I shouldn’t have to explain my gender for you to treat me like a human”.

## **Nativism**

The belief that people born in this country are somehow better Americans than those who have emigrated has a long and ignoble history. Even famously broad-minded Ben Franklin had his xenophobic moments, saying in 1751 that our own state was becoming “a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them and will never adopt our

Language or Customs any more than they can acquire our Complexion.” (Peter Schrag, “Unwanted: Immigration and Nativism in America)

## **Homophobia**

It is an exceedingly rare phenomenon to see public opinion reverse itself as rapidly and dramatically as it has in regard to acceptance of gay and lesbian people in this century. The change is heartening, but the battle is far from over. A recent study published in Social Science and Medicine looked at the connection between homophobia and death rates for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. According to the Daily Mail, “The researchers were able to examine whether mortality risk differed for LGB individuals who lived in communities that were characterised by high versus low levels of prejudice. By the end of the study, 92 per cent of LGB respondents living in low-prejudice communities were still alive. But only 78 per cent of the LGB respondents living in high-prejudice communities were still alive. The researchers also found that the risk of suicide, murder/violence, and cardiovascular diseases were much higher among LGB people in high-prejudice communities.”

The infamous text from Leviticus 18:22 reads, "*V'et-zachar lo tishkav mish'k'vei ishah*," and is generally translated, "Do not lie with a male as you would lie with women." The common liberal rationalization for this text is that it was referring to practices of polytheistic peoples who lived adjacent to the ancient Israelis. Are we then to believe that there were no gay or lesbians among our ancestors? Or should we understand the text as a case of the majority externalizing something it feared about itself?

## **Cultural Bias**

Who decided that Europe is “the West” and Asia is “the East”? West and east of what? Do people in Africa or Afghanistan really think of themselves as residents of the Third World? Is spring in May normal when half the world experiences spring in November? Cultural bias is deeply imbedded in every society, and members of the majority culture are rarely aware of it-until they travel outside their own culture. The consequences of cultural bias in a country as heterogeneous as ours are subtle, yet persistent and pernicious. The majority unthinkingly assumes that everyone shares its standards of beauty, ways of marking lifecycle events, understanding of cultural identifiers. Those who do not are too easily considered to be stupid, primitive, arrogant, disloyal.

We may not be able to eliminate cultural bias completely. But we can be aware of it, and understand how it leads to division, disrespect, and misunderstanding. If opening a Mexican restaurant isn't perceived as a threat to American values, why can't the owners speak Spanish there?

## **Ageism**

“Young people are just smarter,” Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg told an audience at Stanford back in 2007. As I write, the website of ServiceNow, a large Santa Clara-based I.T. services company, features the following advisory in large letters atop its careers page: “We Want People Who Have Their Best Work Ahead of Them, Not Behind Them.” (Noam Schreiber in The New Republic,

3/23/14) An employer who excluded whole races or genders from consideration for jobs would be sued, and would lose. But blatant ageism seems perfectly reasonable in American culture.

And for women, it's-surprise-even worse. "Scientists at Duke University's Center for Metamaterials and Integrated Plasmonics are close to perfecting an "invisibility cloak," a breakthrough they have been working on since 2006. While I appreciate their efforts, I want to give them a tip: If you want to make a person invisible, just put them in the shoes of an over-fifty woman and abracadabra, watch them disappear.

For many of us, the daily process of aging is manageable and often not even that noteworthy. Maybe one day you see a new line or wrinkle on your face, or your knee begins aching after a weekend stroll, or your night vision seems to be increasingly spotty. But on a day-to-day basis, it's not that bad. Invisibility is different. It's the feeling you are no longer vital or important or noticeable to others, a constant nagging pain you can neither avoid nor forget.

(<http://feministing.com/2013/04/04/ageism-and-the-magical-invisibility-cloak/>)

Most cultures throughout human history venerated and honored the old, respecting their life experience and wisdom. Why do we allow our old people to be dismissed and mocked?

### **Ableism**

If you are born with a disability, is disability normal for you? Are we being insulting to people with disabilities when we say that something is lame, or that someone is crazy? Should we try to fix or cure people with different abilities? What defines quality of life in the first place?

In "Far From the Tree", his remarkable book about innate differences within families, Andrew Solomon writes, "Almost any characteristic can be experienced as an identity or an illness, and it is our human limitation not to be able to hold both points of view in mind at once. If we strive to do so, however, we may discover that while individual differences are lonely, the fact of difference is common to most of humanity." We can start by listening to the voices of those whose physical or mental abilities don't fit within the common definition of "normal".

### **Classism**

"When someone works for less pay than she can live on — when, for example, she goes hungry so that you can eat more cheaply and conveniently — then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health, and her life. The 'working poor,' as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and stock prices high. To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else." Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*

The idea that the class into which we are born is the one we deserve is magical thinking at its most dangerous, and struggling Americans deserve better.

## Religious Bias

When we claim that our religion is the only one that God approves of, we diminish both God and ourselves. Surely God, being infinite, has infinite appreciation for the wide diversity of human religious expression. Why is it so important to us what other people say and do in their houses of worship, or if they worship at all? If we treat each other with kindness and respect, we emulate the divine quality of gemilut chesed, regardless of our prayer habits. And if we pray, alone or in a group, but use religious differences as excuses for suspicion, separation, and hostility, then our words are worse than empty.

When faced with these modern "plagues," how often do we doubt or question our own ability to make a difference? How often do we feel paralyzed because we do not know what to do to bring about change?

## ***DA'YENU - A SONG OF GRATITUDE***     דַּיְנוּ

In Torah, Pharaoh brought the plagues upon the Egyptians because he refused to follow God's instructions, even at the cost of his own people's lives. In our world, the plagues from which we suffer are all too often of our own creation. Dayenu can be heard as a song of joy and pride-or it can be heard as reveling in a relationship with God which was based on exclusion. But what if we think of the gifts in Dayenu as not exclusively ours? For us, these particular gifts are worth recording because they make our lives better and bring our souls closer to the divine. But these gifts were never meant to belong only to us, and if we think that God's gifts flow only to one people, we miss the purpose for which God brought us out of Egypt.

Mitzrayim represents the struggle all people face to escape their individual and collective constraints so that they can be what they are capable of being. Shabbat is the acknowledgement that we are creatures of spirit as well as body, and to be fully human, we must cease from our physical labors regularly to protect and grow our divine sparks. And Torah is the moral code that reminds us of our job in the world-to work for peace, respect, and justice for all.

How many are the gifts that God has granted us!

Had God taken us out of Egypt without  
bringing judgments against them...Da'yenu!  
Had God brought judgments against them  
without carrying us across the Sea...Da'yenu!  
Had God carried us across the Sea without  
caring for us for forty years...Da'yenu!

Had God cared for us for forty years  
without giving us the Sabbath...Da'yenu!  
Had God given us the Sabbath without the

gift of Torah on Mount Sinai...Da'yenu!  
Had God given us the Torah without  
bringing us into the land of Israel...Da'yenu!

*Ee'lu hotzee, hotzee'anu, hotzee'anu me'mitzraim, da'yenu*

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים דינו!

אלו נתן לנו את-השבת נודי!

אלו נתן לנו התורה דינו!

## ***THE SECOND CUP***

**והצילתי אתכם מעבדותם** V'hitzalti etchem mei'avodatam

*I will deliver you from servitude.*

נברך את רוח העולם בוראת פרי הגפן.

*Nevarəḥ et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri hagafen.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who creates the fruit of the vine.

***ROCHTZA*** רְחִיצָה

***WASHING THE HANDS***

*We wash our hands as we prepare to eat the festive meal. As we wash, we feel slavery slide off our skin. We remain silent from the washing until we say the blessing over the matzah.*

נְבָרֶךְ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁתָנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיהָ וְצִוָּתָנוּ עַל  
נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

*Nevareh et ruah ha'olam asher kideshatnu bemitzvot<sup>e</sup>ha  
vetzivatnu al netilat yadayim.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who has made us holy with  
the *mitzvot* and commanded us to wash our hands.

## ***PESACH, MATZAH, MAROR***

Rabban Gamliel, the first century sage who compiled the hagaddah, established the basics for the observance of Passover. He taught that those who have not explained these three things during the Seder have not fulfilled their obligation: pesach, matzah, maror.

### ***PESACH* פֶּסַח**

*Point to the shank bone and say:*

In the days of the Temple, our ancestors ate the *pesach*, the special Passover sacrifice. Why did they eat it? It reminded them that at the time of the last plague, the Holy One *pasach*, passed over, the houses of the Hebrews.

### ***MATZAH* מַצָּה**

*Raise the three matzot and say:*

*This matzah-why do we eat it? "It was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and they could not delay..." (Exodus 12:39)*

### ***MOTZI/MATZAH* מוֹצֵי מַצָּה**

נְבָרְךָ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיָאָה לָחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Nevareh et ruah ha'olam hamotziah lehem min ha'aretz.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who brings forth bread from the earth.

נְבָרְךָ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁתָנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיהָ וְצִוָּתָנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

*Nevareh et ruah ha'olam asher kideshatnu bemitzvoteha vetzivatnu al ahilat matzah.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who has made us holy with the *mitzvot* and commanded us to eat matzah.

בְּכָל־דֹּר וְדֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ, כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא יָם־מִמִּצְרַיִם

*In every generation, each person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt.*

- Mishna Pesachim 10:5

*In every generation, each person is obligated to show himself as if he personally went out just now from the slavery of Egypt.*

- Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah; Laws of Hametz and Matzah 7:6*

In the Sephardic text of the Hagaddah, the command to project oneself back into the exodus narrative appears in a slightly, but meaningfully, different form. There, the obligation is to *show* oneself (*l'harot et atmzo*) as having come forth from Egypt. With the addition of a single Hebrew letter, this version changes the obligation from one commanding personal reflection to one governing the way in which one acts in the world...The obligation to “see” and/or “show” oneself as a liberated slave suggests that memory is a two-fold process that involves both reflection and action. (*Rabbi Jill Jacob*)

שָׁמָּה כָּלָנוּ וְהֵיינוּ

*Shama Kulanu V'Hayinu*

And we were *all* there.

**MAROR** מָרוֹר

*Raise the maror and say:*

These bitter herbs-why do we eat them? To remind ourselves that the Egyptians made our lives bitter "with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field that they made [us] perform." (Exodus 1:14)

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת רֵיחַ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁתָנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיהָ וְצִוָּתָנוּ עַל  
אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

*Nevaréh et ruah ha'olam asher kideshatnu bemitzvotéha  
vetzivatnu al ahilat maror.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who has made us holy with  
*mitzvot* and commanded us to eat *maror*.

*Dip the maror in charoset and eat.*

## **CHAROSET**      חָרוֹסֶת

Charoset, unlike maror, is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah. The fact that we made bricks is recounted in the Torah, and we are commanded to tell the story. Part of telling the story is making it real by having tangible symbols. The Torah not only gives us matzah and maror, but gives us guidelines for how to make every aspect of the meal symbolic. When Rabbi Eliezer bar Tzadok calls charoset a mitzvah, he is signaling that irrespective of the original reason for having charoset, there is an opportunity to symbolize another aspect of the story. It is a mitzvah to take charoset and give it a kind of meaning that enriches the story of the hagaddah. For anyone who tells more of the story is considered praiseworthy.

-<http://rabbiarthursegal.blogspot.com/2008/04/rabbi-arthur-segalthe-real-reason-for.html>

## **KOREKH**      כּוֹרֵךְ

### **THE HILLEL SANDWICH**

In Talmud Pesachim, Rava teaches, "A person who swallows matzah without chewing fills the mitzvah, the commandment, to eat matzah. However, a person who swallows maror without chewing doesn't fulfill the mitzvah to eat maror." This time, though, since we've already said the bracha over maror, we are permitted to temper the experience with the sweetness of charoset. What will we taste last, the bitter or the sweet?

**BEITZAH**

**צ'יבה**

## ***THE EGG***

Where's the roasted egg? Let's think about why we traditionally put a roasted egg on the seder plate in the first place. It is commonly seen as a substitute for the special sacrifice we brought to the Temple at Pesach, which we can no longer make since the Temple has been gone. But really, if the Temple reappeared tomorrow, would we want to return to animal sacrifice? So let's think about the other meaning commonly ascribed to the egg—a symbol of spring and rebirth. But many other things make us think of spring. Can we name a few? This evening, spring is represented by a fragrant flower, and rebirth is represented by the seeds which we can now eat and enjoy!

## ***THE ORANGE***

During a holiday that fosters both memory and creativity..., the seder plate, whose rituals were established at least a millennium ago, has increasingly become that palette on which Jews express their social, political and theological concerns.

Symbolic items that have found their way onto the seder plate over the years include:

- ◆ potato peelings or beets, to commemorate Jews who starved during the Holocaust.
- ◆ a fourth matzah, for Soviet Jews who were not free to practice Judaism.
- ◆ a roasted potato or a boiled beet, in place of a shank bone, for vegetarians who don't want meat on their tables. Other people used the potato as a symbol of solidarity with Ethiopian Jews who, because of their earlier near-starvation diets, were unable to eat much substantial food when they first arrived in Israel.
- ◆ an olive, for peace in the Middle East.
- ◆ a crust of bread, to express the exclusion of women and homosexuals from parts of the Jewish community.
- ◆ an artichoke, a symbol for interfaith families.
- ◆ a plantain, symbolizing oppression in Cuba.
- ◆ an empty picture frame or an unlit candle, to symbolize China's suppression of Tibet, including its ban on pictures the Dalai Lama.
- ◆ Fair Trade chocolate or cocoa beans, a symbol of forced labor.
- ◆ a tomato, to symbolize the exploitation of agricultural workers
- ◆ during the Civil War, a brick. It was an innovation by a Union soldier who was unable, during a battle, to provide charoset.

## ספירת העומר

# COUNTING THE OMER

*Together:*

ברוכה את יה אלהינו ריח העולם  
אשר קדשנו במצותיה וצונו  
על ספירת העומר: B'rucha at yah eloheinu ruach ha'olam  
asher kid'shatnu b'mitzvotaha v'tzivatnu  
al s'firat ha'omer.

You are blessed, Our God, Spirit of the  
World, who makes us holy with *mitzvot* and  
commands us to count the *Omer*.

6. היום ששה ימים לעומר

*Hayom shishah yamim la'omer.*

Today is the sixth day of the Omer.

שֻׁלְחַן עוֹרֵיךְ Shulchan Oreich

DINNER IS SERVED

צפון

## SHARING THE AFIKOMAN DESSERT

*Pieces of the afikomen are distributed to each person to complete the meal. We eat the broken matzah together, thus restoring wholeness by sharing the experience.*

# *BIRKAT HAMAZON* הַסְזוֹן בְּרַכַּת

## *BLESSINGS AFTER THE MEAL*

*V'achalta, v'savata u'veyrachta. You shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless.*

We ate when we were hungry  
And now we're satisfied  
We thank the Source of Blessing  
for all that is provided

Giving and receiving  
We open up our hands  
From seedtime through harvest  
We're partners on the land

*V'achalta, v'savata u'veyrachta (2x)*

*V'achalta, v'savata u'veyrachta (2x)*

Hunger is a yearning in  
body and soul  
Earth, Air, Fire, Water  
And Spirit make us whole

We share in a vision  
of wholeness and release  
Where every child is nourished  
and we all live in peace

*V'achalta, v'savata u'veyrachta (2x)*

*V'achalta, v'savata u'veyrachta (2x)*

## ***THE THIRD CUP***

**וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדוֹתֵיכֶם**

*V'hitzalti etchem mei'avodatam*

*I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.*

**נְבָרֶךְ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.**

*Nevarah et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri hagafen.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who creates the fruit of the vine.

## ***HALLEL***

הללויה.	Hal'lu'yah. (4x)
הללו אל־בְּקֹדֶשׁוֹ	Hal'lu eil b'kodsho,
הללוהו בְּרִקְיעַ עֲזוֹ:	hal'luhu birki'a uzo.
הללוהו בְּגִבּוֹרֹתָיו	Hal'luhu bigvurotav,
הללוהו כְּרֹב גְּדֻלּוֹ:	hal'luhu k'rov gud'lo.
הללויה.	Hal'lu'yah. (4x)
הללוהו בְּתִיקַע שׁוֹפָר	Hal'luhu b'teika shofar,
הללוהו בְּנִבְל וְכִנּוֹר:	hal'luhu b'neivel v'chinor.
הללוהו בְּתוֹף וּמַחּוֹל	Hal'luhu b'tof umachol,
הללוהו בְּמִינִים וְעִגָּב:	hal'luhu b'minim v'ugav.
הללויה.	Hal'lu'yah. (4x)
הללוהו בְּצִלְצִלֵי־שָׁמַע	Hal'luhu b'tziltz'lei shama,
הללוהו בְּצִלְצִלֵי תְרוּעָה:	hal'luhu b'tziltz'lei t'rua.
כֹּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה.	Kol han'shama t'haleil yah.
כֹּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה.	Kol han'shama t'haleil yah.
הללויה.	Hal'lu'yah. (4x)

## ***POUR OUT YOUR...?***

In a traditional seder, we open the front door at this point in preparation for the arrival of Elijah the Prophet, the harbinger of the Messianic Age. But before we do that, we take a moment to call upon God to destroy our neighbors. The text is harsh and full of rage: "Pour out Your fury on the nations that do not know you, and upon the kingdoms that do not invoke Your name, for they have devoured Jacob and destroyed his home. Pour out Your wrath on them; may Your blazing anger overtake them. Pursue them in wrath and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord."

We bear a heavy burden of historical pain. But we forget too easily that we are far from the only people who do. How can we remember our past but not be ruled by it? How can we use our pain to deepen our compassion for all who suffer, even those who have treated us harshly?

## ***ELIJAH'S CUP***

*Eliyahu ha-navi, Eliyahu ha-tishbi,*

*Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu ha-giladi.*

*Bim-hei-rah be'yamenu, yavo eileinu,*

*im mashiach ben David, im mashiach ben David.*

אֵלֵינוּ תִּשְׁבֵּי, אֵלֵינוּ תִּשְׁבֵּי,  
אֵלֵינוּ תִּשְׁבֵּי, אֵלֵינוּ תִּשְׁבֵּי,  
בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ יָבֵא אֵלֵינוּ  
עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד.

**Elijah the Prophet, the Tishbite, Elijah of Gilead:**

soon, in our days, Elijah will come to herald the redemption.

*Miriam ha-n'vi'ah oz v'zimrah b'yadah.*

מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיעָה זֶע בְּזִמְרָה בְּיָדָהּ

*Miriam tirkod itanu l'taken et ha-olam.*

מִרְיָם תִּרְקַד אִתָּנוּ לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם

*Bimheirah v'yameinu hi t'vi'einu*

בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵנוּ הִיא תְּבִיאֵנוּ

*El mei ha-y'shuah; el mei ha-y'shuah!*

אֵל מִי הַיְשׁוּעָה, אֵל מִי הַיְשׁוּעָה

*Miriam the prophet, strength and song in her hand; Miriam, dance with us in order to increase the song of the world! Miriam, dance with us in order to repair the world. Soon she will bring us to the waters of redemption!*

## ***THE FOURTH CUP***

**וְלָקַחְתִּי אִתְּכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים** V'lakachti etchem li l'am v'hayiti lachem leilohim

*I will take you to be my people and I will be your God.*

נְבָרַךְ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרְאֵת פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

*Nevarəḥ et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri hagafen.*

We bless the spirit of the world, who creates the fruit of the vine.

# נְרֻצָּה

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם:

## ***L'SHANA HA-BA B'YERUSHALAYIM***

***NEXT YEAR, MAY WE CELEBRATE IN A JERUSALEM AT  
PEACE***

***NEXT YEAR, MAY WE CELEBRATE IN A WORLD  
HEALED AND FREE***

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Laura Horowitz

## Music

Miriam's Song-Debbie Friedman

V'achalta-Hannah Tiferet Siegel

Hallelu-Rabbi R. Matalon

Shehechianu, Motzi-Hirshhorn