

JWC SEDER 2018/5778

Tuesday, April 3/19 Nisan

Written/compiled by Laura Horowitz and Julie Newman



INTRODUCTION

How do you define yourself? With what groups do you identify yourself? How would you complete the statement, “I am a _____” Did you choose those identities or did someone else choose them for you? Were you born with them? Has your self-definition changed over time? Do your identities ever clash with each other?

A seder is a perfect opportunity for us to explore the ways we understand ourselves. We Jews have developed multiple identities as we moved from place to place, lived from one era to another, encountered others like or unlike ourselves. Although the Exodus story takes place in a single locale over the lifetime of one particular man, the Haggadah we gives us a sense of the multiplicity of ways we define ourselves. We are both slave and free, both powerless and powerful, both homeless and bound to a home we have not yet seen.

Many of us in the last year have run headlong into the concept of intersectionality. Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term in a 1989 essay that pointed out that women of color who experience discrimination are not harmed only by racism, but by sexism as well. Since the original essay was published, the term has expanded to include class inequality, discrimination based on physical and mental ability, national origin, language, and religion. Crenshaw taught that people are more than one thing at a time, and kinds of discrimination can combine so as to have harmful effects far beyond what any one kind could produce.

This concept is one that should feel familiar to us because defining ourselves as Jews can be slippery, elusive, even uncomfortable. When non-Jews seek to define us, tensions rise even higher. Are we a religion or a culture or a people or a nation-state or a race or an ethnicity? What happens when our Jewish identity comes into conflict with another of our affiliations: gender, nationality, class, ethnicity/race, political loyalty? Lately, these conflicts have led to anger, bitterness, misunderstanding, and a breakdown in useful communications both within and outside of the Jewish community. And yet, when has any human being ever been a monolithic self? When have we as Jews not had to balance our Jewishness with other elements of our humanity?

A seder asks us to assume multiple identities, some of which are starkly at odds with our reality. But we come back to the seder table again and again, because we know that embracing our various selves leads to inner growth and self-acceptance and to compassion and understanding for those whose selves differ from our own. This seder will examine some of the difficult places where our identities intersect, and together we will search for ways to make that intersection a peaceful and productive one, for ourselves and for those with whom we share the world.

This Haggadah is dedicated to Barbara. This seder is in honor of Malke, our Pittsburgh Jewish feminism matriarch, on the occasion of her milestone birthday.

KABBALAT PANIM

WELCOMING EACH OTHER

We introduce ourselves by saying our names in English and/or Hebrew along with the names of our mothers.

וְקִימָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה שֶׁהֵחַיָּנוּ וְנִבְרַךְ אֶת מַעַיִן תַּיִינוּ

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

MIRIAM'S CUP

As we read, we pass Miriam's Cup around the table pouring water from your cup into hers.

While male prophets emphasize the power of words, the centrality of rules of conduct, of sanctity and of justice, Miriam's prophecy was one of deed...Without Miriam's efforts, no one would have been able to listen to the words of Moses or to study God's Torah. Acts of caring and love — that is the special gift that women give humanity. Notice, also, that no one comments on her well, on how important and valued her contribution is until after she has died.

The tragic reality is that for most women, after-the-fact recognition is often the only kind that is given. Only when they are no longer able to serve are their services noticed, and then only because they are missed. The women who work in the homes raising children, the women who work in the schools teaching students, the women who work in hospitals tending the sick, these and countless other women perform the difficult, tedious tasks that sustain and make human life possible.

Do we sufficiently honor those whose contribution is quiet support of others? Do we still relegate such vital care to one specific group, or have we each undertaken to make ourselves not only disciples of Aaron, not only children of Moses, but also personifications of Miriam — using our hands and hearts, just as she did, to irrigate the lives of our people and of all people? *Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson (edited)*
www.myjewishlearning.com/article/miriam-water-under-the-bridge/

זאת כוס מרים כוס מים חיים. זֶכֶר לִיציאת מצרים.

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

THE ORDER OF THE SEDER

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

THE FIRST CUP

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

V'hotzeiti etchem mitachad sivlot mitzrayim וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִצְרַיִם בְּלֹתֶם מִתַּחַת אֲתָכֶם

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

נְבָרֶךְ 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.

From the very first cup of wine, the Haggadah raises the question of nationality. In Shmot, we are not a scattered band of refugees trying to gather ourselves from far-flung locations. Our condition is directly related to our place: the land of Mitzrayim. The Exodus story is the template for all the centuries to come: Jews being forced from a place of safety (or at least familiarity) and comfort into new places, each with a culture, language, and religion which is not ours. No matter where we went, neither we or the natives ever felt entirely easy about our presence. We retained our languages and our

religious practices, staying deliberately and visibly distinct from the natives. The natives, in turn, retained their suspicion of us and their doubts about our loyalty to the country we shared.

And so matters stood until 1806 when Napoleon, seeking to build a secular state in post-revolutionary France, created a list of questions which he posed to a group he called The Assembly of Jewish Notables. Napoleon wanted to find out where the loyalty of the Jewish community in France lay: to halacha or to France. He gave the Assembly a list of twelve questions, including one that got directly to the heart of the matter: Do the Jews born in France, and treated by the law as French citizens, acknowledge France as their country? Are they bound to defend it? Are they bound to obey the laws and follow the directions of the civil code?

The 111 members of the Assembly knew that this was an opportunity for French Jews to become full citizens of their country and perhaps slow the legal and cultural anti-Semitism that long existed in France. But what would the cost be to the cohesiveness of French Jewry? Could they be both Jews and French citizens? [This was their answer:](#) "... their religion makes it their duty to consider the law of the prince as the supreme law in civil and political matters; that consequently, should their religious code, or its various interpretations, contain civil or political commands, at variance with those of the French code, those commands would, of course, cease to influence and govern them, since they must, above all, acknowledge and obey the laws of the prince."

Of course, that was not the end of the matter. Indeed, it was just the beginning, for these questions have continued to arise wherever Jews live in diaspora. After the creation of the state of Israel, the questions became even more pointed: if their native country were to go to war with the Jewish state, where would the loyalty of the Jews lie? We continue to struggle with this dilemma. Can we be both Jewish and American? If we had to choose, how would we make our decision? Every diaspora Jew hopes that we never have to make a choice.

In every generation, a person must regard herself as though she personally had gone out of Egypt, as it is said: "And you shall tell your child in that day, saying: 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.'" God brought us forth from bondage into freedom, from sorrow into joy, from mourning into festivity, from darkness into great light, and from servitude into redemption.

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

Wade in the water, wade in the water children
Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water

Who's that yonder dressed in red? Wade in the water

Must be the children that Moses led, God's gonna trouble the water – Oh...
Wade in the water...

Who's that yonder dressed in white? Wade in the water
Must be the children of the Israelites God's gonna trouble the water – Oh...
Wade in the water...

Who's that yonder dressed in blue? Wade in the water
Must be the children that's coming through God's gonna trouble the water – Oh...
Wade in the water...

URCHATZ – WASHING ורחץ

This washing is done in silence, without a blessing.

KARPAS – GREENS כרפס

Who says *karpas* has to be green? We know that Eastern European Jews used potatoes for *karpas*, since nothing green was available at Passover time. But did you know that any food over which we make the *ha'adamah* blessing can be used as *karpas*? That includes pickles, peanuts, and pineapple! *Karpas* teaches us that group identity can't always be determined by outward appearance. So dip that pineapple in salt water and enjoy!

Dip greens in salt water and say:

נְבָרֵךְ אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרְאֵת פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה.

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

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

YAHATZ – BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH

יחץ

In this cover are 3 pieces of matzah. We remove the middle piece and break it in half. One half will reappear at the end of the meal as the dessert, the afikomen. The other half goes back in the cover.

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְהָתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם.
כָּל־דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיֵכֶל, כָּל־דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא,
לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְׁתָּא עַבְדִּי, לְשָׁנָה
הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין.

*Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b'ara d'mitzrayim.
Kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichol, kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach.
Hashata hacha, l'shanah haba-ah b'ara d'yisra-eil.
Hashata avdei, l'shanah haba-ah b'nei chorin.*

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.

MAGGID – TELLING THE STORY מגיד

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. And when we claim the power to tell the story of our people, we assert our right to shape its future.

Sh'fachot hayinu hayinu, ata b'not chorin, b'not chorin

Avadim hayinu, hayinu atah b'nai chorin, b'nai chorin

עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ הָיִינוּ
חוֹרִין בְּנֵי חוֹרִין בְּנֵי עֵתָה
עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ
חוֹרִין בְּנֵי - עֵתָה עֵתָה
עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ
בְּנֵי חוֹרִין בְּנֵי חוֹרִין-עֵתָה עֵתָה
בְּנֵי חוֹרִין בְּנֵי חוֹרִין-עֵתָה עֵתָה

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

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?

הַלֵּילוֹת מִכָּל הַזֶּה הַלֵּילָה נִשְׁתַּנָּה מֶה?

מִצָּה כָּלוּ הַזֶּה הַלֵּילָה. וּמִצָּה חֻמֵּץ אוֹכְלִין אָנוּ הַלֵּילוֹת שֶׁבֶכָּל

מָרוֹר הַזֶּה הַלֵּילָה. יִרְקוֹת שְׂאֹר אוֹכְלִין אָנוּ הַלֵּילוֹת שֶׁבֶכָּל

פְּעָמִים שְׁתֵּי הַזֶּה הַלֵּילָה. אַחַת פָּעַם אֶפִּילוֹ מְטַבִּילִין. אָנוּ אֵין הַלֵּילוֹת שֶׁבֶכָּל

מְסַבִּין כָּלֵנוּ הַזֶּה הַלֵּילָה. מְסַבִּין וּבֵין יוֹשְׁבֵין בֵּין אוֹכְלִין אָנוּ הַלֵּילוֹת שֶׁבֶכָּל

Mah nishtanah halaila hazeh mikol halaylot!

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

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

Shebakhol halaylot ayn anu matbeeleen afeelu pa'am akhat, halaila hazeh sh'tay f'ameem.

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

THE FOUR CHILDREN

תּוֹרָה דִּבְרָה בָּנִים אַרְבָּעָה כְּנָגֵד :

לְשֹׂאוֹל יוֹדֵעַ שְׂאִינוּ וְאֶחָד, תָּם אֶחָד, רָשָׁע אֶחָד, חָכָם אֶחָד

K'neged arba banim di'bra Torah:

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

We can speak of four kinds of reactions to questions about our identities: openness, defensiveness, confusion, and silence.

The open woman asks: "What is your truth? I value your identity and I am ready to listen."

The defensive woman asks: "I'm not your oppressor. Why are you attacking me, especially since I belong to a vulnerable group myself?"

The simple woman asks: "Cisgender, privilege, intersectionality-what do those words mean? Can't I just be me?"

As for the one who does not know how to ask, you should open the discussion for her, saying, "Let us learn together, and let us always keep learning."

How do we respond when someone tells us that our identities as women, as white people, as Jews, as Americans are problematic and harmful? It can be shocking and painful to hear such statements, and it's almost impossible not to react reflexively to defend ourselves. But we are people who have experienced our identities being erased by a majority culture. We know what that feels like and what the psychic cost is. That is why we must hear these questions and see the people asking them, and learn from the truths we are given, without excuses and without defenses, as difficult as that can be.

Ella's Song

Lyrics: Ella Baker, American civil rights leader & hero
Music: Sweet Honey in the Rock

Chorus: We who believe in freedom cannot rest.
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of White men, White mothers' sons

We who believe in freedom . . .

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hand of the young who dare to run against the storm

We who believe in freedom . . .

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice - and I must be heard

At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word


We who believe in freedom...

It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon were reclining in B'nei Brak discussing the Exodus all night until their students arrived and said to them, 'Rabbis, the time for reciting the morning Shema has arrived.

Why are we required to tell the story every year? After all, the story doesn't change and we've heard it a million times, right?

The anecdote about the five rabbis in B'nei Brak gives us the answer. By gathering in groups to tell the story, we give ourselves the opportunity to hear a familiar tale in an unfamiliar voice. Our friends and family members come to the seder with their own unique histories and perspectives, and in their tellings we may hear something we've never heard before, something that deepens and enriches the story for us. Hearing the story is just as much of a mitzvah as telling it. And knowing we are not alone in hearing it lends us strength to hear what is difficult and disruptive as well as that which is familiar and comforting.

V'HI SHE'AMDA

 וְהִיא שֶׁעָמְדָה V'hi she'amda
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ וּלְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ. la'avoteinu ul'imoteinu velanu.

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

"My mother and father were wandering Arameans. They went down into Egypt and sojourned there. With few in number, they became there a great and populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and afflicted us and imposed hard labor upon us. And we cried out to the Lord, the God of our fathers and mothers and God heard our cry and saw our affliction and our oppression. God brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great signs and wonders."

THE SECOND CUP

V'hitzalti etchem mei'avotadam דָּתַם מֵעַב אֶתְכֶם וְהִצַּלְתִּי

I will deliver you from servitude.

נְבִרֵה אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵאת פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Nebareh et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri hagafen.

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

What did Abraham and Sarah look like? What about Moses and Miriam? For that matter, what about the rabbis of B'nei Brak? Nothing in Jewish history or law demands that our skins be white. But our mental imagery of our mothers and fathers comes from our Sunday school texts and western art, which portrayed biblical figures as looking European, not Middle Eastern. The face of American Jewry is Ashkenazi and American Jewish culture predominantly originated in Eastern European practices. In this country, few of us have ever encountered a Jew of color, and even fewer have met a Jew of color with a position of power in the Jewish community. But race has long been a thorny issue for us, affecting both the way we define ourselves and the way others define us.

What is race anyway? Is it a social construct, a biological reality, or a mixture? Here's a traditional definition: "Each of the major divisions of humankind, having distinct physical characteristics". <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/race#h70025319623660> But if you take an anthropology or sociology class these days, you will learn that race is entirely a social construct created by Europeans to justify their subjugation of native peoples in the lands they colonized. In fact, research has shown that biological differences within so-called "racial" groups are greater than the differences between such groups.

We Jews know all too well that the idea of race can be used to excuse the most egregious kinds of harm a powerful group can inflict on a less powerful one. Historically, anti-Semites have assigned us to a racial category of our own, one somehow weak and inferior compared to white Christians and at the same time mysteriously powerful. Jewish groups and our allies have spoken strongly in the last 18 months to fight the resurgence of anti-Semitic slurs and conspiracy theories that have accompanied the growth of right-wing white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups. The association of race and power is as American as the stars and stripes.

The left, for its part, challenges our view of ourselves as a marginalized group by saying that, in the US today, Jews are white. This is less a statement about appearance than it is about status. According to this argument, Jews are as white as any other white people in the US in that we have all of the powers and privileges of any white American. According to this view, Jews are dishonest and disingenuous-and yes, racist-when we consider ourselves to be targets of discrimination. It's true that most of us look and speak and live like any other white Americans. Most of us enjoy the same privileges as other white people: freedom from unjustified traffic stops, from being followed by staff when we shop, from strangers crossing the street to avoid us. As a group, we have education, wealth, and power that are enormous in relation to our actual numbers. Still, few of us have gone through our lives without encountering anti-Semitism, so we can

experience hurt and anger when we are called “white” in this context, especially as public acts and statements of anti-Semitism continue to grow. Can we be both marginalized and privileged?

Just as we taught ourselves about biblical Jewish women whose stories had been lost or buried, we now have an opportunity to learn about our contemporary Jewish sisters of color. This past Purim, Jewish Multiracial Network, Jewish Women’s Archive, and Repair the World united to create a campaign to celebrate a group of women rabbis, activists, educators, and artists who are African-American. To discover these remarkable women, go here: <https://werepair.org/purim/>. And share their stories!

HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR MATZAH BALLS?

Peter and Ellen Allard

How do you make your matzah balls
How do you make your matzah balls
Oh, how do you make your matzah balls
When you make your matzah ball soup?
When you make your matzah ball soup?

Singer: I make mine fluffy and light
Group: She makes hers fluffy and light
Singer: I make mine fluffy and light when I make my matzah ball soup!
Group: When she makes her matzah ball soup!

I add some schmaltz and salt
Mine always fall apart
My matzah balls they sink...

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

God brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians and they were:

Blood	<i>Dam</i>	דָּם
Frogs	<i>Tzfarde'ah</i>	צְפַרְדֵּי
Lice	<i>Kinim</i>	כְּנִים
Insect swarms	<i>Arov</i>	עֲרוֹב
Cattle plague	<i>Dever</i>	
דֵּבַר		
Boils	<i>Sh'chin</i>	שִׁחִין
Hail	<i>Barad</i>	בָּרָד
Locusts	<i>Arbeh</i>	
אֲרֵבָה Darkness	<i>Choshech</i>	
חֹשֶׁךְ		

24:17)

Sing together: **None of us are free till all of us are free**

DA'YENU - דינו

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 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!

*Ilu hotzianu mimitzrayim
Ilu natan lanu et hashabbat,
Ilu natan lanu et hatorah*

מִמִּצְרַיִם הוֹצִיאָנוּ אֱלֹהִים דֵּינוּ!

אֱלֹהִים נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת דֵּינוּ!

הַתּוֹרָה אֶת לָנוּ נָתַן אֱלֹהִים דֵּינוּ!

<https://ajws.org/who-we-are/resources/holiday-resources/passover/global-justice-haggadah/10-plagues-suffering-affliction/>

ROCHTZA - WASHING THE HANDS

רחצה

We remain silent from the washing until we say the blessing over the matzah.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו על נטילת ידים:

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam asher kid-shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzee'vanu al ne'teelat yadaim.

Praised are You, Lord, our God, whose Presence fills the universe, who has sanctified our lives through Your commandments and commanded us to perform this washing of the hands.

THE THIRD CUP

נטויה בזרוע אֶתְכֶם וְגָאֲלֹתִי V'galti etchem bizro'ah n'tuah

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

נְבָרֶה אֶת רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Nevareh et ruah ha'olam boreyt peri hagafen.

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

Is there a difference between being a woman and being a biological female? Is a transgender woman a “real” woman? Who gets to decide? How much do body parts matter in that decision? And how do these questions affect us as Jewish women?

Biologists, sociologists, and feminist and queer theoreticians have debated the meanings of sex and gender for some time. The lines between physical traits and socially determined ones can be a lot more porous than we imagined. As transgender people have felt more comfortable speaking about their lives and struggles, what was a theoretical matter for many of us has become personal. Knowing someone who's trans isn't so unusual any more, as family members, friends, co-workers, and celebrities come out as trans. (Did you know that the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine, is a transwoman?)

A vigorous (even contentious) debate has gone on in feminist circles in the last few years, centering around the question of whether transwomen can be considered women as cis women are. (Cis means the gender to which you were assigned at birth, which is generally the one with which we identify.) As cis women demand that we take our places as full equals to men in every aspect of our society, transwomen have

demanded that they take their place as full equals to cis women. They argue that they suffer exactly the same harms that cis women do: pay inequity, inadequate access to health care, sexual harassment, and violence.

It's one thing for cis women to agree with these demands in the abstract. It's another when a transwoman wants to use the women's locker room at the gym, especially if she has a penis. Some cis women are deeply uncomfortable having what they consider to be their safe spaces shared by people whose bodies do not match their image of a woman's body. What about women only festivals, organizations, support groups, or educational institutions? What about a mikvah?

And if you've grown up as a male and transitioned in adulthood, is your experience closer to that of a cis woman or a cis man? How similar do our personal histories have to be to share a gender identity? Can we find ways to respect the concerns of cis women while at the same time sharing the identity of "woman" with anyone who wants to claim it? Can we, as cis Jewish women who continue to struggle with gender inequity in institutional Judaism find a way to share our hard-won power with our trans sisters?

AIN'T NO MAN

Avett Brothers

There ain't no man can save me
There ain't no man can enslave me
Ain't no man, or men that change the shape my soul is in
There ain't nobody here who can cause me pain or raise my fear

'Cause I got only love to share
If you're lookin' for truth I'm proof you'll find it there

PESACH, MATZAH, MAROR...and more

מִמְצָרִים יֵצֵא הוּא כָּאֵלוֹ, אֶת-עַצְמוֹ לְרֹאוֹת אָדָם תִּיב וְדוֹר בְּכָל-דּוֹר

PESACH פֶּסַח

Point to the shank bone.

Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly, so that the land was filled with them. A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph... And he said to his people, "Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground."

Shmot 1, <https://www.sefaria.org/Exodus.1.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>

The new king may not have known Joseph. But he did know the Israelites, who prospered in Egypt to the benefit of both themselves and the Egyptians. Why, then, did Pharaoh decide to attack and enslave the Israelites? Surely they did not outnumber the native people, nor does Torah indicate that the Israelites were rebellious or disruptive. At the time of the exodus, we had been in Mitzrayim for 430 years, according to Shmot 12:40, certainly long enough to regard Egypt as their home.

Torah does not say why Pharaoh turned against the Israelites. But we can theorize, using our knowledge of history and current events. We know that political leaders who want to entrench themselves in power sometimes do so by creating fear and division between the "real" citizens of a country and those who do not meet that arbitrary standard. Whether Pharaoh deliberately employed this cruel strategy or whether he truly believed that the Israelites were dangerous, the result is the same. The Israelites went from freedom and prosperity to slavery to barely escaping Mitzrayim with only the possessions they could carry on their backs. The shank bone reminds us how easy it is to target others simply because they are different.

MOTZI MATZAH מוציא מצה

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)

The Pittsburgh chapter of the Sisterhood of Salaam/Shalom held a bread-sharing program at Rodef Shalom last year. Our Muslim sisters and we brought various kinds of breads from our cultures and religions to taste and enjoy. As enjoyable as it was to eat the breads, even better was hearing the stories attendees told about their contributions. Hearing how the recipes had been handed down over generations and how they were integral parts of each woman's identity gave us beautiful insight into our similarities and differences, and reminded us to value both.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, המוציא לחם מן הארץ:

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Praised are You, Lord, our God, whose Presence fills the universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת מצה:

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam asher kid-shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzee'vanu al achilat matzah.

Praised are You, Lord, our God, whose Presence fills the universe, who has sanctified our lives through Your commandments and commanded us to partake of matzah.

BITTER HERBS מרור

Raise the maror.

How much pain did the Hebrew slaves endure before crying out to God for relief? And how long would they have stayed in slavery if their pain had not reached that level? How acute does our suffering or the suffering of others have to be before we act to relieve it? Maror is pain with a purpose. It reminds us that we cannot find sweet relief from bitter times until we acknowledge our condition and take the necessary steps to change it.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת מרור:

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam asher kid-shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzee'vanu al achilat maror.

Praised are You, Lord, our God, whose Presence fills the universe, who has sanctified our lives through Your commandments and commanded us to partake of maror.

Eat maror.

CHAROSET חרוס

If the sting of maror impels us to act to alleviate the bitterness of pain, charoset reminds us that habit and hopelessness can lead us to experience pain as normal, even comforting. Making bricks for Pharaoh was brutal work. But it was what we came to know as normal, and even when we had escaped Egypt, some of us longed to return to what felt safe and familiar. The Haggadah cleverly inverts the meaning of maror and charoset, to remind us that not all pain is bad and not all sweetness is desirable.

KOREICH THE HILLEL SANDWICH פורך.

Is America a melting pot or a salad bowl? This section of the hagaddah shows us how to answer that question in a classically Jewish way: yes! First, we discuss at each of the foods on the seder plate individually. Then we blend several of them together to make something that tastes both familiar and different. We need and value each of the components of our koreich for what they are, AND we need and value the new creation that results when we combine them. Rabbi Hillel hid a message for contemporary American Jews (and all Americans) in his invention of koreich-that difference and unity need not be at odds with each other. So let's enjoy our diversity sandwich!

עורד שלחן

SHULCHAN OREICH - DINNER IS SERVED

THE FOURTH CUP

לֹאֵלֹהִים לָכֶם וְהָיִיתִי, לְעַם לִי אֶתְכֶם וְלִקְחָתִי

V'lakachti etchem li l'am v'hayiti etchem leilohim

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

נְבָרֶךְ 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.

What makes this a feminist seder? Is it because everyone in attendance identifies as female? Is it because we use egalitarian God language and include Miriam as well as Elijah? Because there's an orange on our seder plates? Is it just because we say it is?

When the JWC started doing women's seders, they were explicitly seders for, by, and about women. The first women's seder was held in 1975; our first one was in 1993. Those early seders taught us about the women of the Pesach story: Miriam, Batya, Shifra and Puah. They inspired us to find our own place in Judaism. As we grew in knowledge and confidence, we began to consider what we as Jewish feminists could bring to larger questions of freedom and human dignity, social justice and tikkun olam.

If it were simply the need for feminist critique that motivated the emergence and persistence of women's seders, dayeinu—that would be enough. But there is more: the Passover story is, at its core, one of freedom from oppression, from the expectation that one group of people will be subservient to another. It is fundamentally a story of liberation—a story the telling of which feminists not only critique, as above, but also embrace, as elemental to our own journey as Jewish feminists. Francine Klagsbrun, <https://ritualwell.org/ritual/why-women%E2%80%99s-seders>

So what makes this a feminist seder? Writer Marie Shear's classic definition of feminism suggests an answer: Feminism is the radical notion that women are people). When we use the seder to remind ourselves that we are all people in need of love and worthy of respect, we bring feminism's dream closer to reality.

צפון TZAFUN

SHARING THE AFIKOMAN DESSERT

Pieces of the afikomen are distributed to each person to complete the meal.

BIRKAT HAMAZON וְהַמִּזְבֵּחַ תַּכְבֵּר

BLESSINGS AFTER THE MEAL

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ

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)

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

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

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)

COUNTING THE OMER

ספירת העומר

You shall count from the eve of the second day of Pesach, when an omer of grain is to be brought as an offering. The day after the seventh week of your counting will make fifty days. On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you. (Lev. 23:15-16, 21)

[W]hen we get caught up with the details of our lives, it's easy to forget, to wake up one morning and realize, "Oh, I think I forgot to count yesterday...or has it been two days?" It can be an effort just to differentiate one day from another. A recent ruling from the Conservative movement argues against the general view that a person who has lost count for more than a day can no longer bless the days that are left. It quotes the opinion of several sages that each day is unique, and that blessing each day is a mitzvah in and of itself, regardless of what one may or may not have done on previous days. This ruling reminds us that it is never too late to begin our spiritual journeys and never too late to refocus our efforts when we have become distracted.

<https://www.jewishboston.com/what-is-counting-the-omer-how-can-i-participate/>

הַעֲמֵר סְפִירַת עַל וְצִנּוֹנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָהּ קִדְּשָׁנוּ אֲשֶׁר הָעוֹלָם רוּחַ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהִי אֶת פְּרוּכָה

*B'rukhhah at Yah Eloheynu ruakh ha'olamim asher kideshanu bemitzvotaha
vetzivatnu al sefirat ha'omer.*

Blessed are you, ETERNAL, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who has made us holy with
your mitzvot and commanded us concerning the counting of the Omer.

4. הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לַעֲמֵר

Hayom arba'ah yamim la'omer.
Today is the fourth day of the Omer.

HALLEL

Pitchu Li (Psalm 118:19)

בַּם אוֹדָה יְהִי-צֶדֶק אֲבֹא-לִי שַׁעֲרֵי-פֶתַח

Pitchu li sha'arei tzedek

Pitchu li sha'arei tzedek
Avo vam odeh Yah
Avo vam odeh Yah

ELIJAH'S CUP

We comfort and mourn those whose blood has been spilled.
We tend to those who suffer from disease.
We respond to storms and disasters that claim lives.
We stop infestations of hatred and fear.
We overcome the sickness of racism and bigotry.
We protest the proliferation of violence.
We fill the air with voices for change.
We bring light to those who live in the shadows.
We inspire the next generation to carry on the struggle for a better world.
We appeal to all people to act with humanity.

<https://ajws.org/who-we-are/resources/holiday-resources/passover/global-justice-haggadah/10-plagues-suffering-affliction/>

*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.*

אֵלֵיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, אֵלֵיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי,
אֵלֵיָּהוּ, אֵלֵיָּהוּ, אֵלֵיָּהוּ, אֵלֵיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי,
בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ יָבֹא אֵלֵינוּ
עִם מָשִׁיחַ 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.
בְּיָדָהּ
Miriam tirkod itanu l'taken et ha-olam.
Bimheirah v'yameinu hi t'vi'einu
El mei ha-y'shuah; el mei ha-y'shuah!*

בְּזִמְרָה עִז הַנְּבִיעָה מֵרִים

הָעוֹלָם אֶת לְתִקּוֹן אֲתָנוּ תִּרְקַד מֵרִים
תְּבִיאֵנוּ הִיא בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּמַהֲרָה
הַיְשׁוּעָה מִי אֵל, הַיְשׁוּעָה מִי אֵל

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!

נִרְצָה CONCLUSION

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם:

L'SHANA HA-BA B'YERUSHALAYIM
NEXT YEAR, MAY WE CELEBRATE IN A JERUSALEM AND A WORLD AT PEACE

Want to learn more? Here are some links. Be aware that I don't necessarily endorse them. They're here to give you some perspective and help you start your own research if you are so inclined.

Intersectionality: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersectionality>,
<http://www.scarymommy.com/intersectional-feminism/>

American Anthropological Association on race:
<http://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583>

American Sociological Association on Race: <http://www.asanet.org/topics/race-and-ethnicity>

Napoleon and the Assembly of Jewish Notables: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Sanhedrin

Gender Identity: <http://www.transstudent.org/definitions>, <https://www.self.com/story/being-a-woman-uterus>, <https://medium.com/gender-2-0/i-am-a-cis-woman-you-are-a-trans-woman-and-here-is-why-that-distinction-does-not-matter-ad76ac4121e6>