

Passover Haggadah insert

Candle-lighting and welcome ritual:

Before lighting candles go around the table and acknowledge who is not there due to death, physical or mental illness, incarceration, disabilities that made this evening inaccessible or other reasons. Take a moment to introduce yourself and share the name of the person you are missing. You can choose to say a sentence or two about your person, or hold their image in your heart. Candles represent memory and the human spirit in Jewish tradition and tonight our candles can represent all the people who are absent from our table but evoked in spirit.

Afterwards light the holiday candles and recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב:

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam asher kiddeshanu b'mitz-votav
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov.*

Order of the Seder:

It is said that the Israelites left Egypt as part of a “mixed multitude.” Each person, each family, each tribe, guild, age, gender, and sensibility was represented together in our shared Exodus from Egypt. Just as the full breadth of seder rituals is traditionally recited at the outset, this can also be an opportunity to honor the diversity around the table.

Take a moment to look around your Passover table, you can choose to link hands, and appreciate the contributions and the unique value of each person sharing in this evening's celebration. At a small seder everyone can take turns mentioning a contribution or a special quality that someone else brings to the seder. Alternatively the host(s) might individually acknowledge everyone present in some particular way, or speak to the special mix of attendees present. At a large seder, make small groups with one or two others sitting closest, and each person shares a contribution or a special quality that other members of the group brings to the seder. Even people who are just meeting each other can reflect upon warm smiles or open greetings.

Karpas

Spring vegetables are usually eaten dipped in saltwater at this point in the seder. The green sprouts represent new life while the salt water reminds us of the tears of loss woven through the Passover tale. This ritual reflects the fact that new life is often inextricably tied to loss.

In many families a hard-boiled egg is eaten after the karpas, dipped in the same salty water. Hard-boiled eggs are also commonly present at *shiva* gatherings for “meals of consolation” following a funeral. The egg, a symbol of fertility and possibility, represents the full life cycle. Hence this simple ritual engages taste, smell, touch, and sight, in order to acknowledge both new beginnings and the losses we carry among us at this season.

At this point, pass an egg around the table. Each person when holding the egg can choose to share (either out loud or in their heart) a loss and/or a new beginning that is present for them in this season. After everyone has shared dip the greens in salt water and recite together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam borei pri ha-adamah

Next year in Jerusalem!

A traditional seder ends with the recitation: “Next Year in Jerusalem.” (*l’shana habah b’yerushalayim*) Some of us came to this seder well in mind and body, while others arrive in the midst of illness, or care-giving for others who are ill. Some of us wish for complete recoveries for ourselves or loved ones in the coming year, some of us wish for peace and relief in any form, some of us want to continue to live a full life within chronic illness, while others hope for continued strength and vitality.

All these ways of being human are valid. Though we end our seders by saying “Next Year in Jerusalem!”, this is a spiritual and a not a literal destination. Jewish journeys toward personal and collective wholeness have rarely been linear. Indeed the majority of the Torah takes place while wandering in the wilderness. Those who have been touched by mental or physical illness in the past year (and all who support them) may choose to end your seder by saying:

Next Year in Peace and Wholeness

לְשָׁנָה תְּבִיאָה בְּשָׁלוֹם

La-shana ha-bah b’shalom

Rabbis Natan Fenner and Elliot Kukla, for the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center 2017

