



Dear Friend,

Welcome to the Jewish Voice for Peace haggadah! As you probably expected (and maybe even hoped), this haggadah is not like other haggadot—its focus is on making connections between the symbols and liturgy of the traditional haggadah and the realities of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the movement to end the occupation. Much of its content is from or inspired by The Jews Against the Occupation (JATO) “After Exodus” Haggadah. I want to thank and acknowledge my dear friends & long-time comrades at JATO for creating such a meaningful set of words and rituals and their willingness to share it freely.

This haggadah takes our responsibility to be part of the ongoing evolution of Jewish culture and ritual seriously, by re-imagining and re-creating rituals to speak to our highest ethical values and political lives and commitments. What you will find in this haggadah are inspired by, but not adherent to, the tradition: olives on the seder plate, a Nakba dayenu from JATO, ten plagues of the Israeli occupation, and feminine and non-gendered formulations of blessings, for example.

The four cups of wine in this haggadah are dedicated to the four core elements of the movement for justice in Israel-Palestine, as we engage in it, support it, and see it at JVP. The first cup is for **education**, the second for **solidarity**, the third for **the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions Movement**, and the final cup is for **community**. Each cup is a chance for you to reflect on your participation in each of these facets of the work of JVP and your connection to and involvement in them. Each cup is a chance for you to make private, personal commitments for how you hope to engage in education, solidarity, BDS, and community building in the coming year with JVP and beyond.

In the wake of the revolutions throughout the Arab World, and particularly in Egypt, I want to acknowledge the distinction between “mitzrayim”—the narrow place—where the story we tell at Passover takes place and Egypt, the modern-day nation state. Since 2001, I have in my own personal seders been clear to make that distinction, to not conflate contemporary Egyptians with the pharaoh and taskmasters that appear in the Passover story. In the U.S., and worldwide, anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia saturate our media and our culture, and we must be vigilant to oppose it and interrupt it at every turn. This is still true this year, even as when I watched the events in Tahrir Square I couldn't help but think of Moses' plea to “let my people go.” I remain moved and inspired by what has taken place in Egypt and other countries in the past few months, and wish to bring that spirit of liberation and revolution to the seder table this year. As I do so, I continue to be mindful that the tie that binds the story of Tahrir Square to that of the Israelite slaves is that of the human pull toward freedom and justice.

Onward to liberation,

Rabbi Alissa Wise
JVP National Organizer

THE SEDER

1. **Kadesh** – Sanctification of the gathering
First cup of wine: L'chayim to education!
2. **Ur'chatz** – Washing hands before eating green vegetables
3. **Karpas**- Eating a piece of vegetable dipped in salt water
4. **Yachatz** – Breaking the middle matzah
5. **Maggid** - Telling of the story
Four More Questions
The Ten Plagues of the Israeli Occupation
Nakba Dayenu
Freedom
Second cup of wine: L'chayim to solidarity!
6. **Rach'tzah** - Washing hands before eating matzah
7. **Motzi** – Blessing over matzah as food
8. **Matzah** – Blessing over matzah as a special mitzvah
9. **Maror** – Eating the bitter herbs
10. **Korech** – Eating a sandwich of haroset & bitter herbs
11. **Shulchan orech** – Eating the festive meal
12. **Tzafun** - Eating the afikomen
13. **Barech** - Grace after meals
Third cup of wine: L'chayim to the BDS Movement!
14. **Hallel** - Praise
Fourth cup of wine: L'chayim to community!
15. **Nirtzah** - Conclusion

I lived my childhood in a world so dense with Jews that I thought we were the great imposing majority and kindness had to be extended to the others because, as my mother said, everyone wants to live like a person. In school I met my friend Adele, who together with her mother and father were not Jewish. Despite this, they often seemed to be in a good mood. There was the janitor in charge of coal, and my father, unusually smart, spoke Italian to him. They talked about Italian literature, because the janitor was equally smart. Down the hill under the Southern Boulevard El, families lived, people in lovely shades of light and darkest brown. My mother and sister explained that they were treated unkindly; they had in fact been slaves in another part of the country in another time.

Like us? I said.

Like us, my father said year after year at seders when he told the story in a rush of Hebrew, stopping occasionally to respect my grandmother's pained face, or to raise his wine glass to please the grownups. In this way I began to understand in my own time and place, that we had been slaves in Egypt and brought out of bondage for some reason. One of the reasons, clearly, was to tell the story again and again—that we had been strangers and slaves in Egypt and therefore knew what we were talking about when we cried out against pain and oppression. In fact, we were obligated by knowledge to do so.

But this is only one page, one way to introduce these Haggadah makers, story tellers, who love history and tradition enough to live in it and therefore by definition be part of its change.

— Grace Paley

Grace Paley (1922–2007) was an American-Jewish short story writer, poet, and political activist.

The Seder Plate

At your tables, discuss the significance that each of the items on the seder plate has for you. Below is a list of what appears on the seder plate and an example of meaning that can be assigned to each.

Karpas – A green, spring vegetable symbolizing spring’s bounty.

Beitzah – A boiled egg symbolizing the cycle of life.

Z’roah – A roasted beet (or shank bone) symbolizing the sacrifices offered.

Maror - Bitter herbs symbolizing the bitterness of oppression

Charoset - A mixture of nuts, fruit and wine symbolizing the mortar Israelite slaves used to lay bricks.

Orange – Symbolizing building Jewish community where women, queer, and transgender people are welcomed and recognized as full, valued participants.

Olive – Symbolizing the self-determination of the Palestinian people and an invitation to Jewish communities to become allies to Palestinian liberation struggles

Seder plate ritual

From the “After Exodus Haggadah”

It is a tradition in some Sephardic families to pass the seder plate over everyone’s head while singing (or reciting) the order of the seder. The ritual of passing the seder plate is meant to offer a blessing to our guests—may you only know sweetness and may the bitterness and affliction of oppression “pass over you.”

All: Recite the order of the seder

Volunteer: Pick up the seder plate and bless each person at the table. Move the seder plate around each person’s head in a circular motion, then lightly touch the seder plate to the head before blessing the next person.

After everyone has been blessed, someone should bless the volunteer.

Candle Lighting

At your table, light your candles together.

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah Adonai eloheynu melech ha;olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov pesach b'zman cherutaynu.

Blessed is the spirit of freedom in whose honor we kindle the lights of this holiday, Passover, the season of Freedom.

Shehechianu

This blessing is recited when we do something for the first time. We recite now for the unique gathering of people here and in honor of tonight as the last night of Passover 5771.

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shehechianu v'kiamanu v'higianu lazman hazeh

Blessed is the Eternal for giving us life, for sustaining us and for bringing us to this time

Social Action Blessing

A blessing to mark the purpose of our gathering—to strengthen our commitment to together pursue justice.

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu lirdof tzedek

Blessed is the source who shows us paths to holiness, and commands us to pursue justice.

Kadesh: The first cup of wine

L'chayim to education

“...Education is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, not to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.” – Hannah Arendt, 1968

We raise the first glass to education. At JVP we continually are educating ourselves on the history of the conflict, the history of social movements that came before, the political analysis of today, the Jewish textual tradition and more. We value popular education that sees the learner as the primary text. Through the coverage of the Egyptian Revolution last month, we saw the way young leaders set up classrooms in Tahrir Square, ensuring students would not lose access to education while waging their historic struggle for freedom and democracy. It was a great reminder to us that educators and students are always at the heart of the struggle for justice, and that no such struggle is complete without access to education, for all.

This first cup we raise, L'chayim, to education!

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Ur'chatz: Washing hands before eating a green vegetable

There is a bowl of water, a cup, and a towel near your table. We invite each person to pour water over their neighbor's hands, helping them to wash.

TOGETHER:

As we help each other to wash our hands, we reflect on the mutual dependence that water creates. We commit to work for justice with others, rather than in isolation.

Karpas: Eating a piece of vegetable dipped in salt water

We dip a spring vegetable into salt water—the spring vegetable reminding us of potential and promise and the salt water reminding us of the tears and the pain along the way. This is an invitation to hold complexity—a reminder that change is possible even in what seems like endless darkness. As you dip the green vegetable into the salt water, affirm for yourself the potential for justice even as we hold the tears of occupation.

TOGETHER: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri ha'adamah

Blessed is the One, who sustains all life, and brings forth fruits from the earth

Yachatz: Breaking the middle matzah

Born in rural Galilee in 1931, Muhammad Ali was left without a home when his village was destroyed in 1948. He fled to Lebanon along with most of the village's residents, only to return a year later and settle with his family in Nazareth - one mile away from the village of his childhood. A souvenir salesman by trade and a devotee of old Mickey Mouse cartoons, Muhammad Ali is self-taught in the arts of poetry and short fiction.

There Was No Farewell by Taha Muhammad Ali

We did not weep
when we were leaving -
for we had neither
time nor tears,
and there was no farewell.
We did not know
at the moment of parting
that it was a parting,
so where would our weeping
have come from?
We did not stay
awake all night

(and did not doze)
the night of our leaving.
That night we had
neither night nor light,
and no moon rose.
That night we lost our star,
our lamp misled us;
we didn't receive our share
of sleeplessness -
so where
would wakefulness have come from?

We will now break the middle matzah, hiding one half to be found later as the afikomen. Once the matzah is broken, it cannot be repaired completely. Irreparable damage has been done -- but the pieces can be reunited.

As we break the middle matzah we acknowledge the break that occurred in Palestinian life and culture with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 when hundreds of villages were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of people displaced. This damage cannot be undone -- but repair and return are possible.

Inspired by the Israeli organization Zochrot, remembrance, who put up signs on streets and buildings around towns in Israel to reveal the Palestinian communities that once existed there, we will now recite the names of the villages destroyed on April 25th in 1948:

Yajur
Saqiya
al-Khariyya

Kafr 'Ana
Salama
Bayt Dajan

Balad al-Shaykh
Qannir

Maggid: Telling of the story

Four More Questions for Pesach from Rabbi Brant Rosen

We will ask two now, and two more along the way throughout the seder.

Question 1: Maggid, Telling the Tale

A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. 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." So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them... (Exodus 1:10-11)

As we begin the Exodus story, we read that the oppression of the Israelites resulted from Pharaoh's fear that their growth would somehow overwhelm the Egyptian nation. These verses certainly have an ominous resonance for the Jewish people. Indeed any member of a minority faith or ethnic group knows all too well the tragedy that inevitably ensues when a nation views their demographic growth as a "threat."

Today it is all too common to hear Israel's leaders and supporters suggest that the "Jewish character" of Israel is threatened by the demographic growth of the Palestinian people. How should we react to the suggestion that the mere fact of this group's growth necessarily poses a national threat to Israel? As Jews living in the Diaspora, how would we respond if our leaders raised questions about the "demographic threat" of a particular minority group to the "national character" of our country? In a multi-ethnic society, can a state's identity ever be predicated upon the primacy of one ethnic group without the oppression of another?

Question 2: Zayit, Olive

As we ask this question, pass olives around the table

Zayit: al shum mah? – This olive: why do we eat it?

The olive tree is one of the first plants mentioned in the Torah and remains among the oldest species in Israel/Palestine. It has become a universal symbol of peace and hope, as it is written in Psalm 52:

I am like a thriving olive tree in God's house, I trust in God's loyal kindness forever and ever.

We add this olive to our Seder plate as a reminder that we must all be God's bearers of peace and hope in the world. At the same time, we eat this olive in sorrow, mindful that olive trees, the source of livelihood for Palestinian farmers, are regularly chopped down, burned and uprooted by Israeli settlers and the Israeli authorities. As we look on, Israel pursues systematic policies that increasingly deny Palestinians access to olive orchards that have belonged to them for generations. As we eat now, we ask one another: How will we, as Jews, bear witness to the unjust actions committed in our name? Will these olives inspire us to be bearers of peace and hope for Palestinians – and for all who are oppressed?

All: *B'rucha at Shekhinah, b'tocheynu, ruach ha'olam, borayt p'ri ha-eitz*

Blessed are you, Shekhinah, who is within us, spirit of the world, who brings forth fruit from the trees.

The Ten Plagues of the Israeli Occupation

As we read each of the ten plagues, spill a bit of the wine out of your cup.

1. Poverty

From The Canadian International Development Agency

Almost 58 percent of Palestinians live in poverty, and about half of this group lives in extreme poverty. About 50 percent of Palestinians experience or risk experiencing food insecurity. Food insecurity is particularly severe in Gaza, where the majority of the population relies on humanitarian assistance to survive.

2. Restrictions on movement

In addition to more than 100 permanent checkpoints and the separation wall that snakes throughout the West Bank, the IDF has erected hundreds of physical obstacles: flying checkpoints, concrete blocks, dirt piles, boulders, trenches, and more to block roads and prevent movement between Palestinian communities.

3. Water shortage

From B'tselem

Israel's citizens, like those of developed countries worldwide, benefit year-round from unlimited running water to meet their household needs. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffer from a severe water shortage throughout the summer.

This shortage of water affects every function that water plays in human life: drinking, bathing, cleaning, and watering of crops and animals.

The shortage drastically affects the residents' health and economic well-being. The shortage of drinking water can cause dehydration and the inability to maintain proper hygiene and thus lead to illness. Failure to water crops and animals affects the livelihood of the residents.

The water shortage violates the basic human rights of Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories such as the right to health, to adequate housing, to equality, and to benefit from their natural resources. This harm results from Israeli policy, in effect since 1967, based on an unfair division of resources shared by Israel and the Palestinians.

4. Destruction of Olive Trees

Olive trees have long been a symbol of Palestinian culture and livelihood. Israeli military and settler violence and the construction of the Wall have destroyed hundreds of thousands of Palestinian olive trees since 2000, and more than a million since 1967.

5. Home demolitions

Since 1967, over 18,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, leaving tens of thousands of families traumatized and without shelter. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, all occupying powers are prohibited from destroying property or employing collective punishment. Israel's policy of house demolitions seeks to confine Palestinians to small enclaves, leaving most of the land free for Israeli settlement.

6. Settlements

Illegal settlements and the network of "bypass roads" that connect them, continue to claim Palestinian land and escalate violence against Palestinian communities with the complicity of Israeli military. Under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel is prohibited from establishing settlements.

7. Political prisoners

From www.jvp.org

Palestinians who are struggling for their freedom are increasingly joined by Israelis and internationals inspired by the Palestinian model of unarmed resistance to occupation and discrimination. But the Israeli government has responded to this hopeful movement with a brutal crackdown on human rights advocates.

While many internationals and Israeli Jews work with great passion for human rights for all peoples, it is Palestinian advocates who are typically targeted by the government with the greatest intensity. Palestinians like Abdallah Abu Rahmah, who was convicted in an unfair trial and sentenced to a year in prison for organizing protests in Bil'in against the theft of the village's land, then saw his sentence extended 2-3 months after the Israeli military appealed to make it harsher. He was finally released after serving 16 months. Or Mohammed Othman, a human rights advocate who was jailed last year and only freed after an international campaign. Or Khalida Jarrah, the President of Addameer, the Palestinian prisoners' support and human rights association, an organization that has documented the ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees. Ms. Jarrah is also a legislator, but even her parliamentary privileges apparently do not allow her to travel to Jordan for urgently needed medical care. In a Kafkaesque twist, Israel does not allow her to travel without proof of illness, but she cannot diagnose her illness unless she can travel.

8. Profiteering

From www.WeDivest.org

JVP's petition to financial giant TIAA-CREF highlights five companies that profit from the Israeli occupation. These companies are just 5 of hundreds of companies that TIAA-CREF invests in.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN profits from the production of parts for the Apache helicopters and F-16 aircrafts used by Israel against civilians in Gaza during Israel's 2008-09 assault.

CATERPILLAR profits from the destruction of Palestinian homes and the uprooting of Palestinian orchards by supplying the armor-plated and weaponized bulldozers that are used for such demolition work.

VEOLIA profits from the construction and expansion of illegal Jewish-only settlements by operating a landfill in the West Bank, exploiting Palestinian natural resources to serve the settlements, and by contracting for the future operation of an illegal light rail system connecting these settlements with Jerusalem.

ELBIT profits from the confiscation of Palestinian land by providing surveillance equipment that is mounted on the Separation Wall, which was declared unlawful by the International Court of Justice.

MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS profits from Israel's control of the Palestinian population by providing surveillance systems around Israeli settlements, checkpoints, and military camps in the West Bank, as well as communication systems to the Israeli army and West Bank settlers.

9. Denial of the Right of Return

The original Palestinian refugees and their descendants are estimated to number more than 6.5 million and constitute the world's oldest and largest refugee population. Israel implements a Law of Return giving every Jewish person rights to settle in Israel as a citizen and denies Palestinians the Right of Return guaranteed under international Law.

JVP's position on Palestinian refugees and the right of return:

The plight of Palestinian refugees needs to be resolved equitably and in a manner that promotes peace and is consistent with international law. Within the framework of an equitable agreement, the refugees should have a role in determining their future, whether pursuing return, resettlement, or financial compensation. Israel should recognize its share of responsibility for the ongoing refugee crisis and for its resolution.

10. Erasing histories

Many Jewish schools and communities wrongly teach that in 1948 Palestine was "a land without a people for a people without a land." Yet the place where Israel was founded was never empty or barren, it was home to almost one million Palestinians living in over 700 villages and cities, who share a vibrant history and culture. Most of these villages and cities were depopulated and renamed during and after 1948, as part of the still ongoing efforts to undermine and disavow Palestinian identity and history.

NAKBA DAYENU

For tonight's Dayenu, let us all stand. This Dayenu, from Jews Against the Occupation-NYC, is call and response—if you are so moved to read one of these statements, speak up. An uneven chorus of voices, a lone voice and periods of silence are all acceptable. The bolded "We should have said enough" responses we all say together.

When the Etzel and the Stern Gang massacred 250 Palestinians at Deir Yassin, outside of Jerusalem

we should have said enough.

When in villages throughout Palestine, Jewish brigades implemented a procedure of expulsion -

we should have said enough.

When soldiers rounded up Palestinian men and massacred them collectively –

we should have said enough.

When other men were forced to dig their neighbors' graves –

we should have said enough.

When women and children were ordered to walk towards Arab countries, while Jewish soldiers fired shots over their heads –

we should have said enough.

When Palestinian men were forced into labor camps, where their labor included destroying Palestinian homes –

we should have said enough.

When the on the Eve of Passover, in an operation called, "Cleaning Out Chametz" the Haganah shelled the Palestinian residential quarters of Haifa, forcing 70,000, 90% of the city's Palestinian residents, to flee –

we should have said enough.

When similar operations were carried out in Jaffa, Tiberias and Safad –

we should have said enough.

When the 10,000 Palestinian residents of Majdal, now Jewish Ashkelon, were enclosed for two years in a ghetto, or closed militarized area, and later forced on trucks and transferred to Gaza –

we should have said enough.

When the IDF forced the inhabitants of the cities of Lud and Ramle out of their homes at gunpoint and forced them to march west towards Jordan –

we should have said enough.

When, after villages were depopulated, they were obliterated by the IDF, houses and mosques bombed and bulldozed, all signs of former life destroyed –

we should have said enough.

When Palestinian homes were confiscated by Israel and repopulated with Jews –

we should have said enough.

When the Haganah used live fire to prevent villagers from returning to their homes –

we should have said enough.

When Israel continues to deny that the forced expulsions happened –

When Israel and the American Jewish community continue to deny the Right of Return to the refugees of 1948 -

We say: enough!

Dayenu!

Freedom

In remembrance of the 2011 protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Gabon, Bahrain, Libya, and elsewhere.

Liberation comes when people gather
by the tens and by the thousands
demanding that the despot who's held the reins
step down, and in between the slogans
they dish out lentils cooked over open flame,
and homes open up so the protestors can shower
and members of one faith link hands
to protect members of another faith at prayer.
Liberation comes at a cost: not only
the horses and chariots swept away, but
innocents gunned down by their own army,
panicked children lost in the roiling crowds
activists imprisoned for speaking freely,
and when the world stops watching
they may be beaten—or worse.
It's upon us to at least pay attention
on mobile phones and computer screens
as real people rise up to say
*we have the right to congregate and to speak
we will not be silenced, we are not afraid.*

—Rabbi Rachel Barenblat
from the Velveteen Rabbi's Haggadah for Pesach

Second cup of wine

L'chayim to solidarity!

Solidarity is hard work. It means ongoing self-reflection, clear accountability structures, continual learning and critical thinking. Also, humility, empathy, commitment, hope and love. Solidarity is about communities with different levels of oppression and privilege uniting in the struggle for liberation. It involves community building, support in struggle, awareness of our own relationship to different forms of oppression, and commitment to action that is accountable to those most directly affected by injustice.

A crucial part of our work at JVP is solidarity work. We stand in solidarity with Palestinians and with other Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S. and worldwide. We take seriously understanding white Jewish privilege, as well as the long history of anti-Jewish oppression.

With this second cup, we honor the long legacy of solidarity in the labor movement, in the story of Passover with the courageousness of the midwives Shifra and Puah, through the work of the White Rose and other Christian German anti-fascist movements during World War 2, and beyond.

We raise our glass and re-ignite our commitment to the work, responsibility and the joy of solidarity.

L'chayim to solidarity!

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adnai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Rach'tzah: Washing hands before eating matzah

From www.mecaforpeace.org

In the West Bank and Gaza, the Israeli Occupation systematically denies Palestinian adequate quality and quantities of water. Palestinian communities inside the state of Israel have less access to water than their Jewish counterparts, as well. Water is diverted from Palestinian resources in the West Bank (and previously in Gaza) to illegal Israeli settlements and into Israel. Israel denies materials, fuel, and permits to sustain and expand water systems. Military attacks predictably—and often deliberately—destroy wells, water tanks, pipes, treatment plants, and sewage systems. Widespread poverty prevents people from purchasing clean water or repairing their wells and plumbing. The health and well being of virtually every Palestinian child and adult is affected by the shortage of clean, safe water.

Acknowledging the water shortage in Palestine, we will refrain from washing our hands right now.

Motzi & Matzah: Blessing over matzah as food and as a special mitzvah

We will now bless the matzah, “the bread of affliction”, and as we bless it and eat it we dedicate our selves to fighting oppression in all its forms so that never again shall anyone have to eat this bread of affliction, even as we understand so many currently suffer.

Together: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam ha’motzi lechem min ha’aretz

Blessed is our God, determiner of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth

Together: Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam asher kidshanu b’mitzvotav v’tzivanu al achilat matzah

Blessed is our God, determiner of the universe, who has made us holy through commandments and has commanded us to eat unleavened bread.

Maror: Eating the bitter herbs

We taste a bit of maror, the bitter herb, as it calls to mind the bitterness of slavery, the bitterness of life under occupation.

Let us now in silence and mindfulness, taste the bitter herb.

Korech: Eating a sandwich of haroset & bitter herbs

As we prepare to eat the Hillel sandwich with the sweetness of haroset and the bitterness of maror, highlighting the challenge to us to taste freedom in the midst of oppression, to be aware of oppression even as we are free, we hold the contradictions of bitter and sweet.

REVENGE By Taha Muhammed Ali

At times ... I wish
I could meet in a duel
the man who killed my father
and razed our home,
expelling me
into
a narrow country.
And if he killed me,
I'd rest at last,
and if I were ready—
I would take my revenge!

But if it came to light,
when my rival appeared,
that he had a mother
waiting for him,
or a father who'd put
his right hand over
the heart's place in his chest
whenever his son was late
even by just a quarter-hour
for a meeting they'd set—
then I would not kill him,
even if I could.

Likewise ... I
would not murder him
if it were soon made clear
that he had a brother or sisters
who loved him and constantly longed
to see him.

Or if he had a wife to greet him
and children who
couldn't bear his absence
and whom his gifts would thrill.
Or if he had
friends or companions,
neighbors he knew
or allies from prison
or a hospital room,
or classmates from his school ...
asking about him
and sending him regards.

But if he turned
out to be on his own—
cut off like a branch from a tree—
without a mother or father,
with neither a brother nor sister,
wifeless, without a child,
and without kin or neighbors or
friends,
colleagues or companions,
then I'd add not a thing to his pain
within that aloneness—
not the torment of death,
and not the sorrow of passing away.
Instead I'd be content
to ignore him when I passed him by
on the street—as I
convinced myself
that paying him no attention
in itself was a kind of revenge.

All: Make and eat a Hillel sandwich

Shulchan orech: Eating the festive meal

It is now time to eat and shmooze with new and old friends and comrades!
Enjoy!

Tzafun: Eating the afikomen

We now find the afikomen and bring it together with the piece it was separated from.

One traditional comment on this ritual is that it symbolizes the reunification of the 12 tribes of Israel. This commentary is all the more profound in the current climate of division and gatekeeping today in American Jewish communities.

Just last month, the Brandeis University Hillel twice rejected a membership bid by the Brandeis Jewish Voice for Peace chapter, even after some 1,000 Brandeis students, nearly a third of the student body, signed a petition circulated by JVP asking the Brandeis Hillel to reconsider its decision to not to admit JVP as a partner organization. The petition was also signed by 50 rabbis and 100 faculty members, parents of students, and Brandeis alumni.

As we eat the afikomen, let us acknowledge that what is broken can never be healed with a trace, the pain of the divisions and breaks in Jewish communities will endure even after Hillel one day welcomes in the young, creative, and committed Jews of JVP campus chapters.

As we eat the afikomen, let's do so with hope and resolve to find unity of commitment within American Jewish communities to work for justice and freedom for all people, and to welcoming all voices to the Jewish communal table.

Barech: Grace after meals

Four More Questions for Pesach from Rabbi Brant Rosen

Question 3: Return

When God returns Zion from captivity, it will be as in our dream; Our mouths will be filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy... (Psalm 126: 1-2)

We begin the blessing after the meal with the image of return: a vision that has always been central to our collective Jewish “dream.” Today, of course, this Jewish ideal has been realized by means of political nationalism. Zionism has succeeded in “returning” the Jewish people to sovereignty in its historic homeland.

The founding of the Jewish state, however, has tragically created a nightmare for another people. The creation of Israel in 1948 displaced 700,000 indigenous inhabitants from their land. As a result, over 4,000,000 Palestinian refugees now yearn passionately to return to their homes.

And so we ask: what has the Jewish “return” to Zion wrought? How do we understand a Jewish “right of return” to Israel that grants automatic citizenship to any Jew anywhere in the world while denying that same right to the very people who actually lived on this land not long ago? Can any “return” truly be complete as long as it denies that right to others? Could there possibly be a way that both peoples might realize their respective dreams of return?

Third cup of wine

L'chayim to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement

The broad consensus among Palestinian civil society about the need for a broad and sustained Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) resulted in the Palestinian Call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel that was launched in July 2005 with the initial endorsement of over 170 Palestinian organizations. The signatories to this call represent the three major components of the Palestinian people: the refugees in exile, Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the discriminated Palestinian citizens of the Israeli state.

The call for boycotts, divestment campaigns, and government sanctions are tried and true non-violent resistance tactics as history shows us: In Alabama in 1955 it was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 1965 in Delano, California, it was the United Farm Workers' strike and call for boycott of California grape growers. And in 1985, it was Artists United Against Apartheid organizing in Sun City, South Africa.

These movements succeeded because-- instead of telling people to wait for government leaders to do the right thing-- they gave people powerful tools they could use to end injustice. Here. And now. Here at JVP, we are bringing these tools to bring an end the Israeli occupation of Palestine with our We Divest Campaign demanding that one of the world's largest retirement funds divest from the Israeli occupation.

We raise this third cup to the powerful history of boycotts, divestment campaigns and government sanctions, to Palestinian civil society, and to all of us organizing for an end to the Israeli occupation.

L'chayim to the BDS movement!

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Hallel: Praise

Together we will sing songs of peace & hope

LO YISA GOY

Lo yisa goy el goy cherev
Lo yilmedu od milchama

Nation shall not war against nation, and they shall study war no more

OSEH SHALOM

Oseh shalom bimromav
Hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu
V'al kol ha olam
V'imru v'imru amein

The one who makes peace on high, make peace upon us, upon all the world and let us say: amen

OD YAVO SHALOM ALEINU

Od yavo' shalom aleinu
Od yavo' shalom aleinu
Od yavo' shalom aleinu
Ve al kulam (x2)
Salaam (Salaam)
Aleinu ve al kol ha olam,
Salaam, Salaam (x2)

Peace will come upon us
Peace will come upon us
Peace will come upon us
and on everyone.

Salaam (*'peace' in Arabic*)
On us and on everyone
Salaam, Salaam

Fourth cup of wine

L'chayim to community!

From the JVP 2011 National Membership Meeting: Building a Community of Respect and Trust, a note from Stefanie Brendler, JVP Board member

We come together as JVP members to strengthen and build community. We come together to envision the world we want to live in: a world where every individual has the right to self-determination by participating in shaping our future together. In this world, we look out and care for one another; we practice trust and kindness; we respect each other's personal (physical and emotional) space; we lend an ear or ask for a helping hand; we believe that everyone comes to do this work with good intent; and, we hold each other accountable when we err.

JVP is home to a multitude of diverse identities (including race, class, gender, sex, sexuality, age, physical ability, size, religion, religious/secular, etc.), and we will affirm each other in our spectrum of identities. We will model our shared vision of the world by creating a space that is as safe, inclusive and supportive as possible for all of us. This includes having thoughtful conversations with each other if/when we hear language used pejoratively or language that perpetuates stereotypes.

We all feel the stress of the present state of affairs, and it is physically and emotionally draining. Though it is sometimes difficult to see, we know there is a rainbow on the other side of the storm cloud of injustice; if we didn't know this, we wouldn't be participants in the movement for peace and justice. It is because of the rainbow, not the storm cloud, that we act.

With our best critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, we will practice community building as an alternative to perpetuating the violence of an oppressive security-culture state.

We raise the fourth cup to the rainbow. L'chayim to community!

TOGETHER:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam borei pri hagafen

Blessed is the Eternal, determiner of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Nirtzah: Conclusion

Four More Questions for Pesach from Rabbi Brant Rosen

Question 4. “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

We now end our Seder meal once again with the proclamation “Next Year in Jerusalem!” And so we ask: what will we do to ensure that Jerusalem lives up to its name as a city of peace? How will we respond as the Jewish state increasingly implements policies that claim this holy city in the name of one people only? Do we dare to dream of a city divided or a city truly united for all its inhabitants?

...and if we do believe that Jerusalem must be, once and for all, a true City of Peace, what are we willing to do to make it so?

CLOSING

As we close tonight, go around your table and say goodnight and one thing that you are taking away with you from this evening’s seder.

TOGETHER: This year Palestinians are refugees next year, may all Palestinians have the right to return to their home lands and to Jerusalem.

Next Year in Jerusalem! Next Year in al-Quds! Next year in a City of Peace!