

An Incredibly Short Seder

Step 1) Light some candles. This is a reminder that this time and space are special and outside of the ordinary hustle and bustle of life.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov. Shehecheyanu v'kiymanu v'higyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed is the Ruler of the Universe, who gave us laws and commanded us to light the festival candles. With the sustenance of liberation, let us celebrate this season and our place in it.

Step 2) Drink a cup of wine, the first of four. Lean to the left and relax a minute.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam, borei p'ri hagafen. L'chayim!
Blessed is the Ruler of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine. To Life!

Step 3) Wash your hands, you've been on BART. Use some soap, why don't you?

Step 4) Ask Four Questions:

What's with the flat bread?

We eat unleavened bread because the people fleeing
Egypt didn't have time to let their bread rise.
It's also very tasty covered in chocolate.

What's with all the stuff on this plate?

The horseradish reminds us of the bitterness of slavery,
the apples of the bricks and mortar that were produced,
the saltwater of the tears of all those who are oppressed,
the lamb bone for how our doors were marked to pass over,
the egg and parsley the rebirth of a people into spring.
The orange is for inclusivity, because it "should not be here",
And the olive, to express our hope for peace in our time.

Why all the pillows?

We recline to remind us to savor our freedom,
and to remind us that others are not yet free.

When can we eat?

Soon; but first, a story and some wine.
Open the door, to check for anyone else who might wish to join.
Anyone is welcome because until everyone is free, none of us are.

Step 5) Tell the story of Exodus

A long time ago, the Hebrews fled a famine and found refuge in the land of Egypt. See Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat for more background on that story. After generations passed, a new Pharaoh saw the number of Hebrews in his land, and ordered them enslaved.

Afraid of a rebellion, Pharaoh decreed that all male Hebrew children be killed. One brave woman defied the order, placing her son in a basket and sending him floating down the river Nile. His sister Miriam followed the basket from the banks, until it was found by a princess, who drew him from the water. Miriam offered her mother as a wet-nurse, and Moses was raised as a prince of Egypt.

Although a child of privilege, as he grew he became aware of the slaves who worked in the brickyards of his father. When he saw a master beating a slave, he struck and killed him. Fearing retribution, he set out across the desert alone on a spirit quest in the Sinai.

He came upon a burning bush, which though it flamed was not consumed. A voice called him to lead his people to freedom. Moses argued, pleading inadequacy and difficulty speaking in public. The voice prevailed; sometimes our responsibilities choose us, like Spiderman.

Moses returned to Egypt and went to Pharaoh to argue against the injustice of slavery and for the freedom of his people. When refused, he warned that terrible things would happen, and ten plagues were unleashed upon the Egyptians. We spill a drop of our wine from our cup for each plague, to remind ourselves of the effect on the Egyptian people, and that their suffering diminishes our celebration.

Dam, Tzfardeiya, Kinim, Arov, Dever, Sh'chin, Barad, Arbeh, Choschech, Makat B'chorot
Blood, Frogs, Fire, Beasts, Plague, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, Death of the Firstborn

A first born himself, Pharaoh acquiesced as the last plague began. The Hebrews fled, not waiting for their bread to rise. A "mixed multitude" of other slaves fled with them, reminding us that liberation is not for us alone, but for all the nations of the earth.

After the slaves fled, the plagues stopped. Pharaoh sent his army after them, to the edge of the Sea of Reeds. The freed people entered the water, having faith that they would escape their pursuers. The sea parted, pushed by an entirely rationally explainable wind. After they crossed to the other side, the wind stopped, and the army and chariots were swept beneath the waves.

We mourn even now that Pharaoh's army drowned: our liberation is bittersweet because people died in pursuit. To this day we relive our liberation, that we may not become complacent, that we may always work towards the arc of freedom.

Drink the second cup of wine.

Step 6) Dayenu - It would have been enough

DAYEINU

I - lu ho - tzi ho - tzi - a - nu, ho - tzi a - nu mi - mitz - ra - yim,
 ho - tzi - a - nu mi - mitz - ra - yim da - yei - nu.
 (Chorus) Da - da - yei - nu, da - da - yei - nu, da - da - yei - nu, da -
 yei - nu da - yei - nu da - yei - nu. yei - nu da - yei - nu.

A simple song in a round, to teach us not to take any single act of compassion for granted.

There are dozens of verses, this is just one. We are grateful for every step toward freedom. We talk about these steps in the first person and in the now, because everyone should regard themselves as personally part of the Exodus.

If we had only been released from bondage, it would have been enough!

Go Down Moses

1. When Is - rael was in E - gypt's land, Let My peo - ple go, Op -
 2. Thus saith the Lord, bold Mo - ses said, Let My peo - ple go, If
 3. No more in bond - age shall they toil, Let My peo - ple go, Let
 - pressed so hard they could not stand, Let My peo - ple go.
 not I'll smite your first born dead, Let My peo - ple go. Go down,
 them come out with E - gypt's spoil, Let My peo - ple go.
 Mo - ses, Way down in E - gypt's land, Tell old Phar - aoh, To
 let My peo - ple go.

We also sing this spiritual to remember the historical and ongoing oppression in our country, not just that of our ancestors.

Drink a third cup of wine.

Step 7) Eat and drink more wine.

In the past we ended the Seder promising, "Next year in Jerusalem." Maybe the real Jerusalem is the friends we made along the way. See you next year, in sh'allah.