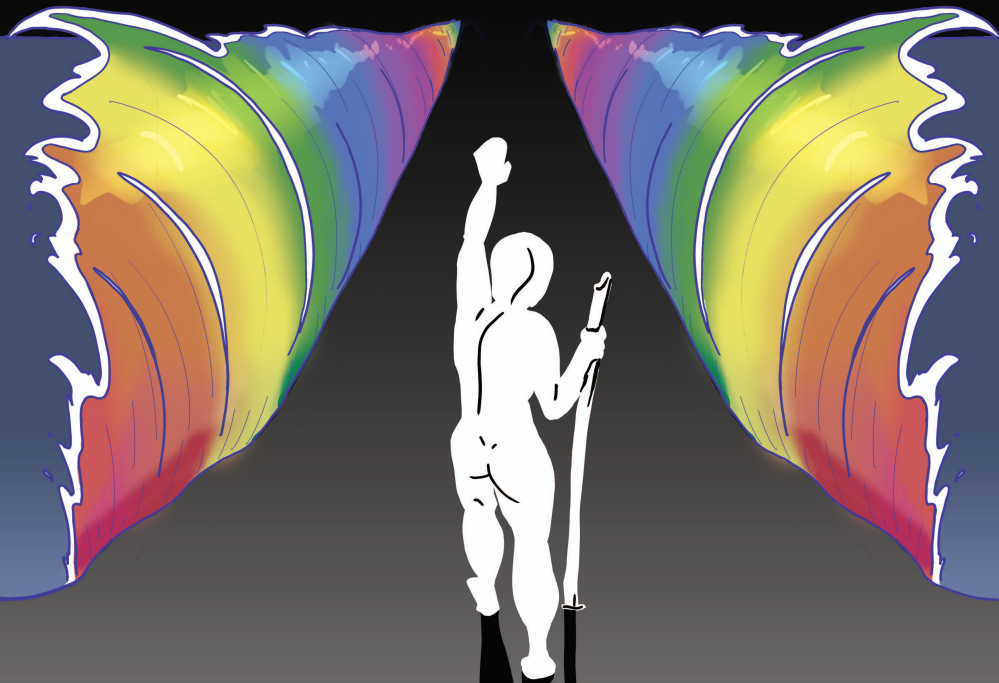


exodus

a queer passover haggadah

יְצִיָּאָה | yetziah



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Cover image by Ezra Posner

preface

Passover celebrates freedom and liberation from bondage. The Hebrew word for Egypt—מִצְרַיִם *Mitzrayim*—reminds us of the word מְצַר *metzar*—“narrow place.” We gather together to celebrate not only the Exodus from Egypt, but also our own coming out of narrow places.

Following the *seder* (order) established by the Rabbis for a home-table Passover ritual, any *haggadah* (no matter how “non-traditional” its content) centers the moment of coming out of narrowness not only as a collective experience that transforms a group into a community, but as a moral call to be attentive to the plight of all those who are bound. The experience of having been enslaved for centuries—and then suddenly freed from bondage—is cited time and again in Jewish sacred literature as the quintessential moment of our becoming a people with a distinct mission to love the stranger.

Our celebration is no different: We tell stories of the Israelites’ hasty departure from Egypt and of their miraculous passage through the Sea. We sing of how God liberated Israel with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. We ask questions and, through the symbols and tastes of the Passover meal, begin to answer them—using the words of an evolving Jewish tradition and bringing our whole selves, all of our accumulated experience, with us to the table.

And yet tonight must be different. Tonight we especially honor those too often marginalized and ignored, either through the strictly-gendered system of traditional Judaism or through contemporary exclusions of anyone who is not cisgender and heterosexual. We gather as a fully inclusive family with special attention to our queer community, broadly defined. We do this to honor the activists and everyday folks whose struggle and sacrifice has made it possible to love and live openly in new and hitherto unimagined ways. We do this to honor the freedom we now experience, and to push ourselves to recognize the freedoms we have yet to achieve.

This *haggadah* began with student organizers in the queer Jewish community at New York University, and evolved into the 2013 *Different from All Other Nights: A Queer Passover Haggadah*. The text comprises songs, blessings, and readings culled from several sources—from the Rabbinic *seder* to contemporary queer *haggadot* produced by LGBTQIA organizations and synagogues.¹ It is a *seder* for all of us.

¹ Footnotes throughout the text mark excerpts taken from previously-published *haggadot* or other sources. Many uncited sections are simply translations of the traditional *seder* elements. All other text was authored by Rabbi Nikki DeBlosi.

In 2013, I began the tradition of dedicating each of the four cups of “the fruit of the vine” to a story of *yetziah*, of “coming out.” That year, three students shared their stories; the following year, many more students wanted to offer theirs. We have heard tales of coming out as trans, coming out as bi, coming out as “not-straight,” coming out as asexual, coming out as a person of faith... And so, each year, we have witnessed tales of coming out of narrowness, at whatever point on the journey folks may be. You are invited to adapt this *haggadah* for your own community, and to share stories of exodus. Sections headed “Reader” are intended for participants to read aloud to the group; those with no heading are intended for the facilitator, either for reading aloud, paraphrasing, or replacing with a framing that reflects the needs of your community. Like all *haggadot*, this text is intended as a guide.

We celebrate Passover—**פסח** *Pesach*—as a commemoration of events long past. We recall the years of bitter bondage. We remember the tenth, terrible plague which “passed over” —**פסח** *pasach*—the homes of the Israelites, who would that very night leave Egypt, their dough still unleavened. JQ International’s *GLBTQ Passover Haggadah* notes that “the holiday of Passover has grown to represent a time to remember the struggle for civil liberty in our current day lives—or in other words, individuals whose recognition of rights and validation of identity have been ‘passed over’” by the broader culture (Los Angeles, 2008, available online; 2). Tonight, we listen to voices that have been too long passed over, and we call out for stories of Exodus—of **יציא** *yetziah*. These are stories of going forth into freedom. Stories of coming out.

- Rabbi Nikki Lyn DeBlosi

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introduction: different from all others...

Each year, Jews at *seder* tables across the world dutifully chant the first of four traditional questions: “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

But in Hebrew the question omits the word “why,” asking instead: “***Mah nishtanah ha-lailah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-leilot?*** *What differentiates this night from all other nights?*”

Why don't you celebrate Christmas? Why don't you date girls? Why are you in the “wrong” bathroom? Why won't you just eat a cheeseburger? Why can't you make up your mind between gay and straight? Why don't you keep kosher? Why do you have to “flaunt” your difference?

Sometimes *why* questions put us on the defensive. We worry that we have to justify our difference, or even our very existence. Sometimes we feel we have to squeeze ourselves into a very narrow definition of what it means to be Jewish. Sometimes *why* questions imply a value judgment: Why are you this “strange” way rather than that “normal” way? Why are you different, unusual, problematic, “queer”? Why can't you just *fit in*?

Our *seder* tonight is a little queer, for tonight, we need not explain *why* each of us is different. We need only come to the table prepared and open to share and to celebrate what distinguishes us, one from the other.

we sing together

*Hinei mah tov u'mah naim shevet kulanu
yachad.*

הִנֵּי מַה טוֹב וְיָמָּה נְעִים שֶׁבֵּת כָּלְנוּ יַחַד

Behold! How good and how pleasant it is for us all to dwell together.²

² Hebrew is a gendered language: it is impossible to offer language in our haggadah that is completely gender-neutral. And yet, we know from experience that too many folks feel pointedly excluded when our languages uses the masculine as the “default” for “human.” As we begin the *seder*, we raise our voices with commonly-known words (in whatever melody your community prefers) adapted to be more inclusive. If you prefer, or for musical reasons, you may change “*kulanu*” to “*kulam*,” to the traditional “*achim*” (brothers), or to another alternative of your choice.

הַדְּלִיקַת נְרוֹת **candlelighting** ³

READER: As we bathe in the light of these candles, we remember all the candles we've lit as Jews, as LGBTQI⁴ people and allies, and as those who struggle for freedom. Shabbat candles. *Yahrtzeit*⁵ candles. Candles at AIDS vigils. And candles at Take Back the Night Marches.

READER: As we share in the light of these candles, we rededicate the flame each of us carries within, that small reflection of the Creator's light that is ours to use as a beacon in our work of *tikkun olam*—repairing the world.

we light the festival candles and say the blessing:

*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
Melech ha-olam, asher kideshanu
b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu lehadlik neir
shel Yom Tov.*

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

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who sanctifies us with commandments and commands us to kindle the festival lights.

³ The readings in the candlelighting section are taken from Congregation B'nai Jeshurun's *The Stonewall Shabbat Seder* (June 27, 1997/23 Sivan 5757), 1.

⁴ Different communities have different practices with respect to terminology and initials for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, genderqueer, queer, intersex, aromantic, and asexual communities. If we have left out an initial or label, it is not meant as a slight to those who identify under that label, but rather reflects our community's ever-changing nature.

⁵ Memorial candles commemorating the anniversary of the death of a loved one.

⁶ This *haggadah* will use both masculine and feminine God-language. These human, bodily metaphors for God are intended not to limit our understanding of God, who is beyond space and time and body, but to expand our understanding. Because Hebrew is a gendered language, we cannot escape “he” and “she” throughout the *seder*; therefore, occasionally grammatical gender agreement has been intentionally eschewed as an effort to include genderqueer interpretations.

blissing differences

Each week, as we turn back from Shabbat to our everyday lives, Jews all over the world express gratitude for the distinction between one kind of time and another. The ritual of *havdalah* (separation), with its braided candle, fragrant spices, and overflowing wine, can teach us that difference is valuable and meaningful. In the Babylonian Talmud, our Rabbis recorded a blessing to be recited upon the occasion of seeing an “unusual” creature.⁷ As we begin our seder, we honor the uniqueness of each person present by embracing our queerness—that is, our difference, our distinction, our uniqueness. *Queerness*, we affirm, is precisely the kind of *distinction* for which we are, as a community, grateful.

*take a moment to introduce yourself to those around you
and to share what distinguishes you from others.*

you may use these questions for inspiration:

what is your name? Who or what does your name honor or invoke?

what brought you to this seder table?

what does freedom mean to you?

*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
Melech ha-olam, meshaneh
ha-briyot.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְשַׁנֵּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who has made all creatures different.

קִדְּשׁ **kadeish (sanctification)**

Tonight, our four cups are dedicated to יְצִיאָה; *yetziah*—going forth, coming out. We invite members of our community to share their stories before dedicating each cup.⁸

*members of our community share their coming-out stories...
we fill, lift, and dedicate the first of four cups of wine*

⁷ This traditional blessing is recited upon seeing an unusual creature (like an elephant, for example) (*Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 58b*). Here, as in *The Stonewall Seder*, it serves as a way to express our gratitude for the differences and distinctions that make each human being unique.

⁸ At NYU, student leaders invite individuals from the community ahead of time to prepare their stories. This ensures a diversity of representation at our seder in terms of religious or spiritual background, levels and forms of familial and communal support, gender identity and presentation, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.; spontaneously inviting folks to share works as well. Do what fits best for your community.

*B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach
ha-olam, boreit p'ri ha-gafen.*

ברוכה את יה, אלהינו רוח העולם, בוראת פרי הגפן.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

*(On Shabbat: vayehi erev, vayehi
voker, yom ha'shishi. Vayechulu
hashamayim v'ha-aretz, v'chol
tva'am, vayechal Elohim bayom
ha'sh'vi'i melachto asher asa,
vayishbot ba-yom ha'sh'vi'i mi-kol
melachto asher asa. Vayevarech
Elohim et yom ha'sh'vi'i vayekadeish
oto, ki vo shavat mi-kol melachto
asher bara Elohim la'asot.)*

*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
Melech ha-olam, asher K'ra'anu
la-avodato v'rom'manu bik'dushato,
v'kideshanu b'mitzvotav. Va-titen lanu
Adonai Eloheinu b'ahavah (on
Shabbat: Shabbatot lim'nuchah
u')moadim l'simcha, chagim
u'zmanim l'sason, et yom (on
Shabbat: hashabbat hazeh, v'et yom)
chag ha-matzot ha-zeh, z'man
cheiruteinu, (on Shabbat: v'ahava)
mikra kodesh, zeicheir litziyat
Mitzrayim. Ki eileinu karata v'otanu
kidashta la-avodatecha, (on Shabbat:
v'Shabbat) u'moadei kodshecha (on
Shabbat: b'ahava uv'ratzon),*

(לשבת ויהי ערב ויהי בקר
יום הששי, ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל צבאם: ויכל
אלהים ביום השביעי, מלאכתו אשר עשה, וישבת
ביום השביעי, מכל-מלאכתו אשר עשה: ויברך
אלהים את-יום השביעי, ויקדש אתו, כי בו שבת
מכל-מלאכתו, אשר-ברא אלהים לעשות:)

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קראנו
לעבודתו ורוממנו בקדושתו, וקדשנו במצותיו.
ותתן לנו יי אלהינו באהבה (לשבת שבתות
למנוחה ו)מועדים לשמחה חגים וזמנים לששון
את-יום (לשבת השבת הזה ואת-יום) חג המצות
הזה. זמן חרותנו (לשבת באהבה), מקרא קדש,
זכר ליציאת מצרים. כי אלינו קראת ואותנו קדשת
לעבודתך. (לשבת ושבת) ומועדי קדשך (לשבת
באהבה וברצון) בשמחה ובששון הנחלתנו: ברוך
אתה יי, מקדש (לשבת השבת ו)ישראל והזמנים:

(כשחל יו"ט במוצאי שבת מוסיפים כאן ברכות
הבדלה.) ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא
מאורי האש: ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
המבדיל בין קדש לחל בין אור לחשך, בין ישראל
לעמים, בין יום השביעי לששת ימי המעשה. בין
קדשת שבת לקדשת יום טוב הבדלת. ואת-יום
השביעי מששת ימי המעשה קדשת. ברוך אתה יי,
המבדיל בין קדש לקדש:)

⁹ This *haggadah* uses the festival *kiddush* of the Reconstructionist movement, as it appears in *A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah*, which emphasizes the shared destiny of the Jewish people with the other peoples with whom we share this world (32). Language of chosenness and exaltedness has been altered to reflect both our unique relationship with the God of our ancestors and our responsibility to all peoples.

*b'simcha u'v'sason hinchaltanu.
Baruch Atah Adonai m'kadeish (on
Shabbat: haShabbat v')Yisrael
ve-hazmanim.*

*(on motzei Shabbat we add havdalah:
Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech
ha-olam, borei m'orei haeish. Baruch
Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech
ha-olam, hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol,
bein or l'choshech, bein Yisrael
l'amim, bein yom hash'vi'i l'sheishet
y'mei ha-maaseh, bein kedushat
shabbat likedushat yom tov hivdalta.
V'et yom ha'sh'vii misheishet y'mei
ha-maaseh kidashta. Baruch Atah
Adonai, ha-mavdil bein kodesh
l'kodesh.*

(On Shabbat, on Friday night, we include: There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day. The heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed. And God completed, on the seventh day, [God's] work which [God] had made, and [God] ceased on the seventh day, all [God's] work in which [God] had been engaged. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because on it [God] ceased all [God's] work which [God] had created.)

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who has called us to Your service, and made us holy with your *mitzvot*, and given us, Eternal our God, in love, (Sabbaths for rest), the festivals for happiness, the holidays and seasons for rejoicing, (this Shabbat and) this day of the festival of *matzot*, season of our freedom, a holy convocation, a remembrance of the going-out from Egypt. For you have called to us, and made us holy for Your service, and [Your Sabbaths and] Your holy festivals, in happiness and joy, You have given us, to have and to hand on. Blessed are You, Eternal, who raises up to holiness [Shabbat,] the people Israel and the festival times.

(At the end of Shabbat, on Saturday nights, we add: Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who creates the light of the fire. Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who has distinguished between the sacred and the ordinary, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six working days. You

have distinguished between the holiness of Shabbat and the holiness of the Festival, and have set aside the seventh day above the six working days. are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who distinguishes between the types of holiness.)

B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach ha-olam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu la-z'man ha-zeh. בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעַנוּ לְזִמְנָן הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Spirit of the Universe, who enlivened us, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

וּרְחָץ **urchatz (symbolic washing)**

READER: In Hebrew, *urchatz* means “washing” or “cleansing.” In Aramaic, sister language to Hebrew, *urchatz* means “trusting.” As we wash each other’s hands, we reflect on this act of trust and welcoming, recalling the sources of hope and trust we want to bring into the world for ourselves and each other.¹⁰

we pass around the bowl and cup and wash. no blessing is said.

כַּרְפָּס **karpas (eating greens)**

READER: (*Lift the vegetable*) A spring holiday, Passover reminds us of the potential of newness and growth, of emerging green and fresh after the desolation of winter. Tonight, we dip our vegetable in salt water, a bodily reminder of the tears of our ancestors in slavery. From bitter tears to new growth, we ask ourselves, of what resilience might we be capable?

we dip the vegetable twice in salt water, bless, and eat

Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-adama. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

¹⁰ Adapted from the 2012 Keshet *haggadah* for NYU’s Bronfman Center, itself adapted from online sources. I regret that I was unable to locate the original source in order to cite it properly.

יָדִי **yahatz (breaking the middle matzah)**

we break the middle piece of matzah, hiding it as the afikoman, the retrieval of which will end our seder

READER: No prayer is recited before we break the middle *matzah* on our *seder* table. This is a silent act. We realize that, like the broken *matzah*, we are all incomplete, with prayers yet to be fulfilled, promises still to be redeemed.¹¹

מַגִּיד **magid (narration)**

READER: Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer [their] bread to others. But one who is willing to divide [their] food with a stranger has already shown [themselves] capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the *seder* by inviting others to join us. That is how we turn affliction into freedom.¹²

we raise the matzah and sing

*Ha -lachma, ha-lachma anya
di achalu, di achalu avahatana,
b'ara, b'ara d'Mitzrayim...*

הָא לַחְמָא הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא
דִּי אֶכְלוּ דִּי אֶכְלוּ אַבְהַתְנָא
בְּאֶרְעָא בְּאֶרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם.

All: 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. Now we are here; next year may we be in Israel. Now we are slaves; next year may we be free.

¹¹ Harold Schulweis, excerpted in *A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah*, 40.

¹² Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, "Sharing the Bread of Affliction: Passover and the Hidden Meaning of Freedom," Huffington Post Blog, 03/23/2013.

the four questions¹³

READER: Questions, even the most irreverent, seed the freedom that we celebrate tonight. When God, taking Abraham into his confidence, announced the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the man responded with rebellion. “Heaven forbid You to do a thing like this, to deal death to the innocent along with the guilty. Heaven forbid for You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do justice?!” (Genesis 18:24-25).

READER: The irreverence displayed here takes the breath away. But even more breathtaking is the divine response. God doesn’t consume God’s inquisitor in a pillar of fire. Instead God submits to Abraham’s questioning. Had God instead flamed up in [anger], then the story we tell tonight could never have been written, not a word of it.

READER: Perhaps tonight there is one who sits at the table, harboring an irreverent question, one that challenges the assumptions that have brought this family to this table for many generations. If the struggles with their question lead them away from the answers of their ancestors, what then? Must lineage dictate the child’s interpretation of the world?

*anyone who wishes may raise a question to those sitting at their table.
behind the recitation of the traditional four questions are our own voiced and
unvoiced inquiries.*

*Mah nishtanah ha-lailah ha-zeh mi-kol
ha-leilot?
She-b’chol ha-leilot anu ochlim chameitz
u’matzah—ha-lailah ha-zeh kulo matzah.
She-b’chol ha-leilot anu ochlim sh’ar
yerakot—ha-lailah ha-zeh maror.
She-b’chol ha-leilot ein anu matbilin afilu
pa’am echat—ha-lailah ha-zeh sh’tai
p’amim.
She-b’chol ha-leilot anu ochlim ochlim
bein yoshvin u’vein m’subin—ha-lailah
ha-zeh kulanu m’subin.*

מה נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל הַלַּיְלוֹת?
שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין חֵמֶץ וּמֶצֶה. הַלַּיְלָה
הַזֶּה כְּלוּ מֶצֶה:
שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר יֵרַקוֹת הַלַּיְלָה
הַזֶּה מְרוֹר:
שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנוּ מְטַבִּילִין אֶפְּלוּ פְּעַם
אֶחָת. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים:
שֶׁבְּכָל הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין יוֹשְׁבֵין וּבֵין
מְסֻבִּין. הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה כְּלוּנוּ מְסֻבִּין:

¹³ This interpretation of and introduction to the Four Questions has been adapted from Jeffrey Goldberg’s Commentary (“Library”) to the Four Sons in editor Jonathan Safran Foer’s *New American Haggadah* (New York: Little & Brown, 2012), 31.

What differentiates this night from all other nights?

On all other nights, we eat *chameitz* (leaven) and *matzah*. Tonight, why only *matzah*?

On all other nights, we eat any kinds of herbs. Tonight, why bitter herbs?

On all other nights, we do not dip even once. Tonight, why do we dip the greens twice?

On all other nights, we eat sitting or reclining. Tonight, why do we all recline?

Reader: In addition to the Four Questions, tonight we ask ourselves a fifth. We are commanded to celebrate as if each one of us were personally liberated from Egypt. In the next year, how do you hope to bring yourself closer to your place of freedom?¹⁴

take a few moments to answer the fifth question at your table...

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Eternal our God brought us out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Had not God brought our ancestors out of Egypt, then we, our children and our grandchildren would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. Even if we all were wise and perceptive, experienced, and versed in Torah, it would still be our duty to tell about the Exodus from Egypt.

the four children

READER: [The Rabbinic tale of] the Four Children presents four individuals who ask about the tradition in very different ways. [They are:] The wise, the rebellious, the simple, and the one who does not know how to ask. They are four very different learners who need to be addressed as individuals.¹⁵

READER: Freezing the Four Children into four “types” can be harmful. Too many of us have been labelled the “rebellious” child for our determination to be included at the table as our whole selves. Too many of us have found ourselves unable to ask the crucial questions of inclusion. We remind ourselves that the Four Children represent the responsibility of those in power to teach in ways that can be heard by all kinds of folks, to pass along the tradition in ways we can each understand and embrace.

not everyone at our table tonight has familiarity with the exodus story as told in the torah and interpreted through centuries of jewish tradition.

¹⁴ Adapted from the 2012 Keshet *haggadah* for NYU’s Bronfman Center, itself adapted from online sources. I regret that I was unable to locate the original sources in order to cite them properly.

¹⁵ Rabbi Jason Miller, “Making the Four Children Speak to Us on Passover,” Huffington Post Blog, 04/18/2011, Updated 06/18/2011.

as a community, we move through the symbols and summary of the story, leaving room for questions, for challenges, for additions, and for reinterpretations. our haggadah guides us, but need not confine us.

the seder plate

READER: The journey from narrowness to freedom begins in a dark place. Here, at the beginning, are the tears of enslavement, of dehumanization. Earlier tonight, we tasted the vegetable, dipped in salt water. Our *seder* invites us to image ourselves in the story with all our senses. A plate of symbolic items, some of which we will eat and others which serve as visual reminders, make vivid the journey from narrowness and bondage to breadth and freedom.

READER: (*Lift the egg*) The egg brings to mind rebirth and the cycle of the seasons. Even as we recall a time when our people made no choices of their own, this egg calls us to consider our own generative possibilities: what will we create in our lifetimes?

READER: (*Lift the shank bone*). The lamb shank represents the sacrifices we have made to survive. Hiding our authentic selves—in our people’s past as Jewish and in our people’s past as queer—risking the revelation of the truth, entering a Jewish community where we were not sure we’d be welcomed. Each of us has made sacrifices that brought us here.¹⁶

READER: (*Lift the orange*) A new and growing tradition, the orange represents the notion that there is—there must be—a place at the table for all of us, regardless of gender identity, romantic status, or sexual orientation. As Jews we constantly re-create ourselves; our symbol is a fruit that carries within the seeds of its own rebirth. Placing the orange on the seder plate was originally an act of rebellion, a reminder of the rebellion of the Hebrew midwives Shifra and Puah, who refused to carry out Pharaoh’s order to murder Hebrew newborns.¹⁷

READER: To save her son from Pharaoh’s next edict, that all male Hebrew children be tossed into the Nile, Yocheved hid him in a basket among the reeds, where his sister stood silently watching over as Pharaoh’s own daughter took the child in, naming him Moses and raising him as her own. When he had grown up, he killed an Egyptian taskmaster who had beaten an Israelite slave, and he fled to the desert.

¹⁶ Adapted from the 2012 Bronfman Center Queer *haggadah*.

¹⁷ *The Stonewall Seder*.

READER: In the desert Moses encountered a bush that burned, but was not consumed. “I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob,” said a Voice (Exodus 3:6). And Moses heeded the Eternal’s command, returning to Egypt and demanding of the Pharaoh to let God’s people go.

READER: But God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Again and again, Pharaoh refused to let the people go, until God performed such signs and wonders as had never been experienced before, bringing plague after plague upon Pharaoh and his people.

the ten plagues

ALL: **These are the ten plagues which God brought down upon Egypt:**

as each plague is mentioned, each person takes a drop of wine from the cup and recites:

<i>Dam.</i>	דָּם.	Blood.
<i>Tzfardei’a.</i>	צַפְרֵדַּעַ.	Frogs.
<i>Kinim.</i>	כִּנִּים.	Lice.
<i>Arov.</i>	עֲרוֹב.	Beasts.
<i>Dever.</i>	דָּבָר.	Cattle Plague.
<i>Sh’chin.</i>	שָׁחִין.	Boils.
<i>Barad.</i>	בָּרָד.	Hail.
<i>Arbeh.</i>	אַרְבֶּה.	Locusts.
<i>Choshech.</i>	חֹשֶׁךְ.	Darkness.
<i>Makat bechorot.</i>	מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת.	Death of the Firstborn.

READER: We diminish our joy tonight in acknowledgement of the suffering of the Egyptians, which was the price of our freedom. How many plagues has humanity faced? We recite another ten plagues, plagues against our queer community, which have diminished us for too long.¹⁸

take turns reciting these plagues around your table

The **blood** shed in the Nazi death camps and in queer-bashings.

The **laughter** caused by our stereotyped representation in jokes and in the media.

The **guilt** we are told is inherent in our simple existence.

¹⁸ From the JQ International GLBT Haggadah, accessed on Haggadot.com 6/1/2017, with additions and adaptations made for the sake of broader inclusion.

The **shame** we are made to feel when we share our lives and our bodies with someone of the same gender as ourselves.

The **despair** we feel when we are told that we are evil and monstrous, that AIDS is God's judgment upon us.

The **fear** caused by a hostile society that might cast us out if it knew who we are.

The physical **pain** of being attacked by homophobes and transphobes, and the mental pain of being rejected by family, by synagogue, and by community.

The **loneliness** of thinking that we are the only one of our kind.

The **darkness** of our closets.

The hollow **silence** of when we do not speak out in our own defense, the silence from one generation to another.

Though we may not have individually suffered each plague, we acknowledge the suffering of our queer community, and we vow not to be complacent about the suffering of all those who are bound.

READER: The turn from narrowness to freedom happens not in one momentous splitting of the sea, but in the long process of acknowledging and naming oppression, of speaking truth to power, of honoring our stories, and of walking bravely onto the dry land, with the water like a wall to our right and to our left.

READER: We sing together words to express our gratitude for all the steps along the way to full inclusion and freedom for all.

dayeinu

Ilu hotzi hotzianu mi-Mitzrayim...

dayeinu!

Ilu natan lanu et ha-Shabbat...

dayeinu!

Ilu natan lanu et ha-Torah... dayeinu!

Dai-dai-einu!

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים... דַּיְנוּ!

אלו נתן לנו את-השבת... דַּיְנוּ!

אלו נתן לנו את-התורה... דַּיְנוּ!

If God had only brought us out of Egypt... it would have been enough for us!
 If God had only given us the Torah... it would have been enough for us!
 If God had only given us the Sabbath... it would have been enough for us!

מִרְיָם כּוֹס **miriam's cup**¹⁹

READER: Crossing the sea was just the beginning of our transformation from enslavement to freedom. We include on our seder table כּוֹס מִרְיָם *kos Miryam*, Miriam's cup. Legend tells of a mysterious well filled with "living waters" that followed the Israelites through their wandering in the desert while Miriam was alive.

community members pour water from their own cups into Miriam's cup, reminding us that we might each act as a source of inspiration for the entire community

READER: In every generation, we experience both oppression and liberation. In our wanderings, both as a people and as individuals, Miriam's well still accompanies us as a sustaining presence in the desert, enabling us not just to survive, but to thrive.

raise Miriam's cup

ALL: *Zot kos Miryam, kos mayim chayyim, zeicher litzi'at Mitzrayim. This is the cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters, a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.*

second cup

*members of our community share their coming-out stories...
 we fill, lift, and dedicate the second cup of wine*

B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרְאֵת פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.
ha-olam, boreit p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

¹⁹ Readings adapted from the *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah* (New York: The Jewish Women's Project, 2002 (2000)), 29-30 and from *A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah* (Philadelphia: The Reconstructionist Press, 2000), 29.

רוחצה rohtzah (handwashing)

we pass around the bowl and cup and wash

*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
melech ha-olam, asher kideshanu
b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al netilat
yadayim.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us with commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.

מוציא מצה motzi matzah

READER: (*Lift the matzah*) The unleavened bread reminds us of life's brittleness. Too many among us come here with flattened hearts. May tonight's *seder* enable our spirits to rise.

we each take and lift a piece of matzah

*B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach
ha-olam, ha-motzi'ah lechem min
ha-aretz .*

בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיָּאָה לֶחֶם מִן
הָאָרֶץ.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, spirit of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

we bless and eat the matzah

*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
melech ha-olam, asher kideshanu
b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al acilat
matzah.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, sovereign of the universe, who sanctifies us with commandments and commands us concerning the eating of *matzah*.

מרור maror

READER: (*Lift the maror*) We taste the bitter herb to remind us of the bitterness of Egyptian bondage. It stings, bringing tears to our eyes, as we recall contemporary discrimination.²⁰

we bless and eat the maror

*B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach
ha-olam, asher kideshanu
b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat maror.*

בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר..

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, spirit of the universe, who sanctifies us with commandments and commands us concerning the eating of bitter herbs.

כּוֹרֵךְ korech

READER: (*Lift or point out the charoset*) This *charoset* represents the mortar that bound the bricks our ancestors labored to make for Pharaoh, and reminds us of the vibrant new communities we are building today.²¹

we make a sandwich with matzah, maror, and charoset

READER: This sandwich can remind us of aspects of this very community, or of ourselves—bitter and cracked surfaces that give way to the sharp, fresh evidence of our labors in the world, tempered with sweetness combined from many sources. We are bitter and sweet, stubborn and giving. It is with our diversity that we begin our festive meal.

²⁰ Adapted from the 2012 Bronfman Center Queer *haggadah*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

שלחן עורך **shulhan orech (festive meal)**

as you enjoy your food, turn to those around you and engage in conversation. the following questions are offered as suggestions and starting points...²²

- ❖ With which characters in the Exodus story do you identify?
- ❖ What do the symbols on the *seder* plate mean to you?
- ❖ What other queer connections do you see to the tale of the Exodus, to the symbols on the *seder* plate, or to the Passover ritual?
- ❖ For some queer people, going home can be complicated; home might even be the place from which you were expelled. How do you define your family, and how does that affect your relationship to the Passover *seder*?
- ❖ Passover is a home ritual. How is it to celebrate this holiday here in this “home” with this chosen family?
- ❖ What lessons do you take from your ancestors’ journeys?
- ❖ What, other than food, do you have to offer the stranger in your midst?

²² Adapted from Keshet GLBT Jews’ Passover Resources, www.keshetonline.org.

צפון tzafun (finding the afikoman)

in keeping with jewish tradition, prizes for those who find the afikoman are encouraged!

בָּרֵךְ barech (blessing after the meal)²³

*B'rich Rachamana, malka d'alma,
marei d'hai pita.*

ברוך רחמנא מלכא דעלמא
מריה דהאי פיטא.

Blessed be the Merciful One, sovereign of the universe, master of this bread.

HaShem, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
pure and holy, tried and true,
and with thanksgiving
I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

third cup | elijah's cup

READER: A poem by Adrienne Rich:

Freedom. It isn't once, to walk out
under the Milky Way, feeling the rivers
of light, the fields of dark—
freedom is daily, prose-bound, routine remembering.
Putting together, inch by inch the starry worlds.
From all the lost collections.

*members of our community share their coming-out stories
we fill, lift, and dedicate the third cup of wine*

*B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach
ha-olam, boreit p'ri ha-gafen.*

בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

²³ This blessing derived from the Babylonian Talmud (*Berachot* 40b), is usually recited only in times of duress or hurry. We adapt it for use here, employing a tune that also serves as a setting for the Christian song "Sanctuary." Thanking God, who is Full of Mercy, with these words, we also express our desire to reach across religious and cultural differences and welcome all to our table. Your community may prefer to use the traditional, longer version of the Blessing after Meals, the Birkat haMazon.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

READER: We open the door for Elijah, that mysterious prophet whom tradition promises will resolve every dispute, smooth over every conflict, and reveal the Messianic Age—a time of peace and security for all of us.

fourth cup

ALL: **We cannot forget those who remain behind in any land—any environment—of persecution, fearful of anti-Semitism, religious intolerance, homophobia, or bigotry of any kind. To those still seeking liberty of life, to those striving courageously to build a community, and to those of all humankind that strive to live a free and equal existence with all people of the world, we pledge our continued vigilance, support, and solidarity.**²⁴

ALL: And we take a breath in silence before blessing this, our fourth cup, to honor those who are as yet unable to emerge from their narrow straits.

*we fill and lift the fourth cup of wine
we breathe in silence, reflection, and memory
we dedicate the fourth cup*

B'ruchah At, Yah, Eloheinu Ruach בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרְאֵת פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.
ha-olam, boreit p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

נִרְצָה conclusion²⁵

**May slavery give way to freedom.
May hate give way to love.
May ignorance give way to wisdom.
May despair give way to hope.
Next year, at this time, may everyone, everywhere, be free!**

L'shana ha-ba'ah b'Yirushalayim!

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם!

Next year in Jerusalem!

²⁴ Adapted from the JQ International *LGBTQ Haggadah*.

²⁵ Taken from the 2012 Bronfman Center/Keshet Queer *haggadah*.

