Leader: Thank you so much for joining us today as we journey through history to recall flights to freedom. Over the centuries, millions of people have traveled across continents for weeks, months, even years - over land, seas, rivers and oceans - to escape the misery and terrors of their lives and to search for freedom. But are the “others” really others? Or are we really all one people? Today, as we celebrate Passover’s story of a passage to freedom, we also recall the journeys of others who have beaten the odds in an exodus toward freedom.

All: We are here as a family of families to remember the slavery of our ancestors. We do this so that we may be inspired to cherish the freedom we now have, to recognize the bondage of those who are not yet free, and to encourage our sons and daughters to help in the struggle to free all men and women.

Song: Hee nay Ma Tov

Hee nay ma tov oo'ma na'yeem

Shevet a'kheem gam ya-khad (repeat)

Hee nay ma tov shevet a'kheem gam ya-khad (repeat)

Hee nay ma tov oo'ma na, yeem Shevet a'kheem gam ya'khad (repeat)

How pleasant it is for people to live together peacefully.
Leader: It is said that there is nothing new under the sun, yet nothing remains the same. Against the backdrop of eternity the earth displays an ever-changing countenance. The sun rises and the sun sets; yet each day and each season is fresh and new.

All: Slowly, one season emerges from another. The harshness of icy winter yields to gently, nourishing showers. Inevitably, the cold, dark days succumb to the warmth and light of spring. We rejoice in the warm light and rich blessings of this season.

Leader: The celebration of Passover represents the perennial rebirth and survival of the Jewish people and the world of nature. The light of these candles symbolizes a renewal of life, a reaffirmation of freedom.

“Seder”, in Hebrew, means “order.” Let the order of our celebration proceed with the lighting of candles.

All:
N varekh et ha-or
Ka-asher niggavets b-tsavta
l-hadliq nerot shel yom tov.
B’or ha-herut
n-varekh et ha-haiyem.

All: We gather together to kindle the festival candles, symbols of light, liberation and life.

(The candles are lit.)

All: Song—Ay-fo O-ree?

Ay-fo o-ree? O-ree bee.
Ay-fo tik-va-tee? Tik-va-tee bee.
V-gam bakh, v-gam bakh.

Where is my light? My light is in me.
Where is my hope? My hope is in me.
Where is my strength? My strength is in me.
And in you, and in you.

Sherwin Wine
Leader: The holiday of Passover traces its roots to the pagan sacrifice of the first lambs of springtime (Hag Ha-pesach) and Hag Ha-matzot, an equally ancient agricultural festival. Later in Jewish history, the story of the Exodus from Egypt, an archetypal struggle for freedom from oppression and slavery, was overlaid onto these older and universal themes of birth, renewal, and sacrifice. Symbols from the older rituals were infused with new meanings connected to the fabled story of Moses and the children of Israel leaving the tyranny of Pharoah and finding their freedom.

The Four Questions

Leader: Passover is a celebration of life. The story of the Jewish people is a story of the victory of life and survival. Our ancestors traveled the planet in search of safety and liberty. We are here today because they never lost hope. It is customary for the youngest person present to ask the Four Questions. This shows the continuity of our traditions and culture for future generations.

Ma nishtana ha-lie-la he-ze mee kol ha-lie-lote?

Youngest Person or All: Why is this night different from all other nights?

1. On all other nights we eat either leavened bread or matzah. Why on this night do we eat only matzah?
2. On all other nights we eat herbs of any kind. Why, on this night, do we eat only bitter herbs?
3. On all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once. Why, on this night, do we dip them twice?
4. On all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining. Why on this night do we recline?

Leader and all who wish to join in:

1. She-b’-khol ha-lie-lote a-noo okh-leen kha-metz oo-matzah. Ha-lie-la ha-zeh koo-loh matzah.
2. She-b’-khol ha-lie-lote a-noo okh-leen sh-ar y’ rah-kote. Ha-lie-la ha-zeh ma-ror.
4. She-b’-khol ha-lie-lote a-noo okh-leen bayn yosh-veen oo-vayn m’soo-been. Ha-lie-la ha-zeh koo-la-noo m’soo-been.
Leader: “Haggadah” means “the telling” in Hebrew. We will answer the Four Questions by telling the story of Passover as it is recorded in the book of Exodus.

All: Let us look at the last of the Four Questions first: Why do we recline tonight? At a Seder, we recline to celebrate the luxury of freedom. In stark contrast, the Seder is meant to help us try to imagine what it felt like to suffer persecution at the hand of Pharoah and to flee from bondage to freedom. As we feast in freedom, let us recall the powerful strength and courage it takes to seek such freedom.

Leader: We now begin our story, the Maggid.... It is a tale for which there is actually no archaeological evidence, yet it has become a cornerstone of our story of freedom and hope over the centuries. It is a legend of impossible events, but events that reflect our constant hope for a better world.

Reader: Four thousand years ago, our forefather, Jacob, was a nomadic shepherd. In a time of famine he went to Egypt and settled there with his twelve sons. The Pharoah, King of Egypt, gave him the good land of Goshen, and the children of Jacob prospered there for many generations.

But there arose a new Pharoah who feared the Jews. And he said to his people, "Look at how strong these children of Israel are! If war comes, they may join our enemies and fight against us!"

Thus the Pharoah, out of fear, made slaves of our ancestors and set over them taskmasters to afflict them with heavy work. He tried to subdue them by making them gather straw to make bricks so that they could build cities for him on the plain. He tried to reduce their numbers by casting male children into the river. And the lives of our ancestors became bitter with pain.

Reader: But one Jewish mother, trying to save her son, placed him in the river in a boat of reeds, trusting to the current rather than to man’s cruelty. And so the story of Moses begins. Moses’ sister, Miriam, watched as Pharoah’s daughter found the child, pulled him from the river, and took him home to the palace to raise as her own son.

Although Moses grew up as the son of the Princess, he never forgot his Jewish heritage; and as an adult, he saved a Jew who was beaten by an Egyptian overseer. He fled to the desert to avoid capture and lived there with a friendly tribe for many years.

Reader: One day Moses had a vision. He knew that the slaves were his brothers and sisters, and he came to know that his mission was to lead them out of Egypt. He returned to Egypt and went to the Pharoah asking him to let the Jews go. But Pharoah would not let them go. Each time that Moses asked, Pharoah’s heart hardened more.
Leader: As we sing the next song, we recall how the story of Moses and the liberation of the Jewish people has served as an inspiration for later struggles for freedom.

All: (sing) *Let My People Go*
When Israel was in Egypt’s land, Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go!
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell old Pharoah, Let my people go!
No more shall they in bondage toil. Let my people go!
Let them come out of Egypt’s soil. Let my people go!
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell old Pharoah, Let my people go!!

Reader: We all know what happens next in this famous legend of our people. A series of plagues brings chaos and suffering to Pharoah and his people, until finally Pharoah relents and allows the Israelites to flee.

Today we invoke the plagues of the past by looking at man-made plagues. May we commit ourselves to work to diminish these plagues as we diminish our wine glasses with a drop of wine for each plague.

(Wine is poured.)

All: We pour ten drops for ten plagues of injustice:
Against the making of war, and against the teaching of hate.
Against the despoiling of the earth, and against the perverting of power.
Against a culture of destruction, and against the fomenting of crime.
Against the oppressing of peoples, and against neglecting human needs.
Against the subjugation of learning, and against the erosions of freedom.

Leader: As we recall the legend of our ancestors’ escape from bondage in Egypt to freedom, let us now drink the first of our four traditional cups of wine in celebration of that freedom.

All: P’ree ha-gaphen eeto nishtay “L’hayeem!”
The fruit of the vine—with it, let us drink, “To Life!” “L’hayeem!”

Leader: We now return to our story, and in doing so, we answer the first of the Four Questions: Why, on this night, do we eat unleavened bread?

All: Legend has it that when Moses and the Israelites fled Egypt, they moved so quickly that the bread they carried with them did not have time to rise. It hardened like crackers as it baked in the sun on their backs.

Leader: Matzah is the most known symbol of Passover. It is the symbol of affliction and of freedom. Scholars have noted that long before the Jews celebrated Passover, farmers in the Middle East celebrated Hag Ha-matzot, the festival of unleavened bread. They made the bread for this festival from the new grain harvested at this time of year. The old fermented dough was thrown out so that last year’s grain would not be mixed with this year’s. Therefore, the new season began with the eating of unleavened bread—matzah.

Later on, the Jewish people incorporated the agricultural festival into the celebration of freedom and renewal we now call Passover.

All: Matzah is part of the cultural experience that our immigrant ancestors, no matter how religious or secular, brought here to America and to wherever we are scattered around the world.

(All partake of matzah.)

Leader: The story of Passover concludes when the Israelites reach the Red Sea. The Sea parts, paving their path to their freedom. As Pharoah’s soldiers follow, the Sea folds in once again, and the Israelites achieve safety on the other side.
Stories, symbols, song and wine....

Reader: We now recall a more recent journey to freedom. A young mother with four children ages two through eight - she knew that she had to leave. The pogroms were getting worse - Jews in her shtetl would surely soon be targeted for rape, murder and robbery. This is a story of our grandmothers... my grandmother. She left at night taking only the essentials that she needed to keep her children — Samuel, Celia, Lucy and Rebecca (my mother) — alive. For months, they hid in haystacks by day and crept through farmlands by night until they reached a harbor where they could get a ship to America. They traveled by boat in steerage, camping in the crowded belly of the ship. Finally they arrived in Boston in 1910. They brought with them only what they could carry in their arms and their hearts. Their newfound freedom echoed the freedom of their ancestors who had escaped from Egypt.

Leader: To commemorate the courage and resilience of our ancestors, please join us in singing an old song with a new slant. Dayenu, “It Would Have Been Enough,” is a traditional song at Passover. Rabbi Daniel Friedman suggests that satisfaction is easily confused with resignation to conditions that still cry out for improvement. He proposes that being unsatisfied with pressing challenges such as civil rights is a Jewish tradition that we should honor. He has written a song that could be titled “Lo Dayenu”. However, his English title is “We Are Not Satisfied.”

Song: We Are Not Satisfied

Long ago our people learned
Not even food that they had earned
Could satisfy their dignity
If they were not free.

(Chorus: Lo lo dayenu, lo lo dayenu, lo lo dayenu, dayenu, dayenu, dayenu.

So they roamed for many years
With thirst and hunger, pain and tears.
They sought a land of liberty
Where all are free. (Chorus)

The moral of this story’s clear
People cannot thrive in fear.
Justice is security
And all must be free. (Chorus)
Leader: Let’s drink our second cup of wine to toast the courage and freedom of our ancestors.

All: P’ree ha-gaphen eeto nishtay “L’hayeem!”
The fruit of the vine—with it, let us drink, “To Life!” “L’hayeem!”

Leader: We now turn our attention to the second of the Four Questions: On all other nights we eat herbs of any kind. Why, on this night, do we eat only bitter herbs? The bitter herb reminds us of the bitterness that our ancestors experienced in their time of bondage in Egypt, under tsarist rule in Russia, and during other times of persecution.

(Put some maror on a piece of matzah)

All: As we eat the bitter herb, we recall the suffering in Egypt and think of other people who have been oppressed throughout the ages.
(Eat matzah with maror)

Leader: Only one of the Four Questions remains: On all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once. Why, on this night, do we dip them twice? The bone, greens and eggs take us way, way back to our ancient roots. They symbolize the agricultural festivals of spring and rebirth that people have celebrated for thousands of years. Pesach takes place on the full moon of the first month of the Hebrew calendar, at the beginning of spring in Israel. According to legend, our ancestors left Egypt by the light of a full moon. In the wandering that took not only them but also more recent ancestors out of bondage, our people were reborn into a new life, just as the earth is reborn each spring. It has become traditional to dip the green symbol of life in salt water to recall the sweat of toil and the tears of hardship. Please take some greens and dip them in salt water before you eat them.

(Eat herbs dipped in salt water)
All: Rise up, my loved ones, my dear friends and come away.
For the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come.
The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land,
The fig tree puts forth her green figs and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance.
Arise, and come with us!!

(Shir ha-Shirim—Song of Songs)

Reader: When I, a small, blonde-haired, blue-eyed boy, snuck out of the Warsaw Ghetto through a tiny hole in the fence, I went unnoticed out on the streets. I was able to take money outside the ghetto to buy medicine and other necessities without getting caught. Every time I ventured out, I was terrified, but I had no choice: I had to do it. My family and neighbors depended upon me, for without my wanderings, they would have certainly died. Later, I worked with courageous people on the outside who found ways to secure escape. My family fled to France, where we lived for a few years before even that was not safe for us. Eventually, we were among the lucky ones who made our way across the ocean to America.

Leader: Let us now drink our third glass of wine as we recall with sorrow and joy the heroism of our family and friends who faced harrowing escapes from one of the worst acts of human destruction of our time.

All: P’ree ha-gaphen eeto nishtay “L’hayeem!”
The fruit of the vine—with it, let us drink, “To Life!” “L’hayeem!”

Charoses, maror and matzah

Leader: Charoses, a mixture of ground apples, nuts, cinnamon and wine, is a symbol of the hope of freedom and reminds us of the mortar that the Israelites are said to have used to hold together the bricks of Pharoah’s cities. Its sweet taste reminds us of the sweetness of freedom and the hope that enabled our ancestors to withstand the bitterness of their slavery and persecution. Let us now eat charoses on a piece of matzah.

(All partake)
Leader: Two thousand years ago, the sage Hillel started a tradition. He ate matzah, charoses and maror together to symbolize that in times of oppression we must keep alive the hope of freedom. We eat this sandwich in memory of Hillel.

(All eat a sandwich of matzah, charoses and maror)

Leader:
We have now answered the Four Questions, but the stories of freedom-seeking people still abound. At some seders a potato is added to the seder plate to symbolize the exodus of the Ethiopian Jews from oppression to freedom, the famines many have suffered, and the starvation of those in concentration camps during the Holocaust.

Reader: The plane, with the bright sun reflecting off its silver body, landed softly and taxied slowly toward the gate. As the door swung open, a mass of humanity - old and young with black, brown, yellow, and white skin dressed in vibrant red, green, black, and orange - swarmed from the plane. Children rested over shoulders and sacks over backs. Small suitcases laden with all they owned swung tightly from each hand. They had fled the war-torn land of Vietnam, the scorched earth of Cambodia, the filthy and disease-plagued refugee camps, and the torture chambers and killing fields. They had finally arrived in the United States of America, fearful of the present and hopeful for the future. At last they were free.

Reader: Every day I see the faces and hear the stories - from China, Cuba, and Iran: unable to speak for fear of reprisal, to love the person they loved, or to pursue careers they chose. They come from Mexico looking for education and safety for their children and from Haiti and India, having been clever and brave and lucky enough to escape from the bondage their parents sold them into. As a social worker, I do what I can to help these courageous men, women and children make a new life of freedom.

Leader: While we sit here today, millions of migrants are moving from country to country, across rivers and oceans seeking a better life free from fear, violence and humiliation.
Let us drink our fourth cup of wine to honor them and the many humanitarian groups that come to their aid.

All: P’ree ha-gaphen eeto nishtay “L’hayeem!”
The fruit of the vine—with it, let us drink, “To Life!” “L’hayeem!”
Song: Ba Sha Na:

Lalala, lalala, lalala, lalala
Ba-sha-na, ba-sha-na ha-ba’ah
Od tir-eh, od tir-eh, Ka-ma tov ye-he-yeh
Ba-sha-na, ba-sha-na ha-ba’ah.

Soon the day will arrive when we will be together
And no longer will we live in fear.
And the children will smile without their wondering whether
On that day dark new clouds will appear.

(Chorus)
Wait and see, wait and see what a world there can be
If we share, if we care, you and me.
Wait and see, wait and see what a world there can be
If we share, if we care, you and me.

And the vines, they will grow; the tender leaves will blossom.
And the fruits of our hands will be sweet.
And the winds that bring change will clear away the ashes
When together we'll go forth to meet. (Chorus)

Some have dreamed, some have died, to make a bright tomorrow,
And their vision remains in our hearts.
Now the torch must be passed in hope and not in sorrow,
And a promise to make a new start. (Chorus)
The Orange

Leader: In recent years, a new tradition has begun. It is said to have started in a Florida synagogue where Susannah Heschel, chair of the Jewish Studies Department at Dartmouth, was speaking about the growing role of women in Judaism. A man rose and said in anger, “A woman belongs on the bimah like an orange belongs on the Seder plate.” And so it came to be.

All:
Round you are and bright as a newly risen moon.
You are sweet and acid, dessert and medicine.
You carry within your curves the future
Of your kind, pale seeds winking
From the sections, each an embryo tree.

Come into your own and shine,
Where the only roundness was the almost
Hidden plate bearing the ritual items.
Be subject as well as object. Sing
In your orangeness of female strength.

Clash if you need to. Roll if you must.
Center the plate about your glow.
We are, we will be, we become: rabbis
Yes, cantors, shapers, prophets, creating
A new Judaism that is yours and ours.

Elijah’s Cup and Miriam’s Cup

Leader: According to the Biblical account, Elijah was a prophet who lived about 500 years after the Exodus. It is said that Elijah bravely battled against the evils and injustices of his time. In the story Elijah does not die, but ascends to “heaven” in a fiery chariot. For the earliest rabbis, he became a symbol of hope. It is said that he would return someday to usher in a world of peace and understanding.

As humanists, we do not wait for Elijah’s return, but know that we—ourselves—must work to bring about a world of peace and justice. At the same time, we share with all Jews the symbol of Elijah’s return, a cup of wine on the table.

We may not live to complete the task, but neither may we refrain from beginning. If not now, when? We will drink; may our wine give us joy for the work ahead!

(Fill glasses. The door is opened.)

All: (Stand raise glasses and sing) Ay-lee ya-hoo ha na vee, Ay-lee ya-hoo ha tish bee, ay-lee ya-hoo, ay-lee ya-hoo, ay-lee ya hoo, ha gil a dee.
Leader: Our Passover Seder is now complete. As we have observed the Seder today, may all of us celebrate it together next year in health and in good spirits. May the spirit of this festival of freedom and renewal remain with us throughout the coming year, and may we continue to learn from its teachings. May Israel and its neighbors, and may our people - all people - live in harmony.

Song: Peace Be with You

Peace be with you wherever you go
Peace be with you whatever you do
Peace be with you 'til we meet again
Peace be with you, my friend.

Love be with you wherever you go
Love be with you whatever you do
Love be with you 'til we meet again
Love be with you, my friend.

Joy be with you wherever you go
Joy be with you whatever you do
Joy be with you 'til we meet again
Joy be with you, my friend.

Shalom Alechem Shalom Shalom
Shalom Alechem Shalom Shalom
Shalom Alechem Shalom Shalom
Shalom Alechem Shalom Shalom!

Song (all together)

Heyveynu shalom aleichem (3 times)
Heyveynu shalom, shalom, shalom Aleichem
On a lighter note…….

Little David comes home from Sunday school and announces that he learned about Passover. His father asks him to tell what he learned.

So, David says, "Well, one night, Moses leaned out of his window and shouted, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this any more. We have to get out of here." So he gathers all the Jews together and they get in their cars, half-tracks, and trucks, and start to leave Egypt. Soon after they have left and are speeding into the desert, Pharoah finds out and immediately gets the Egyptian army to mount up in their jet fighters, helicopters, and tanks to go after the Jews. They begin firing missiles, and mortar shells and they...."

Just then David's father yells, "Wait a minute! Do you mean to tell me that that's what they taught you in Sunday school about Passover?!"

David says, “Well, no. But if I told you, what they told me, you'd never believe it."
CREDITS

This Haggadah is a compilation of selections from various Haggadahs listed below along with original parts by Becky Schulman and Susan Freud.

A Liberal Haggadah compiled and edited by Rabbi Jack B. Silver

Haggadah for Passover by Rabbi Daniel Friedman

The Liberated Haggadah by Rabbi Peter H. Schweitzer

A Humanist Modern Version Haggadah For Passover by Eszter Hargittai

A Haggadah for Celebration of Passover by Kent Barrabee

The Machar Haggadah for Passover, revised 2002, created by Machar members and selections and adaptions from other sources.

The Haggadah for Humanists, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Westport, Connecticut

The Humanist Haggadah by Sherwin Wine