

A Way In
Passover Guide to Honor and Heal our Broken Hearts
2024 5784

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Why is this Passover different from all other years?

Each year we come to the *seder* carrying all that is happening in our lives and in the life of our shared world.

This year many of us come to *pesach* with quivering souls and troubled hearts. The violence, destruction and suffering we are witnessing and experiencing is so difficult to bear. It is understandable that at times we shut down, turn away or get lost in fear, rage and despair. It is understandable that in response to the devastation and pain our hearts harden.

As we know from the *pesach* story and our own experiences, a hardened heart diminishes our capacity to feel connection or empathy and act with compassion and care.

This *seder* guide is designed to help us soften our hearts by sharing our pain and sadness. The aim is to bring us into connection and relationship, not through political agreements or discussions, but rather by sharing experiences of heart-break, sadness and despair.

We each come to *pesach* with our own stories to tell. Our common ground, our place of connection this year can be our broken hearts. Even as our hearts might ache for different reasons, sharing our feelings with each other can open the way for connection.

I pray that witnessing each others pain and sadness will help us leave *mitzriam*, the narrow place of judgment, blame and fear and guide us toward healing, compassion and hope.

This guide does not include all the aspects of a traditional *seder*. It can be used as an alternative experience or as an addition to your *haggadah*. It is a creation of this moment and does not have the benefit of being crafted through experience. In many ways it is a work in progress. Please use what is helpful and leave the rest.

May we enter this season with awareness and with care for our tender hearts and may the *pesach* rituals, traditions and offerings open the way for liberation, transformation and healing.

We welcome each other to the *pesach* table and begin with reading:

Mikra Kodesh A Holy Calling Out

Each Season has its call,
Each Festival its light
That shines from the depths
Of mystery.

And each season is meant to awaken us
And shake us to our core,
So we rise again and again
Reconnected and
Recommitted to this sacred and fragile life.

We come to *Pesach*, the Festival of Liberation, and
The Mystery calls:

It is time to leave the narrow place,
To leave what keeps you small and afraid,
It is time to leave what holds you back,
It is time to stop serving what is no longer true.

I will take you out,
I will deliver you,
I will call you present,
I will bring you into relationship with the Unfolding of All Life.

And you will know absolutely that you are here in relationship with
Every rock, tree, bird and stream,
Every blade of grass, every animal,
Every person that ever was or will be.
And you will know that you serve this Mysterious Infinite Unfolding
With every word and deed.

Exodus 6:6-7

Come out into the expanse --- blossom and be.

The soul expands and constricts,
So much is unknown, fragile and frightening.

We harden our hearts.
We resolve to stay in the narrow place.

And the Mystery calls:

I take you out into the expanse, I deliver You, because I desire You. Psalm 18:20

I desire you, God calls. I desire you.

There is no making rational sense of this journey through life,
There is no guarantee of fairness,
Or predicting how it will go.

There is though,
The Mysterious Life Force that flows through all.
There is the movement of the seasons
And the calls to our souls.

And there are stories to tell,
Experiences to share,
Beauty to celebrate.

And there is each of us
All of us--
God's desire.

So, may we love.
And may we practice meeting life,

Whatever it brings,

With compassion, kindness,
Generosity,
And love.

This, God assures us, is why we are being taken out.
This, God makes clear,
Is why we are here.

Rabbi Yael Levy

Kadesh: Sanctifying the Moment

First Cup - Honoring the Ancestors

We raise this first cup in honor of our ancestors, those who have gone before us and opened the way. We give thanks for their strength and courage and ask them to shine their lights and help guide us in these times.

Before we say a blessing and drink from the first cup, we can share names of the people we are remembering, honoring those who made a difference in our lives and in the life of the world.

Blessing

*Blessed is the Divine Presence that flows from mystery
and unites past, present and future generations.
Please, may all the generations be with us and guide us in these times.*

*Blessed is the mystery that flows through all the worlds
and brings forth the fruit of the vine.*

Urchatz: Sacred Hand Washing

We engage in this ritual in honor of Myriam, the prophetess who guided us across the sea and whose deep connection with the Divine helped provide water on our desert journey.

One of Myriam's deep gifts was her ability to hold joy and sorrow at the same time. She was able to hold the trauma of the people even as she guided them in dance and celebration.¹

Myriam bestows gifts of strength and fluidity. She helps us be with delight and sadness, pain and possibility. With Myriam we laugh and weep, sing and wail. With Myriam we dance.

¹ Teaching gleaned from Kohenet Luna Liebling

As we wash our hands in waters from Myriam's well, we ask her to hold and guide us for love and healing as we offer this prayer:

*Please, Myriam, help us find joy even as we ache in pain and sadness.
Help us be nourished by shared delights and beauty
so we can keep rising for healing and peace.*

Pass around a bowl (or bowls) of water and wash and dry each other's hands. During the washing you can share songs and melodies.

Karpas: Honoring the Gifts of Earth and Shedding Tears

We begin with gratitude for earth's love, generosity and wisdom by each naming something we deeply love in the created world and/or by sharing something we have learned from earth, trees, sky, waters, creatures.

We close with the Prayer:

*Blessed is the Mystery from which creation continues to spring forth.
May we live in reverent relationship with all.*

As we prepare to dip the greens in salt water we ask earth to receive our tears. The tears we have shed, the tears that are still unable to flow.

Dip the greens and before eating we say this prayer:

*Blessed is the Divine presence that flows from mystery
and brings forth fruits of earth.
May our tears water the ground for love, generosity and healing
to take root and grow.*

Yahatz: Breaking the Matzah

As we begin the *seder* the *matzah* is *lechem oni*—the bread of affliction. By the middle of the *seder* the *matzah* has become the *afikomen*—the dessert—what we seek, what we long for.

This transformation begins as we lift up three *matzot*, break the middle *matzah* and call out, “This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat.”

As we let ourselves feel the suffering and brokenness in ourselves and in the world and as we turn toward relationship with each other and all life the *matzah* transforms.

It goes from being the bread of poverty to being the bread of connection, hope and faith. The *matzah* becomes the call that says to our broken hearts; healing and transformation is possible.

This is the bread we will bless and eat.

This year we add a new aspect to *yahatz*, the ancient practice of breaking by

Sharing our Broken Hearts

The ritual begins with a short meditation

Then each person in turn breaks a whole piece of *matzah* and shares an experience of heartache, grief.

The sharing is received in silence and then a short blessing meditation and prayer.

The halves of the broken *matzah* are set aside for later in the evening

To prepare: Each person has a piece of *matzah* wrapped in a cloth napkin with an extra matching napkin beside it.

(Participants can be asked to bring these two napkins to the *seder*)

Opening Meditation

We close our eyes, focus on the breath and bring our attention to our hearts, letting slow, calm, deep breaths fill the heart space and travel through the body. After a few calming breaths we each silently say this prayer and let the words and vibrations fill our hearts:

rachamim al l'vavee רחמים על-לבבי

May infinite compassion be upon my heart

rachamim al l'avchem רחמים על לבבכם

May Infinite compassion be upon your hearts

Over and over with the breath, we silently repeat this prayer:

(This meditation can be done for 3-5 minutes,
whatever feels best for your *seder*.)

After the meditation a designated reader says:

We each come to the *seder* with tender hearts. Each of us carrying our own blend of sadness, pain, anger, confusion, despair.

Let us acknowledge that each of our hearts might be aching for different reasons and the grief and sorrows we are experiencing might be rising from different wells.

Let us find kinship and connection by listening to each other's pain and responding to each other's hurts with compassion.

Let us not follow the harsh judgments and critiques that arise in the mind and cause us to harden our hearts and turn away. When we notice judgments arising, let's respond to these harsh and critical voices with slow, calm even deep breaths and the silent prayer:

rachamim al l'vavee רחמים על לבבי

May infinite compassion be upon my heart

rachamim al l'avavchem רחמים על לבבכם

May Infinite compassion be upon all hearts

May we remember that underneath the anger, pain and sorrow is what we each so value and love.

May our sharing of grief and heartache build bridges of connection and open the ways toward healing.

In silence we set the intention to listen deeply, to receive each other's offering and to do our best to respond with compassion and care.

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The first person begins by lifting up their *matzah* and breaking it in two letting the sound reverberate in the silence.

When they are ready they make their offering by sharing sorrow:

My heart aches for...

I feel such pain/grief about...

When done speaking they say: *debarti*, I have spoken

Everyone responds: *shamati*, I have heard

Then everyone at the table offers a silent prayer focused on the grief and sadness shared.

May all _____ be blessed with healing

May all _____ be blessed with loving care

May all _____ be blessed with kindness and compassion

May all _____ be blessed with peace.

Afterwards the first speaker wraps each piece of the broken *matzah* in one of the napkins and says

Blessed is the mystery that flows through time and space

Healing the broken heart and holding our deepest sorrows. From Psalm 147:3

And after a few moments of silence the next person goes.

After everyone has had their turn, close the ritual with this reading:

And you must be able to bear your sorrow; even if it seems to crush you, you will be able to stand up again, for human beings are so strong, and your sorrow must become an integral part of yourself; you mustn't run away from it.

Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that is its due, for if everyone bears grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will abate. But if you do instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge—from which new sorrows will be born for others—then sorrow will never cease in this world.

And if you have given sorrow the space it demands, then you may truly say: life is beautiful and so rich. So beautiful and so rich that it makes you want to believe in God.

Etty Hillesum

Second Cup

We raise this cup to the beauty that fills the world and share something that touches our hearts and inspires love, connection, hope, possibility.

May we never attempt to escape the suffering of the world,

Always being present whatever beings need our help.

May mountains and rivers be our witnesses in this moment

As we bow our heads and request compassion to embrace us all.

Thich Nhat Hahn

Blessed is the mystery that flows through all the worlds and brings forth the fruit of the vine.

Ritual Eating

We return to Myriam's well as we bring around bowls of water once again and wash each other's hands.

As we wash a person's hands we say to them

May you be blessed with healing

May you be blessed with loving care

May you be blessed with peace.

After everyone's hands are washed we say together:

*Blessed is the mystery that flows through all the worlds
and calls us into holy relationship through the lifting up of our hands*

We each taking a piece of *matzah* and say:

*Help us have faith in the power of transformation and possibility
Help us lift up a vision of a world healed and whole and help us walk toward
this vision with all our hearts, souls and strength*

Before we eat:

Pause, take a moment of silence, breathe into the heart space, place on the heart an intention, a quality we want lift up and have guide us.

Prayers together for *Matzah*

*Blessed is the Mystery that flows through all the worlds
and calls us into holy relationship through the eating of matzah*

*Blessed is the Mystery that flows through all the worlds
and brings forth bread from the earth*

Prayers together for *Maror*

*May the channels be cleared for healing and transformation
to come through each of us and all of us together.*

*Blessed is the Mystery that flows through all the worlds
and calls us into holy relationship through the eating of maror*

Eating of Charoset:

*Let sweetness find and fill us, giving us the strength and willingness
to keep rising together for healing and love.*

*Blessed is the Mystery that flows through all the worlds and brings forth
fruits from the earth and trees.*

Festive Meal Together

At some point during the meal or after the meal, each person takes a half of the broken *matzah*, wraps it in a napkin and hides it.

After the meal everyone searches for someone else's hidden *matzah*.

When all the broken pieces of *matzah* are found, each person in turn, delivers the piece of *matzah* to the person who hid it.

As the broken pieces are returned, blessings are shared.

The person who found the matzah says:

May healing come to your heart and the hearts of all the world.

(Or each person can create their own blessing to share with each other)

Then everyone shares a piece of their *matzah* that has been returned. This is the “lucky” *matzah* that carries the gift of seeking and finding, care and love. As we partake of this dessert we place a prayer, a hope on our hearts

Afterwards the Third Cup is Raised

We give thanks for the food we have eaten and the gifts we have received.

Before we drink we can share offerings of gratitude.

*Blessed is the mystery that flows through all the worlds
and brings forth the fruit of the vine.*

Fourth Cup for Elijah's

Elijah is the prophet who will usher in the age of the messiah, who will open the way for a radical change in consciousness and a radical new way of being in which generosity and compassion reign and *tzedek* and shalom fill the world.

We each add a few drops of wine/grape juice from our own cups, affirming our willingness and commitment to offer our selves, our gifts, blessings, questions and seeking for healing and transformation, for the benefit of all life.

*Blessed is the mystery that flows through all the worlds
and brings forth the fruit of the vine.*

We close the *seder* sharing visions and dreams for a world healed and reborn

Next year in a world _____

The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat;

The lion and the young calf will be together. A child will lead them.

Isaiah 11:6

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,

And their spears into pruning hooks,

Nation shall not take up Sword against nation

They shall never again know war.

Isaiah 2:4

May it be so,

Rabbi Yael Levy

