Refugee Seder

סדר פליטים

سدر اللاجئين

סדר הלאג'יאים

Truah
the rabbinc call for human rights

Right Now
Innovations for Human Rights Awards in NGOs
Blessed is the creator of the fruit of the vine.

How good and how pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity. (Psalm 133)

KADESH: SANCTIFYING OUR GATHERING

A central symbol of the Passover seder—literally an “order”—is four cups of wine or grape juice, representing different stages of the seder. We move from gathering to hearing other people’s stories, then to sharing our own exodus narratives, and finally to song. Let us fill the first cup, the cup of gathering, and consider why we are here.

Refugees are people who escape war, violence, or persecution in their home countries and seek protection in other countries. Their persecution may be based on race, religion, nationality, or political opinion. Nearly all Jews have ancestors who have been refugees. The Passover story tells of Jewish refugees who escaped poverty and seeking safety in a land of promise.

Since 2007, Israeli activists, progressive Jewish organizations, and African refugee and asylum seeker communities have united to hold a communal “Refugee Seder” in Israel each year. The participants celebrate a renewed commitment to working together for freedom. At this seder here today, we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Israel who pursue freedom.

We say the blessing and drink the cup of gathering.

YACHATZ: BREAKING THE MIDDLE MATZAH

Matzah, unleavened bread, reminds us both the bread of poverty that the ancient Israelites ate in Egypt and the bread of freedom that they ate in their rushed escape to freedom. Three matzot sit on a plate at the center of the table. At this point of the seder, we break the middle matzah in two, wrap one portion in a napkin, and set it aside, hidden from sight.

OPENING SONG:

Hinay ma tov umah na’im shevet achim gam yachad.

www.truah.org
We pour a second cup, the cup of storytelling, and over it we begin to tell tales of Exodus old and new.

**MAGGID: TELLING THE STORIES**

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt...

The reason people are leaving Eritrea is not hunger; it's a dictatorship that imprisons and tortures citizens at will. If he could live in Eritrea with freedom and safety, W told me there was no place he would rather live; it was home. As we drove out of Holot [Detention Facility in the Negev], W said, “it looks exactly like the military camp in Eritrea” (where men do constant, mandatory service until they’re 55, making it impossible for them to have any other life). “Exactly the same! The only difference is that in Eritrea, the fence is wood,” he said, looking out at the high, thick metal topped with barbed wire. –Testimony of W, a refugee from Eritrea, recorded by journalist Ayla Peggy Adler, 2/12/14

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2 http://972mag.com/between-tei-aviv-and-holot-open-jail-splits-refugee-family/87081

www.trua.org
The Egyptians treated us badly and they made us suffer, and they put hard work upon us…

Kamal ("Kimo"), 26, was born in a village in Darfur. He was 15 when the Janjaweed attacked his village. 800 of his villagers fled to the Nuba Mountains, where they made a temporary camp. Three weeks later, the UN found them, said it was unsafe, and helped them get to Kakuma camp in Kenya, but there were no opportunities for a real future or education there. With his best friend Ibrahim, he decided to leave. He left his family and went to South Sudan where he worked for a year to earn the money for the Bedouins to cross the Sinai. After climbing the fence to Israel, Ibrahim and Kimo walked for ten hours without food or water. They finally saw the Israeli border patrol and they were given water and food and put into a detention facility. After six months there, he was brought to Levinsky Park in South Tel Aviv, where he stayed for three months outside, while working to get his visa. He has worked in hotels for the last four years. In his free time, he studied computers, psychology, and English and volunteered with ASSAF’s (Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) Youth Program. He received a summons to report to Holot Detention Facility on April 2, 2014.—Testimony

 Богатые и бедные, мы все преданы своему избранию. Я был вынужден покинуть Египет. Этот человек меня вез из Египта в Израиль. Я пережил много страданий. Мне было трудно все это пережить.

"It is because of what the ETERNAL did for me when I came forth out of Egypt."
I have been out of jail [in Israel] for a few weeks now. I can't tell you how much I appreciate my freedom after what I have been through. I take nothing for granted…My only wish is to remain free. When we reached Sinai, our traffickers raised the bounty, money that needs to be repaid.—Testimony of an anonymous refugee from Eritrea.

Peasach—Freedom

Many among us were tortured…in Sinai. When we reached this democratic State of Israel, we didn't expect such harsh punishment in prison…We lost all hope and became frustrated by this situation, so that we ask you to either provide us with a solution or send us to our country, no matter what will happen to us, even if we have to endure [the] death penalty by the Eritrean regime.—Testimony of an anonymous refugee from Eritrea 6

Dayeinu

The song “Dayeinu,” which literally means “it would have been enough for us,” thanks God for all the miracles performed for the Jewish people: from the Exodus out of Egypt, to their journey through the desert, until they entered the land of Israel where they

Pesach—Representing suffering.

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The Israeli government has imposed restrictions making it difficult for asylum seekers to work, so paying back these debts while paying for food and shelter is an extraordinary challenge.

Matzah—Poverty

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Blessed is the creator of the fruit of the vine.

We say the blessing and drink the cup of storytelling.

Blessed is the creator of the fruit of the vine.

We fill the third cup, the cup of conversation, and turn to small groups to share our stories.

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Dai-dai-ku, dai-dai-ku, dai-dai-ku, dai-dai-ku!

CHORUS

Koif ni, shokai ni, kiko sulutani ni, "Dai-dai-ku!"

CHORUS

We fill the third cup, the cup of conversation, and turn to small groups to share our stories.

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We fill the third cup, the cup of conversation, and turn to small groups to share our stories.
How is this night different from all other nights? Tonight we come together, as members of different communities, to learn from each other, to bring attention to the plight of asylum seekers in Israel, and to strengthen our resolve to advocate for their rights. Tonight’s Four Questions are a starting point for small group conversation.

1. What is your family’s exodus story?
2. How does your exodus story shape your worldview? Your sense of responsibility for the Other?
3. How would you describe your relationship with Israel?
4. What does justice look like for you?

The Afikoman—Coming Back to the Big Group

Just as we search for the afikoman, we seek out the injustice in our societies, the hidden as well as the revealed, and organize to transform these dark places into ones filled with light. We seek within ourselves for the places where we are complicit in injustice and pledge to do better. And we search out the places where we are hurt or angry and wash these away, so we may proceed with calm and renewed determination.

We say the blessing and drink the cup of conversation.

Blessed is the creator of the fruit of the vine.
HALLEL: SONG

We fill the fourth cup, the cup of song, and join in singing songs of celebration, struggle, and solidarity.

We shall overcome. We shall overcome some day! Deep in my heart, I do believe, We shall overcome some day.

We'll walk hand in hand... Black and white together... Christian, Muslim, Jew... We are not afraid...

Michael row the boat ashore, halleluyah... Sister help to set the sails, halleluyah... Sinai desert is hot and wide, halleluyah, I've got a home on the other side... Prison walls are thick and tall, halleluyah, hold the body but not the soul...

When Israel was in Egypt land—Let my people go! Oppressed so hard they could not stand—Let my people go! Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh, “Let my people go!”

When refugees crossed Sinai's sand—Let my people go! Sought safety in the Promised Land—Let my people go! Go down, Moses, way down in Israel land. Tell the Knesset, “Let my people go!”

Yesh lanu koach, halleluyah...

After singing these or other songs, we say the blessing and drink the cup of song:

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NIRTZAH: CONCLUDING

At the end of the seder, we pour—but do not drink—a fifth cup for Elijah the prophet, who symbolizes the coming of salvation. Jointly we can bring salvation; change is coming, but it is not yet here. We come together at Passover to connect our separate stories into the story of new freedom. We must cross the wilderness of change before we can enter a promised land of greater justice, greater freedom, greater peace, and deeper healing.

Next year in a Jerusalem rebuilt with justice! Leshanah baba’a biYerushalayim hab’nuyah!