



PESACH 101:

Handbook for a Cultural Celebration of Passover



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About Oraynu and Humanistic Judaism

WHAT IS ORAYNU CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM?

Oraynu, originally known as the Secular Jewish Association, has been around since 1969 and is a growing community of Jewish people and their families who congregate to:

- nourish their Jewish identity
- create a strong bond with like-minded people
- celebrate and mark the festivals and life cycles of the Jewish calendar humanistically
- study and discuss Jewish history, philosophy, and culture throughout the ages
- work together towards *tikkun olam*—creating a just and peaceful world and
- perpetuate this rich cultural heritage to their children

We welcome people of all ages who wish to participate in our cultural, non-theistic expression of Judaism. We embrace interfaith, intercultural and inter-racial couples and families as well as gay, lesbian, transgendered and non-binary individuals, couples and their families. Anyone may join regardless of your religious orientation or faith. It is not very likely, however, that someone who is seeking a personal relationship with any god/goddess within a community context would get that need met in our community.

WHAT IS HUMANISTIC JUDAISM?

It is a rational understanding and interpretation of Judaism and a personal and communal expression of Judaism, which creates a meaningful identification with the history, evolving culture and future of the Jewish people. Humanistic Judaism is an authentic expression of our contemporary way of life that is consistent with a human-centered, ethical worldview and incorporates meaningful elements of the Jewish culture.

WHAT DO HUMANISTIC JEWS BELIEVE?

See the “Ten Foundational Principles of Humanistic Judaism” (next section)

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PASSOVER HANDBOOK?

Many Jews may not be religious but want to celebrate the holidays, including *Pesach* or Passover in a way that is cultural and meaningful, and has integrity for them. For Humanistic Jews there is no required order or content. This handbook includes a suggested order and content. Each person can choose what is meaningful for them. We hope this handbook will help you understand the holiday and its evolution and give you ideas about how you can celebrate the holiday at home in a humanistic way.

HOW DOES ORAYNU CELEBRATE PASSOVER?

Seders: We offer a school *seder* for families with children, and a community *seder* for adults and teens. This year because of the pandemic our *seders* will be via Zoom and we hope this handbook will help you prepare the ritual items for them.

Oraynu’s Haggadah: We have our own *Haggadah* (ritual retelling and commemoration of the roots of the festival, both legendary and historical) which includes traditional material, some creative adaptations and contemporary innovations based on our beliefs and values. There are virtually thousands of different *haggadot* in existence. Within Humanistic Judaism itself there are dozens of different *haggadot*. Many are available for purchase in hard copy or electronically. You can order ours, *Roots and Branches – A Humanist Haggadah for Passover*, by clicking this link: <http://www.oraynu.org/shop/roots-and-branches-a-humanist-haggadah-for-passover/>

Ten Foundational Principles of Humanistic Judaism

Compiled by Rabbi Eva Goldfinger

Humanistic Jews share the following foundational principles and are committed to behavior and practices that are consistent with these principles and worldview.

ON NATURE AND REALITY – Human beings are part of the evolving natural universe which we view through our senses and understand through rational thought. The universe exists on natural laws, independent of supernatural intervention. There is no evidence supporting any conscious life after death.

ON THE PURPOSE OR MEANING OF LIFE – Although there is no single over-arching purpose to life, self-actualization for every human being gives life purpose. Only the individual can create meaning in her/his life. Perpetuating life and improving its quality can add profound meaning to human life.

ON SPIRITUALITY – Spirituality is that which ennobles the human spirit. It is a sense of inner harmony achieved from feeling connected to nature and other humans or from apprehension of beauty both in nature and in the artistic and intellectual creations of human beings.

ON THE NATURE OF TRUTH – Uncertainty is a condition of life and our conceptions of truths evolve as our knowledge and understanding deepen. Truths can be discovered through reason via scientific method and empirical evidence, not through faith or by intuition alone. Truths are universal, not ethnic, and the value of ideas is judged by their truth, not their Jewishness.

ON ETHICS – Ethics is the study of what humans ought to be and evolves out of experience and understanding of the consequences of our actions. All actions ought to satisfy human needs primarily for survival, pleasure and dignity, the harmonization of which leads to happiness. We should glean from all available sources the ethical values that serve these needs.

ON MORAL AUTHORITY – Human beings are the arbiters of morality and have the power as well as the responsibility to be the masters of their own lives. This power can be exercised in a society where maximum personal freedom is granted but is balanced by societal needs.

ON SOCIAL ETHICS – As social animals, humans cannot be self-fulfilled in isolation. We have a moral obligation to be self-reliant and to ensure conditions which encourage self-determination and self-actualization for individuals and groups. This can best be achieved in an open and democratic society where individual rights and group rights are balanced. We value all social structures that promote well-being (e.g. friendship, family, community). The welfare of all people and our earth is of vital concern to us.

ON JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD – We are a unique, not a chosen people, among many unique peoples. We identify with the history, culture, and future of the Jewish people and are proud of our membership in it. We value the contribution of Jews and Judaism to the betterment of our world, and affirm the value of preserving Jewish identities.

ON JUDAISM – Judaism is the historical experience and cultural creation (civilization) of the Jewish people which has evolved, and will continue to evolve, based on the needs and influences of the times. Judaism consists of many traditions. Humanistic Judaism is a logical result of the lessons of Jewish history that taught us that we must be self-reliant.

ON JEWISH CONTINUITY – Jewish people, along with others, have contributed to the advancement of society. There is value in the perpetuation of Jewish culture and peoplehood. Unity is often found in diversity. Membership in the Jewish people should be open and inclusive. Only Jewish pluralism will guarantee the survival of the Jewish people.

General Information about Passover

NAMES

- *Pesach* – Passover
- *Chag Hamatzot* – Festival of Unleavened Bread
- *Yom Chayrutaynu* – Day or Festival of our Liberation

DATES

Nissan 15-22 (8 days) – March or April. Nissan 17-20 are called *chol hamoed* – non-sacred festival days.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Exodus 12:3-11 – likely the earliest reference when *Pesach* was a shepherd's spring rite requiring each household to kill, roast and eat a lamb together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
- Exodus 12:14-20 – a later reference when the shepherd's *Pesach* rite was merged with an agricultural spring rite called the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the festival was extended to seven days and called for 'remembrance' of the exodus from Egypt (see also Exodus 13:6-10, Exodus 34:18-19, and Leviticus 23:5-8).
- Exodus 23:14-15 – this is clearly from the priestly post-Babylonian period and refers to three pilgrim festivals and the requirement for sacrifices (likely at the Jerusalem Temple).
- Deuteronomy 16:1-8 – This is the latest reference incorporating material from all previous ones.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW INFORMATION

Ancient – to about 1000 BCE

- *Pesach* – an ancient nomadic family festival at full moon of first month of spring
- Relic of a primitive atonement rite – leap/jump/dance at moon, sacrifice lamb for fertility, paint its blood on entry to tents to keep out evil spirits, as an antidote for plague and misfortune and as a sign of kinship, all followed by feast on paschal lamb
- Early Israelite priests combined *Pesach* with an existing Canaanite spring agricultural community festival called *Matzot*
- *Matzot* – an ancient festival of thanksgiving, eliminated all sourdough and old bread (yeast a symbol of moral corruption), sacrificed first barley harvest
- *Matzot* ended seven weeks later with the wheat harvest festival (now *Shavuot*)

Temple Period – 1000 BCE – 70 CE

- Spring – a time of liberation of nature, so later priests connected the *Pesach* spring festival with the story of the liberation from Egypt in order to give it a sense of historical connection
- Centralization of cult in Jerusalem Temple required a nationalization of the festival and ethical significance was added
- *Chametz* was burned as a sacrifice at the Temple
- Sacrifices were made with the blowing of the *shofar*/ram's horn and thanksgivings
- A *seder* and feast at home including lamb, 4 cups of wine, *matzah*, greens in tart liquid, *maror* in *charoset*/relish, telling of the story, *Ma Nishtana* (four questions), and praise prayers

Post-Temple Period – 70 AD – TODAY

- Focus on celebration in home and compilation of the *Haggadah*
- By Middle Ages, very similar to the religious rite today
- Spanish *conversos*/forced converts had no access to a *Haggadah* so they celebrated Passover as noted in the Bible
- Moroccan Jews love to dramatize the story at the *seder* and Samaritans continue to observe two separate festivals
- Eastern European Jews added various rituals and songs

ETHICAL MESSAGES

- Freedom from slavery and oppression
- National and universal liberation
- Responsibility in each generation to fight the battle for freedom and human rights
- Hospitality and treating strangers well

- Helping the poor and the underprivileged
- National memory and perpetuating our roots and identity
- Raising children well according to the nature of each child
- Hope inherent in spring season and the potential for growth and renewal

The Haggadah – Our National Story and its Background

The word *Haggadah* means 'The Telling'. It is a book that contains our national story, prayers, songs, the order and explanation of the *seder*, the manner in which we celebrate the *Seder* and rabbinic commentary about the festival and the *Haggadah*. The *Haggadah* is a Jewish classic for both philosophers and ordinary folk. There are almost 4,000 versions of the *Haggadah* in print today. It has been translated into almost every language spoken by Jews throughout the world.

As a book, the *Haggadah* came into being when the 9C Rav Amram Gaon compiled his prayer book which included the *seder* service. It is remarkably similar to the current traditional versions. The *Haggadah* is also contained in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. The first independent *Haggadah* manuscripts were probably created in the 12C. By the time of the Darmstadt *Haggadah* in the 14C, four of the six special traditional songs had been added. Then two additional *seder* songs appeared in print in the Prague *Haggadah* in 1590. Over time, these songs changed, depending on who was putting the *Haggadah* together.

The songs are based on chapters from the Torah; others are allegories or are composed of simple repetitive words set to European folk tunes. Depending on family tradition, the songs are varied and innumerable, in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, English, Spanish or myriads of other languages, and include folksongs, camp songs, labour songs, songs of freedom and resistance or songs about ethical values deriving from the holiday.

In the *Haggadah* is a story of the Exodus which is the focal point of the festival and the *seder*. The question of whether the story is true keeps arising. The Exodus story did not happen the way it is told, but it is likely based on retold stories of old historical memories. What is true is what the writers believe ought to be true. It is a story with high theological purpose—it attempts to revolutionize consciousness. It wishes to create a nationalistic mentality centered on the belief systems of the leaders/priests of the Israelites. The writers worked out their vision of human nature and history in prose-fiction.

It is the traditional mythical structure of the Exodus story that is important and looks like this:

- Israel deserts God by spreading out among the nations (Egyptians in this case) and being influenced by them, thus turning from God's ways and following the other nations' pagan ways.
- God metes out justice by deserting Israel, who become enslaved by the culture they attempt to emulate.
- Israel is sorry and cries for deliverance.
- God, in his great mercy and because he loves them and has pity on them, sends help through Moses, and Israel is redeemed in ways that clearly show the power and superiority of God.
- They then commit to God and his Torah and are rewarded by being given the Land of Israel as a possession forever.

As stories go, there are ones more poetic and more interesting than the Exodus story, yet it is considered the **greatest story of Judaism** because it has come to be our national paradigm—the dream of future liberations which throughout the ages has provided comfort and hope for the Jewish people. The story also ethicized history. God's act of liberation calls for a corresponding human response—the responsibility to redeem ourselves, all humanity and nature. The Exodus story is one of the three creation stories in the Torah with water being both a symbol of death and life:

- creation of the universe and humanity from chaos and water, ending with humanity being exiled from the Garden of Eden, (the womb of nature—exile a metaphor for birth)
- re-creation of the world and moral order, after the flood, with Noah and his family surviving the waters because of the protective embrace of the ark, and
- the creation of the nation of Israel when they passed through the canal surrounded by the waters of the Sea of Reeds, with the help of Moses who was saved by being placed in an ark on the Nile.

Many believe that the story of the Exodus is vital for the perpetuation of the Jewish people. By telling our story, we remember our past and pass it on. We also remember the message inherent in it—in each generation we must redeem ourselves! (See Our National Story for the legend told in detail. This can be told during the *seder*.)

Examples of How Passover is Observed

HUMANISTIC RITUALS	RELIGIOUS RITUALS
Participate in Passover Food Drive	Can participate in Passover Food Drive
Spring cleaning optional	Entire house thoroughly cleaned
Creation or purchase of beautiful <i>seder</i> artifacts like wine goblets, <i>matzah</i> cover, and <i>seder</i> plate	Creation or purchase of beautiful <i>seder</i> artifacts like wine goblets, <i>matzah</i> cover, and <i>seder</i> plates
No requirement to get rid of any leavened products or to stop using regular dishes	All non-kosher for Passover foods and dishes are removed to a segregated spot and symbolically sold to a gentile
<i>Matzah</i> is purchased along with other traditional style Passover foods	Only kosher for Passover foods and <i>matzah</i> are stocked in the house
Nice china, if owned, used for festive <i>seder</i>	Kosher for Passover dishes are substituted for daily dishes
Not applicable	First born sons over 13, or their fathers if they are younger, fast the day before Passover, recalling the death of the firstborns in Egypt, except those of the Hebrew slaves
Before Passover, some parents and children, for symbolic, educational and fun purposes only, perform a <i>b'dikat chametz</i> /ritual searching of the house to find and eliminate 10 strategically placed cubes of <i>chametz</i> /leavened bread; then it is burned	Night before Passover, head of household performs a ritual searching of the house with a candle, feather and wooden spoon inside a cloth for renegade <i>chametz</i> including the 10 cubes of pre-placed bread and burns it all next morning
Can eat whatever they want but often <i>matzah</i> is added to the menu for 2 to 8 days	No <i>chametz</i> , or related products, are kept in the house or eaten for 8 days of Passover
Optional special community service. Cultural fairs and mock or third <i>seders</i> common, underprivileged invited	Special festive service at synagogue on first and last two days
<i>Seder</i> can be on first and/or second night using a humanist <i>Haggadah</i> with rituals, symbolic foods, stories, ethical messages, songs and festive meal	<i>Seder</i> on first two nights using a traditional <i>Haggadah</i> with rituals, symbolic foods, stories, prayers, songs and festive meal
Human rights and fighting against tyranny in every generation is the ethical focus	Gratitude to God for the liberation from Egypt is the religious focus
Some people like to invite non-Jews to the <i>seder</i>	Not applicable
During Passover it is customary to do lots of community service and perform acts of charity	Enable the needy locally and in other countries to have a Kosher Passover

Religious Order of the Passover Seder

1. **Kadesh** – benediction over wine
2. **Urchatz** – leader washes hands
3. **Karpas** – eat greens
4. **Yachatz** – break *matzah* and hide *afikomen*
5. **Magid** – tell the story
6. **Rachtza** – all wash hands before meal
7. **Motzi matzah** – bless and eat *matzah*
8. **Maror** – eat bitter herbs with *charoset*
9. **Korekh** – eat sandwich of *matzah*, *maror* and *charoset*
10. **Shulchan orekh** – festive meal
11. **Tzafun** – eat *afikomen*
12. **Barekh** – benediction after meal
13. **Hallel** – praise liturgy
14. **Nirtzah** – conclusion of *seder* with songs

Suggested Humanistic Order of the Passover Seder

Urchatz/Wash – everyone washes their hands before sitting down at the table.

Hadlaka/Candlelighting – Light four candles, each one representing an important Passover theme chosen by the family. This can remain the same or change every year as some become more immediately relevant than others – see samples under “Humanist Blessings.”

Kadesh/Wine Blessing – Pour and drink all or part of the first of four cups of wine/grape juice, each cup representing an important ethical theme – see samples under “Humanist Blessings.” It is customary at the *seder* to drink and eat all ceremonial items in a leaning/reclining position.

Seder Arukh/Set Order – Explain the meaning of *seder*. Name each special item on or around the *seder* plate, noting that it evolved from a historical use of the item whose initial significance may have been lost. Today, it is either symbolic of some aspect of the liberation of the Children of Israel from slavery or our commitment to establishing a world of universal human rights and dignity. Then explain the symbolic meaning of the *z'roah* and egg which will be eaten just before the meal. Explain the symbolic meaning of the rest of the items as you use them during the *seder*. See “Symbolic Explanations”.

Karpas/Fresh Greens/Parsley and Tapuz/Orange – Dip parsley into salt water, say blessing and eat. See sample under “Humanist Blessing.” Then everyone gets a piece of orange to eat.

Yachatz & Tzafun/Breaking and Hiding – break the top *matzah* in two. Place the larger half, broken into smaller pieces in a bag or serviette and have a different child/person each year take it and hide it for eating later. At the end of the meal the child/person can negotiate for something they want in exchange for returning the *afikomen* for family consumption.

Magid/Telling the Story –

- a. The youngest person asks the well known four questions - *Ma Nishtana/What is Different*. See “*Ma Nishtana*.”
- b. An optional fifth question can be added that deals with any current issue of oppression.
- c. Then *Pesach* story is told. See “Our National Story.” Feel free to retell in a form suitable for those present.
- d. Commentaries offering metaphorical interpretations and ethical lessons may be interspersed during the telling.

Then pour and drink all or part of the second cup of wine/grape juice.

Motzi Matzah/Maror/Korekh – Take two small pieces of *matzah*, put horseradish and/or bitter lettuce and some *charoset* between the two pieces, say a blessing and eat. See sample under “Humanist Blessings.”

Pour and drink all or part of the third cup of wine/grape juice.

Shirah/Sing – Various traditional and contemporary songs on the themes of Passover may be sung throughout the seder. End the *seder* ritual with a song of hope. Also feel free to add meaningful poetry on relevant themes. See lyrics of some suitable songs under “Songs.” Jewish bookstores and the internet will have the music for these and others.

Shulchan Arukh/The Set Table – Except for the egg and the *z’roah*, clear the ritual items off the table and set the table with your nicest dishes for the festive meal. The meal appetizer is usually a hardboiled egg dipped in salt water but can be white eggplant or white zucchini or bean sprouts. Many Passover cookbooks and menus may be found on line to suit your family’s preferences. During the meal, each person can be given a piece of the *z’roah*. Common dessert might be fruit salad or fresh fruit including Israeli fruits such as pomegranates, dates, figs (prunes are also recommended to help the *matzah* and heavy meal go down).

Afikomen/Dessert – At the end of the meal, negotiate for the return of the hidden *afikomen* by promising (and delivering on the promise later) to fulfill the will of the child/person for something they desire. We encourage that this item be somehow related to the Jewish identity of the child/person. The *afikomen* is then eaten.

Siyum/Ending – To close the *seder*, pour and drink all or part of the fourth cup of wine. Songs can be sung here, then everyone helps to clean up.

Suggested Set Up for Humanistic Seder

FOUR CANDLES IN CANDLEHOLDERS

CUP OF MIRIAM SALT WATER CUP OF ELIJAH

DECANTER WITH WINE AND WINE CUP

SEDER PLATE WITH FOLLOWING ITEMS ON IT:



3 OR 4 MATZOT UNDER A SPECIAL MATZAH COVER OR SEDER PLATE#

* Substitutes can be made for vegetarians

** See “Charoset Recipes from Around the World.”

See “How to Make *Matzah*” or purchase from the supermarket

Explanations of Symbols and our Contemporary Seder

Seder/Order is the name of the ritual ceremony of commemoration

Ritual Items: A *seder* needs to speak to the things that are important in our lives. It deals with our past, which we call our roots. It addresses the present, which deals with our values and the expression of our Jewishness in our modern, urban world. It can also suggest the ways in which we can improve our world and make it better for the future. To make this *seder* contemporary, we have added two ritual items to our *seder* plate: an orange and some potato peel. We also have an additional cup, which is called Miriam's Cup.

Eliyahu's/Elijah's Cup: Eliyahu has become one of the most famed and best loved of all the Jewish Prophets. Legend has it that Eliyahu will herald the day when humanity shall live in freedom, peace, justice and joy. But, he will not come until the world is worthy of his presence. From this we can understand that the realization of our hopes, depends on our actions. The cup of Eliyahu is filled with the white wine of "hope and inner strength." [A bit of wine from this cup can be added to the second cup of wine to be drunk during the *seder*.]

Salt Water: In ancient times people would dip their food into salty water in order to enhance its taste. Later the rabbis re-interpreted this utilitarian act to symbolize the tears that the Children of Israel shed while in slavery. When we dip our *karpas* or greens into salt water we think about how life, represented by the fresh green growth, is invariably touched with sadness and bitterness.

Miriam's Cup symbolizes the role that women played in the story of our people's liberation and national birth. Shifra and Puah, the courageous midwives did not follow Pharaoh's edict to kill all firstborn male babies. Yochevet saved Moses' life. Pharaoh's daughter saved Moses from the Nile. Miriam led the women out of Egypt. The legend tells us that it was the hope and perseverance of the women that prevented the refugee slaves from returning to Egypt during difficult times in the desert. Today it also reminds us of the important role women still play in the continuity of the Jewish people. To honor Miriam, and all women, the cup of Miriam is filled with the red wine of "love and compassion" and the understanding that when we tap into the love and compassion in each of us and generously share it with others, we will create a better world. [A bit of wine from this cup can be added to the third cup of wine to be drunk during the *seder*.]

Four Cups of Wine: Four is an ancient mystical number and wine is a medium for celebration. Each person at the *seder* gets a cup into which we will be pouring wine or grape juice.

Seder Plate – the platter or *matzah* cover on which the chosen festival symbols are placed.

Z'roah/Shankbone: The burnt meat (or beets, a common alternative for vegetarians) on our *seder* plate symbolizes the sacrificial lamb. In ancient times our ancestors celebrated a shepherds' spring festival. At sundown of the first night of the full moon (Nissan 14th) each family slaughtered a lamb or a goat for a feast. A bit of blood to show renewed kinship was smeared on the doorpost of the tents. In the Passover story this smearing of the blood on the doorposts signified the beginning of the Jewish rebellion against slavery. The legends tell us that this was also a sign to ensure that the first born in that household were not to be killed during the 10th plague. Following the 10th plague the Jews sacrificed a paschal lamb in gratitude that their first born were not killed. In memory of our shepherd ancestors, we too eat lamb (or beets) as part of the *Pesach* meal.

Sacrifice is no longer a part of the Jewish religious cult, but many vegetarians and vegans considered the slaughter and consumption of any animal as an unnecessary sacrifice. Therefore, only vegetable products are displayed on their *seder* plates or eaten during the festive meal.

Betzah/Egg: The traditional reason given for the egg on our *seder* plate is that it is a reminder of the Passover sacrifice made at the Temple in Jerusalem. A more likely explanation is that eggs were an ancient sign of mourning and this symbol is a reminder of the Jewish people's mourning of the destruction of the Temple. Even today the first meal of mourners includes eggs. For contemporary Jews the egg, like the *karpas* symbolizes spring, rebirth and the continuity of life and hope. Hard boiled eggs are dipped in salt water and eaten as the first course of the festive meal. Vegetarian or vegan alternatives may be white eggplant or zucchini, or bean sprouts.

Karpas/Greens: Passover is essentially a spring festival celebrating the rebirth of nature. This spring vegetable also recalls the season of spring in the story of our liberation and national birth.

Klipay Tapuchay Adama/Potato Peel: Even as we eat the greens of hope and renewal, we are reminded, by the potato peel on our *seder* plate that during the Holocaust, our people were often reduced to eating potato peels to survive. We can never give up our vigilance against tyranny and our efforts to create a world where no one is enslaved.

Tapuz/The Orange on our *seder* plate is a contemporary symbol. Much like women, this beautiful fruit contains within it, the seeds to re-produce itself. For many decades, feminists have been adding the orange to the *seder* plate to remind us all that we need to fight for the right of all women and men to choose for themselves whether and when they wish to reproduce. Children are precious living beings and when we choose to bring them to life, we will more likely cherish them in the ways they deserve. The orange has also come to represent the fight against oppression of any person because of their sexual orientation and our commitment to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that every human being is honoured and permitted to grow to the fullness of their promise.

As with all symbols, legends grow up around them and after a while people forget the original significance. Many say, that in the mid 1970s, during a meeting of the Board of Rabbis, a woman talked about the place of women in the rabbinate and in the pulpit. A male rabbi stood up and retorted that women belong on the pulpit like an orange belongs on a *seder* plate. In support of women in the rabbinate, since that time, many progressive people have added an orange to the *seder* plate, and there it will likely stay for generations to come. [Many families cut up some oranges and each person at the *seder* table eats a wedge whose sweet tartness reminds us that the path towards recognition of the equal rights of all people is paved with both setbacks and successes.]

Matzah: Unleavened bread reminds us of the legend that our ancestors were in such a hurry to get out of Egypt that there was no time for the dough to rise. The sun baked the unrisen dough and made *matzah*, which they ate on the trip out of Egypt. *Matzah* reminds us that historically, our ancient farmer ancestors celebrated a spring fertility festival called *Matzot*. They sacrificed the best of the first barley harvest to the gods so they would have a fertile agricultural harvest. Because yeast was the symbol of the old spirits and in spring, the focus was on the new, all leaven was banished from their homes. That is why we eat bread that is unleavened, which we call *matzah*.

Yachatz/To Break in Two: Why do we break the *matzah* in two when we prepare for the *afikomen*? Legend tells us that in Egypt the slaves would receive only *lechem oni*/bread of poverty, or unleavened bread to eat, and that came sporadically. Not knowing when their next ration of food would arrive, the clever slaves would break their *matzah* and put away or hide the larger portion to tide them over. In memory of this we will break one *matzah* in two and wrap up and put away the larger portion for *afikomen*. The *seder* is not considered complete until we have eaten the *afikomen* at the end. In order, to involve the children, it is traditional for a child to remove the *afikomen* and hide it until it is required. At that time, the child can negotiate the price for the *afikomen*. This symbolizes the right of children to be heard and to be part of the family council. Of course this keeps the child's interest and attention alive as well.

Ma Nishtana/Four Questions and Four Children: The *Ma Nishtana*/'What is different' comes from the Mishna or early rabbinic times. It recalls the importance of perpetuating the story and our culture to our children so it is sung or recited usually by the youngest child before we tell the story.

Magid/Telling the Story: In the modern era our contemporary sages—biblical scholars, archeologists, anthropologists, and historians—have called into question practically all aspects of the legend we have so loyally commemorated each year. These scholars have identified inconsistencies in the story, chronological lapses, mythological aspects of the account, and crucially, a total lack of corroborating evidence.

At most, perhaps a small band of our Semitic ancestors, possibly called the Habiru or Hapiru tribes experienced and escaped Egyptian slavery around 1250 BCE. These tribes then roamed the Sinai deserts joining up with wandering priests or magicians, likely from a Levite tribe. These ancient nomads eventually joined other Semitic ancestors inhabiting the coast and hill country of Canaan. The largest of these tribes were called Israel and Judah. Nearly all of the early Israelites never stepped foot in Egypt and had no memory of this.

And yet, this story has enthralled the Jewish people for millennia and has been embraced by Jewish culture as our collective foundational event. Why has this been so compelling? And why do we continue to cling to it despite there being no evidence of its historicity?

- We tell the story because it is perhaps the first in recorded history to celebrate the idea that slaves could become free people.
- We tell the story because it has inspired us, in our darkest moments, to hope for freedom renewed.

- We tell the story because it teaches us to have compassion for all those who are still not free—because all of us, at one time or another, were metaphorically speaking, “slaves in Egypt.”

So whether or not the *Pesach* story is true, as told, is not that important. It is OUR story and contains important ethical messages for us today. We are committed to passing it on along with whatever we do know about our ancient history.

Maror/Bitter Herbs: Bitter Herbs in the form of fresh horseradish pieces (or grated) and romaine or bitter lettuce, on our *seder* plate reminds us of how bitter indeed, were the lives of the Children of Israel while they were enslaved in Egypt. It also reminds us of the bitterness of the lives of our ancestors during many times during our history. Having experienced so much bitterness, we have a special responsibility to alleviate and to prevent the bitterness in the lives of all peoples.

Charoset: Relish on the *seder* plate is to remind us of the bricks and mortar that Children of Israel had to make in Egypt. The *charoset* is added to the *maror* to remind us that even in the bitterest time our ancestors had hope, and this made it possible for them to endure.

Charoset is likely a throwback to the tasty fruit and nut sauces that our well-to-do ancestors used as dips to add richness and flavour to their meats and vegetables.

Korekh/Sandwich: Some people call the combination of *matzah*, *maror* and *charoset*, a ‘Hillel sandwich.’ The Talmud tells us that Rabbi Hillel of the first century CE observed the Torah literally when it said that the paschal lamb is to be eaten with *matzah* and *maror*. In his honour, we too combine *matzah* and *maror*, and like the rabbis, add *charoset* and eat them together.

Afikomen: In Greek the *afikomen* referred to the joyous revelry and entertainment that followed a banquet. It is possible that during Second Temple times it was customary to follow regular feasts with the Greek style song, dance, games and sweet foods/desserts. But on *Pesach* no song, dance or eating was permitted after eating the sacrifice. The paschal lamb was the dessert, or the last course, of the Passover meal. Perhaps because it was the end of the meal it got to be called *afikomen*. After the destruction of the Temple, when sacrifices were no longer made or served, *matzah* was served as the dessert instead of the paschal lamb and it too was given the name *afikomen*.

Some scholars say that *matzah*, being made of grain flour was offered as a sacrifice to the fertility goddesses of old to encourage fertile harvests. They claim that the *afikomen* is probably a remnant of those ancient fertility sacrifices.

Ma Nishtana - What is Different?

SING:

Ma nish-ta-na ha-lie-la ha-ze
Mi-kol ha-lay-lot 2x
She-b'-khol ha-lay-lot a-nu okh-lin
Cha-metz u-ma-tzah 2x
Ha-lie-la ha-ze, ha-lie-la ha-ze)
Ku-lo ma-tzah) 2x

She-b'-khol ha-lay-lot a-nu okh-lin
Sh'-ar y'-ra-kot 2x
Ha-lie-la ha-ze, ha-lie-la ha-ze)
Ma-ror, ma-ror) 2x

She-b'-khol ha-lay-lot ayn a-nu mat-bi-lin
A-fi-lu pa-am e-chad 2x
Ha-lie-la ha-ze, ha-lie-la ha-ze)
Sh'-tay p'-a-mim) 2x

She-b'-khol ha-lay-lot a-nu okh-lin
Bayn yosh-vin u-vayn m'-su-bin 2x
Ha-lie-la ha-ze, ha-lie-la ha-ze)
Ku-la-nu m'-su-bin) 2x

{Why is this night different from all other nights?
 On all other nights we eat bread or *matzah*, but on this night we eat only *matzah*. On all other nights we eat a variety of vegetables, but on this night we stress the eating of bitter herbs. On all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night twice. On all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we all recline.}

The Four Children

The sages say that when we answer the questions of our children about our heritage, our answers should be based on the ability of the child to listen and to comprehend and the interest level of the child.

To the **chakham or wise child** who asks "What does all this mean?" we say: "We welcome your thoughtfulness and commitment. We will guide you to make your mark on the world."

To the **rasha or rebellious child** who asks "What does this mean to all of you?" we say: "We welcome your defiance and independence. We will guide you to find your place among us."

To the **tam or innocent child** who asks "What is this?" we say: "We welcome your enthusiasm and curiosity. We will guide you to find your way."

And to the **child sheayno yodaya lishol, who does not know to ask**, we say: "There is always a seat at this table for you. We will guide you to learn the beauty and value of our culture."

Our National Story

☆ Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, lived in the land of Canaan. When there was a famine in the land of Canaan, Jacob and the 70 people in his family, went down to Egypt. Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, was the viceroy of Egypt, second in command to the Pharaoh or King, and due to his influence, things went well for the children of Jacob (later also known as Israel). They stayed in Egypt for hundreds of years and grew into a large and prosperous tribe.

☆ The years passed and there came a time when a Pharaoh ruled the Egyptians, who did not know about Joseph and his influence. When Pharaoh noticed how proliferous the Hebrews were he became concerned that in the event of a war, they would rise up against Pharaoh and fight for the enemy against him. He therefore enslaved all the Children of Israel and forced them to work very hard building enormous cities, fortresses, roads and monuments. The slaves were treated badly and did not have a lot of food to eat, but despite these terrible conditions, they continued to grow and multiply. So the taskmasters that Pharaoh set up over the Hebrew slaves forced them to work even harder making bricks and mortar and other heavy labour, and they made their lives bitter indeed.

☆ One day Pharaoh's astrologers told him that a Hebrew boy would be born who would lead the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. The King therefore called the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah and instructed them to drown all newborn male babies in the Nile. But Shifra and Puah did not carry out the orders of the King because they were upright and God-fearing women. When Pharaoh demanded to know why they were not killing the male babies, they replied that the Hebrew women gave birth so quickly that by the time they arrived, the women had already given birth. Pharaoh was so enraged that he issued a decree that every Egyptian must throw newborn male babies into the Nile, but that female babies could live.

☆ A man from the tribe of Levi married the midwife Yochevet and they had two children Miriam and Aaron. When he heard about the King's decree he refused to have relations with his wife because he did not want to take the chance of having a male child who would then be killed. His daughter Miriam accused him of even worse genocide than Pharaoh, since Pharaoh's decree only applied to male babies and not female ones, whereas his actions would prevent even female babies from being born. The man was convinced by his daughter, and Yochevet became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. When Yochevet saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months, then she wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a little ark or basket which she waterproofed with tar. Then she set him adrift on the Nile and she and Miriam hid in the bulrushes along the banks of the Nile and watched to see what would happen to the child.

☆ Pharaoh's daughter came down the Nile to bathe. She spotted the ark among the bulrushes and asked her slave girl to fetch it. When she opened it, she saw a baby boy crying and she took pity on him realizing that he was probably a Hebrew baby. Miriam came up to her and offered to fetch a Hebrew nursemaid. She brought Yochevet to her and Pharaoh's daughter hired her to suckle the baby until he was weaned. Then Yochevet brought him to the castle and Pharaoh's daughter adopted him as her son and called him Moses, meaning 'one who draws out', because she had drawn him out of the Nile. Moses was raised as a prince in the palace of the King.

☆ When Moses was grown up he went out to watch his kinsmen, the slaves, working. He saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave and after looking around to see that no one was watching, he killed the taskmaster and buried him in the sand. The next day when he was walking at the construction site, he noticed two Hebrew slaves fighting. When he asked them why they are hitting each other, the slave answered "Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you intend to kill me as you did the Egyptian?" Moses realized that he was in danger because he had killed an Egyptian guard so he fled from Egypt into the desert and eventually arrived in Midian. He became a shepherd for the priest Jethro and eventually married his daughter Tziporah.

☆ One day when he was tending the flocks he wandered as far as Mount Horeb, considered the Mountain of God. He was amazed to see a bush that was all in flame, yet the bush was not consumed. God's angel spoke to him out of the bush and instructed him to return to Egypt and entreat Pharaoh to let the Hebrew slaves go to serve their God in the wilderness. Moses was afraid to return and he felt incompetent to speak to Pharaoh, because he had a speech impediment. But the angel of God told him that the power of God would be with him and that his brother Aaron would join him and speak on his behalf.

☆ Time and time again Moses and Aaron asked Pharaoh to let the Children of Israel go, but he refused. Moses proceeded to prove how powerful the Hebrew slaves' god, Yahveh was, by performing all kinds of magical tricks. But Pharaoh was not convinced. Finally Moses and Aaron informed Pharaoh that God would strike him and the Egyptians with all sorts of plagues if he would not let the Hebrew slaves go free. So Egypt was struck with ten calamities or plagues: blood, frogs, lice, wild beasts, cattle disease, boils, hail, locusts darkness and finally every firstborn in the land, from King to slave to animal, was struck dead, including the beloved first born son of Pharaoh. And a great cry was heard in the land. But none of the firstborn of the Hebrew slaves died. According to Moses' instructions each household had slain, roasted and eaten a lamb and painted their doorposts with blood to warn away the Angel of Death. They ate in haste with their traveling clothes on and waited for Moses' further instruction.

☆ Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and told them to leave immediately. So, the Children of Israel gathered all their belongings and took all the gifts of clothing, jewelry, livestock and other possessions that the Egyptians gave them and left Egypt. Not long after they left, Pharaoh was sorry that he had let them go, and gathered his army and his swiftest chariots and chased after the Children of Israel. Arriving at the banks of the sea, they looked back and saw Pharaoh's army approaching. They got scared and angry and accused Moses of taking them out of Egypt only to see them die at the hands of Pharaoh's army. But Moses raised his staff over the waters and a wind arose that blew the waters into two towers leaving a channel of dry land in between for people to walk on. The Children of Israel hurriedly walked across the dry land, but when Pharaoh's chariots pursued them followed by the entire army, every man and horse was drowned as the water closed in behind the Children of Israel.

☆ Thus the Children of Israel were saved, and they arrived at Mt. Sinai where God came down on the mountain and declared the Ten Sayings (Commandments) before the entire nation and they agreed to accept God's Torah, be his special people, and follow his will. Moses then went up to the top of the mountain where God taught him the entire Torah. He stayed up there for 40 days and 40 nights and the people got restless and were worried that he would not come back. So they asked Aaron to build a golden calf/bull for them that would lead them out of the desert to the promised land of Canaan. Aaron agreed and collected gold from all the people. But the women, having faith that Moses would return, refused to give their gold jewelry to be melted.

☆ As Moses was coming down from the mountain with the tablets of the law in his hand, he saw the people dancing and singing and worshipping their golden idol and he got so mad he shattered the tablets at the foot of the mountain. He gathered his supporters around him and they killed over 3,000 of the revelers. Then Moses returned to the mountain and brought down a new set of tablets. But God was angry and he punished the people by making them wander in the desert for 40 years until the entire generation who had come out of Egypt had died. Then the Children of Israel were ready to conquer the land of Canaan.



Sample Humanistic Blessings

CANDLELIGHTING:

Candle One

Ba-rukhh ha-or shel chay-rut – Blessed is the light of freedom.

May this candle brighten the way to a world in which all humanity shall live in personal, political, religious and intellectual freedom!



Candle Two

Ba-rukhh ha-or shel e-met v'-tze-dek – Blessed is the light of truth and justice.

May this candle brighten the way to a world in which truth and justice shall prevail for all humanity!

Candle Three

Ba-rukhh ha-or shel sha-lom – Blessed is the light of peace.

May this candle brighten the way to a world in which all humanity shall live at peace with one another and experience spiritual and mental peace within!

Candle Four

Ba-rukhh ha-or shel tik-vah – Blessed is the light of hope.

May this candle brighten the way to a world filled with love, compassion and hope for a better tomorrow!

By lighting these candles we make a covenant to do our personal best to bring the light of freedom, justice, peace and hope to the world.

WINE BLESSINGS:

General Blessing of Gratitude before Cup One

A-nu mo-dim she-he-che-ya-nu v'-ki-y'-ma-nu v'-hi-gi-ya-nu laz-man ha-zeh – We are grateful for the eternal unfolding of the seasons which has brought us to this special occasion.



Cup One

Ash-ray-nu bi-y'-ru-sha-tay-nu u-biv-ra-khot pri ha-ga-fen – We rejoice in our heritage and in the blessings of the fruit of the vine.

We drink this wine in celebration of our freedom and the hope that all humankind will be liberated from tyranny.

Cup Two

We drink this wine in reaffirmation of our covenant to live ethical, just and humanitarian lives and to bring light into the world.

Cup Three

We drink this wine in the hope that very soon peace shall reign on this earth.

Cup Four

We drink this wine to show our love and respect for all humanity and in the hope that next year we will truly live in a perfect world—a world filled with goodness and peace. We accept that it is our responsibility to make that world a reality.

KARPAS BLESSING:

We eat this *karpas* to reaffirm our belief that in spite of bitter times in all generations, we have faith in the renewal and continuity of life.

KOREKH – SANDWICH BLESSING:

Slaves would have to eat crouching or standing. Just as free people used to recline when they ate, we recline when we eat on *Pesach* to remind us that we are free. This *korekh* reminds us that while there is poverty, slavery, and oppression anywhere, we are not truly free. But the sweet *charoset* reminds us of our power to make a difference and work to create a better world.

Lyrics of Some Humanistic Songs

SHEHECHEYANU (Traditional)

She-he-che-ya-nu

V'-ki-y'-ma-nu

V'-hi-gi-ya-nu

Laz-man ha-zeh

{We are grateful to be alive and well to
share this holiday season together.}

PEACE AND FREEDOM (to the tune of Eliyahu Hanavi)

Peace and freedom, let there be

Sha-lom v'-chay-rut lu y'-hi

Peace and freedom, peace and freedom

Peace and freedom and liberty

Bim-hay-ra b'-ya-may-nu

Let us build a world anew

In our days and speedily

It is up to you and me

Peace and freedom, let there be

Sha-lom v'-chay-rut lu y'-hi

Peace and freedom, peace and freedom

Peace and freedom and liberty.

DAYEINU (Traditional)

I-lu ho-tzi ho-tzi-anu

Ho-tzi-a-nu mi-mitz-ra-yim

Mi-mitz-ra-yim ho-tzi-a-nu

Die-ay-nu

Die die-ay-nu 3x

Die-ay-nu 3x

Die die-ay-nu 3x

Die-ay-nu 2x

{If he had brought us out of Egypt,
it would have been enough! If he
had only given us the Torah, it
would have been enough.}

I-lu na-tan na-tan la-nu

Na-tan la-nu et ha-to-rah 2x

Die-ay-nu

LO YISA GOY (Traditional)

And everyone 'neath their vine and fig tree)

shall live in peace and unafraid) 2x

And into ploughshares beat their swords)

nations shall learn war no more) 2x

Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev)

Lo yil-m'-du od mil-cha-ma) 4x

BASHANA HABAA (Lyrics: Ehud Manor; Music: Nurit Hirsch)

<i>Ba-sha-na ha-ba-a</i>		{Next year
<i>Ne-shev al ha-mir-pe-set</i>		we shall sit on the balcony
<i>V'-nis-por tzi-po-rim no-d'-dot.</i>		and watch migrating birds.
<i>Y'-la-dim b'-chuf-sha</i>		Holidaying children
<i>Y'-sa-cha-ku to-fe-set</i>		will play catch
<i>Ben ha-ba-yit l'-ven ha-sa-dot.</i>		between the houses and the fields.
<i>Od ti-re od ti-re</i>)	You'll yet see
<i>Ka-ma tov yi-h'-ye</i>) 2x	just how good it will be
<i>Ba-sha-na ba-sha-na ha-ba-a</i>)	in the coming years.}

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

Wait and see, wait and see)
What a world there can be) 2x
If we share, if we care)
You and me.)

Many dreamed, many died
 To build a new tomorrow
 And the vision remains in our heart.
 Now the torch must be passed
 With hope and not in sorrow
 And a promise to make a new start.



Wait and see.... 2x
 Od tire.... 2x

MY THOUGHTS ARE FREE (to the tune of Sharm el Sheikh by Rafi Gabai)

My thoughts are as free, as wind o'er the ocean,
 And no one can see, their form or their motion.
 No scholar can map them, no hunter can trap them,
 My lips may be still, but I think what I will.

Chorus: I think as I please, and this gives me pleasure,
 My conscience decrees, this right I must treasure.
 My thoughts will not cater, to duke or dictator,
 No captive I'll be, for my spirit is free!

And if tyrants take me, and throw me in prison,
 My thoughts will burst free, like blossoms in season.
 Foundations will crumble, the structure will tumble,
 No captive I'll be, for my spirit is free. Chorus:

MY LIFE ABOUNDS (Adapted from Hannah Szenesh's poem "Eli, Eli"; Music by David Zehavi)

A-ni ro-tze

She-lo yi-ga-mer l'-o-lam

Ha-chol v'-ha-yam)

Rish-rush shel ha-ma-yim) 2x

Ba-rak ha-sha-ma-yim)

Tik-vat ha-a-dam)

{I wish that these things will never end—
the sand and the sea,
the rush of the waters,
the thunder of the heavens,
the hope of humanity.}

My life abounds

With wonders I hope never end,

The sand and the sea,

The rush of the waters,

The crash of the heavens,

The song of my heart.

The strength of my dreams,

The dreams of a people,

The promise of freedom,

The hope of my heart.

*Charoset Recipes from Around the World***EVA GOLDFINGER'S HUNGARIAN CHAROSET**

1 crunchy sweet apple pared and chopped fine (not grated)
½ cup walnuts or pistachio nuts (unsalted) chopped
1 tsp chopped fresh ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg or ground cloves (OPTIONAL)
Tokay or other red wine to moisten (or red/not purple grape juice)

Mix together dry ingredients – do not put into food processor or it will be too fine and mushy
Add a touch of red wine (till moist but not runny or gooey)
Refrigerate and add a touch more wine just before using
This is not a paste and each ingredient needs to be recognizable
Final color is a reddish brown

JOAN NATHAN'S ASHKENAZI CHAROSET (3 cups)

6 peeled apples, coarsely chopped
2/3 cup chopped almonds 3 tbsp sugar, or to taste
½ tsp cinnamon 4 tbsp sweet red wine
grated rind of 1 lemon

Combine all, mixing thoroughly. Add wine as needed.
Blend to desired texture - some like it coarse and crunchy, others prefer it ground to a paste.
Chill.

NICHOLAS STAVROULAKIS'S GREEK CHAROSET (Rhodes) (3 cups)

1¼ cups dates, finely chopped
1 large orange
½ cup honey or sugar
cinnamon to taste
ground cloves to taste
½ cup almonds, finely chopped
½ cup walnuts, finely chopped
5 ounces sweet red wine

Peel the orange and cut it into pieces. Remove the seeds. Add the chopped dates, and mash together into a paste. Put the paste and honey in the top of a double boiler over gently simmering water and stir constantly with a wooden spoon for about 20 minutes or until it is quite thick. Add the cloves, cinnamon, and wine, and simmer until very thick.
Remove from the heat, stir in the chopped nuts, and turn out into a large bowl to cool.

JOAN NATHAN'S VENETIAN CHAROSET (Serves 24)

1-½ cups chestnut paste ½ cup pine nuts
 grated rind of one orange 10 oz. dates, chopped
 12 oz. figs, chopped ½ cup white raisins
 2 tbsp. poppy seeds ¼ cup dried apricots
 ½ cup chopped walnuts ½ cup brandy
 ½ cup chopped almonds honey to bind

Combine all ingredients, gradually adding just enough brandy and honey to make the mixture bind. Other Italian charoSET recipes include mashed up bananas, apples, hard-boiled eggs, crushed matzo, pears, and lemon. [Poppy seeds in this recipe may make it unsuitable for Pesach.]

MOHTARAN SHIRAZI'S PERSIAN CHAROSET (5 cups)

1½ c. peeled apples, cored and diced
 ½ cup unsalted pistachios ½ cup almonds
 25 dates, pitted and diced ½ cup golden raisins
 1 orange, peeled and diced 1 pomegranate
 1 banana, sliced ½-1 cup sweet red wine
 ¼ cup cider vinegar 1 tbsp black pepper
 ½ tsp cayenne 1 tbsp ground cloves
 1 tsp ground cardamom 1 tsp cinnamon

Combine all the fruits and nuts. Add the wine and vinegar until a pasty consistency is achieved. Add the spices and blend well. Adjust seasonings.

MOLLY BAR DAVID'S NORTH AFRICAN CHAROSET

60 grams pine nuts 1 cooked egg yolk
 1 apple - grated ½ cup sugar
 ½ cup each ground almonds and walnuts
 1 lemon, juice and zest
 cinnamon and ginger (to your own taste)

Mix together all ingredients

NUT FREE YEMENITE CHAROSET (1½ cups)

1 cup pitted, chopped dates
 ½ cup chopped dried figs
 1/3 cup sweet Passover wine
 3 tbsp sesame seeds 1 tsp ground ginger
 pinch of coriander 2 tbsp matzoh meal
 1 small red chili pepper seeded and minced, or pinch of cayenne

In a large bowl, combine the dates, figs, and wine. Add the sesame seeds, ginger, coriander, chili pepper, and matzoh meal and blend thoroughly. Roll into 1-inch balls or serve in a bowl.

JOAN NATHAN'S CALIFORNIA CHAROSET

1 whole orange
 1 large avocado, peeled and diced
 juice of ½ lemon ½ cup sliced almonds
 ½ cup raisins 4 seedless dates
 2 figs or prunes 2 tbsp apple juice
 2 tbsp matzah meal

Peel and section the orange; reserve them. Toss the avocado and lemon juice in a bowl. Set aside. In a processor or blender, place the almonds, raisins, dates, and figs. Process until coarsely chopped. Add the orange peel and sections and process briefly to combine. Add the avocado and process 1 or 2 seconds more. Transfer the mixture to a glass bowl and gently fold in the apple juice and matzah meal. Cover with plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator.

ROBERT LEWIS'S PEAR CHAROSET

8 pears 4 cups crushed walnuts
 4 tsp cinnamon 8 tbsp honey
 1 cup red wine

Grate pears well. Combine with remaining ingredients. Stir well before serving. Adjust the spicing as you go along.

How To Make Matzah

Legend: In their hurry to leave Egypt, the Israelites did not have time to wait for their bread to rise so they made *matzah* and let the sun bake it.

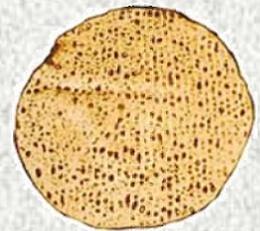
Likely explanation: Because yeast was mysterious, making the dough grow and rise, the ancient peoples thought they had spirits in them. At the new year which was in the spring, for good luck they would throw out all the old yeast and start new cultures. So while the new cultures were growing, they did not have yeast and therefore made flat-breads at this season.

Time Required: 45 minutes

Ingredients needed: cold water flour

Utensils needed: measuring cup large bowl for dough
roll of paper rolling pin
tool or fork for making holes in the dough
floor tiles (ceramic) for lining oven shelf or as baking flats
peel - flat metal plate with a handle for taking the *matzah* out of the oven.

1. Prepare the oven by lining the oven shelf with floor tiles.
2. Leave some space between the tiles and the sides of the oven.
3. Or place *matzah* first on tiles then insert into oven.
4. Set oven on highest temperature setting. (475-500 deg.)
5. Clean work surface and prepare utensils.
6. Wash and dry hands thoroughly.
7. Depending on how many *matzot* you want, measure 1 part water and 3 parts flour.
8. Mix and knead into a firm ball of 1-2 inches for each *matzah*.
9. Roll out dough as thin as possible.
10. Poke holes in the dough with a fork.
11. Put *matzah* onto the tiles in the hot oven or onto tile and then into the hot oven.
12. Bake on tiles for 2-3 minutes until done.
13. Remove using the peel and place in paper bag or box.
14. Put clean paper on the work surface, and repeat steps 7-13.



Some Passover Humour

QUOTE:

Let me tell you the one thing I have against Moses. He took us forty years into the desert in order to bring us to the one place in the Middle East that has no oil! **Golda Meir**

RIDDLES:

Q: Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A: Pharaoh's daughter; she went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little Prophet.

Q: Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Torah?

A: Moses; he broke all 10 commandments at once.

JOKE:

A Jew took his Passover lunch to eat outside in the park. He sat down on the bench and began eating. Shortly thereafter a blind man came and sat down next to him. Feeling neighbourly, the Jew offered a sheet of *matzah* to his bench mate, who ran his fingers over the *matzah* for a minute and exclaimed: "Who wrote this?"

HAIKUS:

On Passover we
 Opened the door for Elijah
 Now our cat is gone.

Tonight, four questions.
 Tomorrow we ask again.
 Expect new answers?

Cooking and baking.
 Oy! The *matzah* balls won't float.
 Our *seder* is doomed.

SHORT STORY:

With *Pesach* soon upon them, the Jewish community in Madrid found themselves in a desperate situation. There was an acute shortage of horseradish. (Now many of you may know that horseradish is a key *seder* ingredient, and also that fiery condiment for *gefilte* fish, and which is also known as *chrain*).

A hue and cry arose, and the entire community was mobilized in an effort to prevent this tragedy. All the European Union Countries gave them the same reply, "Sorry, we have none to send." In desperation, the Rabbi phoned one of his Yeshiva friends in Tel Aviv and begged him to send a crate of horseradish by air freight to Madrid.

Two days before *Pesach*, a crate of grade Aleph, tear-jerking, Israeli horseradish was loaded at Ben Gurion Airport onto the EL Al 789 flight to Madrid, and all seemed to be well.

Unfortunately, when the Rabbi went to the Madrid Airport to claim the horseradish he was informed that a wildcat strike had just broken out and no shipments would be unloaded for at least four days.

As a result:

Wait for it...

You see this coming don't you...

The *chrain* in Spain stayed mainly on the plane.

SONG: Favourite Passover Things (Tune: "My Favourite Things" from "The Sound of Music")

Cleaning and cooking and so many dishes
 Out with the *chametz*, no pasta, no *knishes*
 Fish that's *gefilte*, horseradish that stings
 These are a few of our Passover things.

Matzah and *karpas* and chopped up *charoset*
 Shankbones and *kiddush* and Yiddish neuroses
Tante who *kvetches* and uncle who sings
 These are a few of our Passover things.

Motzi and *maror* and trouble with Pharaohs
 Famines and locusts and slaves with wheelbarrows
Matzah balls floating and eggshells that cling
 These are a few of our Passover things.

When the plagues strike
 When the lice bite
 When we're feeling sad
 We simply remember our Passover things
 And then we don't feel so bad.