

Jews United for Justice Presents



The 5th Annual / Labor Seder

**March 30, 2006
Temple Rodef Shalom
Falls Church, VA**

****Labor Donated****

Co-sponsored by:

American Rights at Work • Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps
Baltimore/Washington Laborers' District Council • DC Jobs with Justice
Greater Washington Jewish Labor Committee (JLC)
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC)
Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO • Mid-Atlantic Laborers
Mid-Atlantic Region - UNITE HERE
Northern Virginia Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO • Temple Rodef Shalom
United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 400

Introduction

This Haggadah brings together stories from Jewish tradition, from the labor movement, and from our own lives. It reaffirms the relevance of the Passover narrative by relating it to the challenges facing working people and working people's organizations today. It offers spiritual support to today's laborers and their efforts to foster economic and social justice. And it invites each of us to relate personally to a story that is thousands of years old, as well as to stories that continue to unfold.

Tonight, we use this Haggadah to further our shared efforts toward economic justice. And beyond this evening, each of us can use elements of this Haggadah to enrich our own lives, our own *seders*, our own organizations, and our own movements. As we join together, may our *seder's* message of liberation inspire us to action and may we learn to channel our religious and spiritual beliefs into the pursuit of justice.

Remarks: *Rabbi Marcus Burstein, Temple Rodef Shalom*
 Shelley Moskowitz, Jews United For Justice



Photo: Jewish Labor Committee Archives

The Seder (Order)

Welcome

Opening Blessings

The First Cup of Wine: In Every Generation

The Second Cup of Wine: Because We Were Slaves

The Symbols of the Passover Seder

Ten Plagues: The Challenges of a Non-Union Workplace

The Third Cup of Wine: With a Mighty Hand and an Outstretched Arm

The Fourth Cup of Wine: Who Worked to Bring us the *Matzah?*

Afikomen/Dessert and Nirtzah/Ending: Building the Promised Land

Welcome

Rabbi Jack Moline and Rabbi Doug Heifetz



Artwork by Shoshi Yaari

Opening Blessing: Shehecheyanu

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vebigianu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who gives us life,
and keeps us strong, and has brought us to this time.

THE FIRST CUP OF WINE: IN EVERY GENERATION ...

“In every generation, each of us should feel as though we ourselves had gone forth from Egypt.” On Passover, we tell the story of our bondage and our liberation in the first person: It is our story, our shared experience. At the Seder, storytelling is not a spectator sport – it demands more of us: It is a call to action. The stories we’re about to read are based on true accounts from ordinary people: Three Jewish union members from three different generations, with three different struggles. As the stories weave back and forth, think about the tapestry of your own family’s stories. How do they differ from these accounts? How are they similar?

Avadim Hayinu

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt, Andrea Foster, & Rob Levy

Avadim hayinu, hayinu
Atah b’nei chorin, b’nei chorin
Avadim hayinu
Atah Atah b’nei chorin, b’nei chorin
Avadim hayinu
Atah Atah b’nei chorin, b’nei chorin

Once we were slaves
Today we are free people

A Modern *Maggid* (Story)

Written and Prepared by David Schlitt

Performed by Rachel Greenblatt, Effe Rosenzweig, & David Schlitt

Discussion Questions

- ☞ Who were your first family members to arrive in America? What did they do for a living?
- ☞ What stories related to labor, immigration, or justice struggles do you bring from your own family’s past or present?
- ☞ [For the children at the table]: When has hearing a story made you want to change something? It can be a story you have heard out loud, read in a book, or even seen in a movie.

Blessing – Sanctification: The First Cup of Wine

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p’ri ha’gafen.

Blessed are You, Source of all Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

THE SECOND CUP OF WINE: BECAUSE WE WERE SLAVES ...

Each year, on Passover, we tell the story of having been slaves in Egypt. Why is it important for us to remember this story and feel as though we, ourselves, were slaves? What relevance does this story have for our lives today?

Let My People Go

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt, Andrea Foster, & Rob Levy

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand
Let my people go!

Chorus:

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh
To let my people go!

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said
Let my people go!
If not, I'll smite your people dead,
Let my people go!

Chorus:

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land

Tell old Pharaoh
To let my people go!

As Israel stood by the water side,
Let my people go!
By God's command it did divide,
Let my people go!

Chorus:

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land
Tell old Pharaoh
To let my people go!

When Moses took them from their toil,
Let my people go!
He led them all to freedom's soil,
Let my people go!

**D'var Torah by Rabbi Jack Moline
Text Study by Rabbi Doug Heifetz**

Discussion Questions

☞ Please reference the Haggadah Supplement.

Blessing – Sanctification: The Second Cup of Wine

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha'gafen.

Blessed are You, Source of all Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

THE SYMBOLS OF THE PASSOVER SEDER

Blessings led by Rabbi Lia Bass

Symbols introduced by:

Lou Cernak, Northern Virginia Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Paul Booth, AFSCME

Les Trachtman, Jewish Labor Committee

Wilma B. Liebman, National Labor Relations Board

Jos Williams, Metro Washington Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Brian Christopher, Mid-Atlantic Laborers



According to the mishnah, Rabbi Gamliel said that whoever has not considered the meaning of the *pesach*, the *matzah*, and the *maror* has not fulfilled the purpose of the seder. As we examine the relationship between economic justice and the Jewish tradition, we take a moment to reflect on the symbols of the Passover seder and their connection with our work.

Karpas/Greens

The green of the karpas serves as a reminder that the season of our liberation is the season of the spring harvest. As we celebrate our redemption from Egypt, we also celebrate the rebirth of the earth and the renewal of our commitment to fight for economic justice. And, as we dip the karpas in salt water, we are reminded that, too often, the food on our table rests on the sweat and tears of underpaid workers.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-adamah.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the Earth.

Eat the karpas.

Baytza/Egg

The roundness of the egg reminds us of the cycles of life and the fullness of the year. As the Passover season approaches again, we rejoice in campaigns won over the past year and look ahead with hope and commitment to the opportunities and possibilities of the year ahead. The roundness of the egg also reminds us that in life, sometimes we are up, and some times we are down. The egg gives us hope that change can happen, and that our efforts always bring new life to people who are oppressed.

Pesach/Shankbone

According to the biblical account, the blood of the paschal lamb was used to separate Israelites from Egyptians. As the cycle of the year begins anew, we strive to make sure that we do not become like the Egyptians in the Passover story, that we are neither perpetrators nor disinterested bystanders in a society of oppression. Traditionally, the *pesach* offering represents the outstretched arm of God delivering the Israelites from slavery. Tonight, we vow to extend our own arms and commit ourselves to action to end economic injustice. This evening we offer vegetables whose bloody color (beets) symbolize the *pesach* offering.

Matzah/Unleavened Bread

When our ancestors fled Egypt, they didn't even have time to wait for the dough of their bread to rise. *Matzah* is the bread of affliction, symbolic of the harshness of slavery, but it is also the bread of freedom, symbolic of the hope that oppression and suffering can end. While we eat the *matzah*, we think of the working conditions of the workers who make our food and we remind ourselves of those in our society and around the world who do not have enough food to eat. The Haggadah states "let all who are hungry come and eat." This Passover, we renew our commitment to making sure everyone can afford to put food on their table, to making the *matzah* truly be "ha lachma anya," bread for the poor that we can all partake together.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam,
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat matzah.*

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who has sanctified us through the commandments and instructed us concerning the eating of *matzah*.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe,
who brings forth bread from the Earth.

Eat the matzah.

Maror/Bitter Herbs

The harshness of low-wage and little or no-benefit work, of disempowerment, of being denied the right to organize, and of being denied the satisfaction that comes from choosing one's work and doing it well cannot be overstated. These bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness and pain of all those who face such harsh realities. We eat this *maror* with the prayer that their bitterness be turned to joy, their slavery into freedom, their oppression into rights.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat maror.

Blessed are You, Source of All Life, Spirit of the Universe, who has sanctified us through the commandments and instructed us concerning the eating of *maror*.

Eat the matzah and the maror together.

Charoset/Symbol of Mortar

The *charoset* evokes the mortar with which our ancestors were forced to build monuments to a system which oppressed them. As we eat the *charoset*, we consider the harsh working conditions of many modern day workers who, like the Israelites, work for a system that does not recognize or reward their labor. At the same time, as the taste of the *charoset* overpowers the *maror*, we are reminded that just as sweetness can overcome bitterness, freedom can overcome slavery. We pray that the year ahead will be filled more with the sweetness of *charoset* than with the bitterness of *maror*, with the victory of freedom over the harshness of injustice.

Eat the maror and charoset in a matzah sandwich, after the custom of Rabbi Hillel.

TEN PLAGUES: THE CHALLENGES OF A NON-UNION WORKPLACE

Just as our celebration of Passover is lessened by the plagues visited upon the Egyptians, so our celebration of labor and work is lessened by the hardships suffered by working men and women who lack union representation.

- 1. Low Wages:** Without unions, workers are often paid unfair wages that do not allow them to be self-sufficient and support their families.
- 2. Inadequate Health Care:** Without unions, employers often fail to provide workers and their families with health care, denying them a basic human right and burdening government and social service non-profits.
- 3. Lack of Training:** Without unions, workers often do not receive the training necessary for their jobs to be safe and productive and for them to advance in their workplaces.
- 4. Job Insecurity:** Without unions, workers often lack a standard work schedule and can be fired without cause.
- 5. Lack of Respect:** Without unions, managers and employers often fail to treat their workers with the dignity due those putting in an honest day's work.
- 6. Discrimination:** Without unions, workers often have inadequate protection against discrimination based on ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation.
- 7. Voicelessness:** Without unions, workers are often afraid to bring forward complaints about abusive or illegal labor practices and are unable to band together to make their voices heard.
- 8. Invisibility:** Without unions, we too often fail to notice the work of the construction workers on our highways, the cleaning people in our hotels, the janitors in our office buildings, and the thousands and thousands of other workers upon whose work we build our lives.
- 9. Workplace Injuries:** Without unions, many workers are seriously injured or maimed on the job each year.
- 10. Deaths:** Recent events in West Virginia remind us of the tragedies that occur every year in non-union workplaces: deaths that are preventable when employers follow basic safety standards.

The wine we have taken from our cups symbolizes the ways in which each of these plagues lessens our enjoyment of life. As we go about our lives, let us be mindful of the men and women who work around us, the sanctity of their hard work, and the struggles and hardships they face. Let us demand that jobs always pay a living wage, that job sites and workplaces be safe and healthy, and that employers respect the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively. And finally, let us remember the Passover story in the context of these struggles: We were freed from bondage in Egypt by the first successful organizing campaign in recorded history.

THE THIRD CUP OF WINE: WITH A MIGHTY HAND AND AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM ...

The Passover *seder* is an ordered ritual, telling a well-known story. But we live in a world less ordered, of stories too often ignored and unvoiced. Our ritual is incomplete if it ends with the story of our redemption from Egypt, if it does not compel us to action in the here and now. Tonight, we open our hands and our hearts to the stories of those who labor today, struggling quietly in our midst for equality and justice.

Solidarity Forever

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt, Andrea Foster, & Rob Levy

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun;
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one,
But the union makes us strong.

CHORUS:

Solidarity forever (x3)
For the union makes us strong.

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn
That the union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old
For the union makes us strong.

Speakers: Room attendant, Hotel X
Room attendant, Hotel Y
Temesgan Hagos, Shop Steward, UNITE HERE Local 27, Parking Service Workers' Union
Mark Fleishman, UNITE HERE

Discussion Questions

- ☞ How does society value the labor of others? What makes a job a “good job”? What kinds of work are under-valued?
- ☞ How can workers gain dignity in their workplace? What role do unions play in these struggles?

Blessing – Sanctification: The Third Cup of wine

Baruch atab Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha'gafen.

Blessed are You, Source of all Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

THE FOURTH CUP OF WINE

WHO WORKED TO BRING US THE MATZAH (AND THE WINE, AND THE TABLECLOTH, AND THE ...)?

Rabbi Israel Salanter would always take charge of the baking of his *matzot*. He supervised the kneading, the rolling of the dough, and the baking, making sure that everything was done properly. One year, before Passover, he became ill and couldn't go to the *matzah* bakery. His students went to supervise the *matzah* baking for him. They asked, "Rabbi, instruct us in what we must be most careful so that the *kasbrut* of the *Matzot* will meet your high standards." "If you want my *matzot* to be truly kosher for Passover, make sure the workers in the factory are treated well."

Ethical *Simchas*: Introduced by Joelle Novey and Eli Staub

For Rabbi Salanter, what is matzah about? Why do you think Rabbi Salanter thought that the way the workers were treated affected whether or not the matzah they made was "kosher for Passover"? Look at the matzah on the table. How many steps did it take, and how many working people do you think were involved, in this matzah coming "min ha'aretz" (from the earth) to this seder?

"Choose-Your-Own Had Gadya" (or, how did this _____ get here?)

Chorus: We bought *matzah* for two zuzim
Had gadya, Had gadya

I just bought a box of *matzah*
Got it at the mart
Where a cashier rang it up
After someone put on the shelf
After someone took it off the truck

Before that, a trucker picked it up
From the factory
After workers packed them in boxes
After bakers placed them in the stove

Before that, bakers kneaded the dough
With ingredients: water and flour
After flour came from a mill
After workers ground the wheat

Back on the farm, workers harvested the wheat
That grew in rows
that workers had to plow
from that seeds that had been sown
that had to get there somehow ...

Chorus: We bought _____ for two zuzim
Had gadya, Had gadya

I just bought a _____
Got it _____
Where _____ rang it up
After someone put on the shelf
After someone took it off the truck

Before that, _____
After _____
After _____

Before that, _____
After _____
After _____
that had to get there somehow ...

- ☞ *How can, we, like Rabbi Salanter, evaluate our food and other purchases with concern for workers in mind?*
- ☞ *Every purchase we make is an opportunity to be aware of the all the people whose work made that product possible. This Passover, we ask: How can we bring this mindfulness to our Jewish celebrations?*

Blessing – Sanctification: The Fourth Cup of Wine

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha'gafen.

Blessed are You, Source of all Life, Spirit of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

AFIKOMEN/DESSERT & NIRTZAH/ENDING

Building the Promised Land

“Who has found the afikomen?” we ask. The finders hold the *matzab* tight, determined to bargain. It’s a part of our lesson plan—this small rebellion. Each year we teach a new generation to resist bondage, to envision someplace better, to savor freedom, and to take responsibility for the journeys of their lives and their communities. As the seder comes to an end, we are all symbolically children, eating the afikomen and recommitting ourselves to the pursuit of justice.

Closing Comments: Avi Rosenblit, Jews United for Justice

If I Had a Hammer

Led by Cantor Charlie Bernhardt, Andrea Foster, & Rob Levy

If I had a hammer,
I’d hammer in the morning
I’d hammer in the evening, all over this land
I’d hammer out danger, I’d hammer out
warning
I’d hammer out love between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land

If I had a bell
I’d ring it in the morning
I’d ring it in the evening, all over this land
I’d ring out danger, I’d ring out warning
I’d ring out the love between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land

If I had a song
I’d sing it in the morning
I’d sing it in the evening, all over this land
I’d sing out danger, I’d sing out warning
I’d sing out the love between my brother and
my sisters
All over this land

Well, I’ve got a hammer,
And I’ve got a bell
And I’ve got a Song to sing all over this
land
It’s a hammer of justice, it’s a bell of
freedom
It’s a song about love between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land

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