



**COMMUNITY
PRIDE SEDER**
A Virtual Celebration of Queer Freedom

Monday June 22, 2020

PRIDE HAGGADAH



*The 50th anniversary of the
1st Bay Area Pride Parade*

Created and led by



With support from



Leaders: Kadesh – Sanctification



When you hear the words “Pride Seder” you might think “A Seder is for Passover!” In the 17th century the Kabbalists in Safed created a Seder for Tu B’Shevat, the New Year of the Trees. And it says in the Talmud that at the New Year we should eat foods that grow abundantly, like pumpkins, beans, leeks, beets, and dates. To this day some communities hold a Seder on the first night of Rosh Hashanah which includes those foods.

So even if there were no other Seders, it would be entirely appropriate for LGBTQ Jews to create a ritual meal to celebrate our liberation from Mizrayim, The Narrow Place of exclusion and oppression, as we’ve been doing at Sha’ar Zahav since 2005.

Some elements of this Seder will be familiar. There’s a Seder plate, with different items on it than those found at Passover. We’ll drink several glasses of water, not wine, because it’s the source of life, and in solidarity with those in recovery. At traditional Seders we wash our hands. Because Queer Jews have been told for so long that we’re impure, tonight there will be no ritual hand washing, to affirm that we come to this table whole and pure. At Passover a piece of matzah – the afikomen – is broken in two and half is hidden to be found later. At this Seder there will be no afikomen. We, our lives, and our stories, were hidden for too long. Tonight, as we mark the 50th anniversary of the first San Francisco Pride Parade, we sit together in community, out, free, and proud. So come, sit, and join us for this Seder of Freedom. Chag Sameach!

1st Reader: The Rainbow Candles

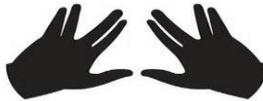


We begin our Seder, not by lighting these rainbow candles but by letting them stand unlit, in all their radiant potential. Rainbow candles – a symbol of who we are in our different queer clans, and a symbol of the full spectrum of the Jewish community, from Orthodox to Humanistic, Ethiopian to Burmese Jews, and of everyone who is now working for inclusion, here and around the world.

2nd Reader: We invite you to close your eyes and breathe in the primal light that filled the universe before ever there were suns or stars. Now open your eyes again and let us recite together the traditional blessing said upon seeing a rainbow.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam, zokair habrit veneman brito, vekayam bemaamaro.

Bountiful are You, Eternal our God, ruler of the universe, who remembers the covenant, is faithful to Your covenant, and keeps Your promise.



Leaders: On this night that is different from other nights, let's recite our traditional words of celebration:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam, shehechianu, vekiymanu, vehigianu, lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us in life, and preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.

Leaders: We will now explore the meaning of the symbols on our Seder plates.

3rd Reader: An Uncovered Challah



The uncovered challah reminds us of the sensuous sacredness of our own bodies, and that the physical world, which includes our bodies, is holy too. We acknowledge the deep spiritual nourishment of physical connection, as we are being kept apart from it in this time.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam
hamotzi lechem min haaretz
Blessed are You, Eternal our God, ruler of the
Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.*



Leaders: One way in which this Seder is unlike any other Seder is that you don't have to wait to eat. Please eat as we're reading and talking. And enjoy your meal.

4th Reader: A Pink Triangle

Under the Nazis, homosexuals wore pink triangles in the work camps, as Jews wore yellow stars. Today, some queer people have turned what was a badge of shame and a mark of death into a badge of honor, resistance, and identity.

Blessed are those who have been marked, in all times and all places. May they always be remembered, through us and through our lives.

5th Reader: A Bundle of Sticks – the Faggot

To remind us of the men, bound together and burned at the stake for their love of one another, and of the burning of women called witches, because they chose to live their lives outside the realm of the patriarchy, and by extension, everyone who is now oppressed, anywhere and everywhere.

Cursed is the flame that destroys, that kills. May it be snuffed out forever. And blessed are all of our siblings who died in years past. May their memories be a blessing, even if we do not know their names.

6th Reader: Bricks and Stones

The bricks thrown at the police at Stonewall, remind us of these words from Psalm 118: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” and we ask what stones we’ve rejected. We remember the Western Wall of the Temple, which has stood through centuries of triumph and tears. If you have any stones, jiggle them in your hand as we ask ourselves: What walls must we build anew, what walls must we tear down?

In Egypt we made bricks as slaves. At Stonewall we used bricks to free ourselves. Blessed is the spirit of freedom and blessed is the One who moves us to free ourselves. Blessed are the bricks and stones, of Earth and from Earth, given voice by our actions.

7th Reader: A Cup of Coffee



Before Stonewall there were several earlier protests, led by trans people, at Cooper’s Donuts in LA in 1959, and in San Francisco at Compton’s Cafeteria in 1966, where in response to violence, coffee cups were thrown at the police. At Passover we pour cups of wine for Elijah and

Miriam. Tonight we pour a cup of coffee to honor our heroes, past, present, and future. Coffee beans are the seeds in the fruit of the coffee tree, so inhale the aroma as we recite the blessing said over fruit:

*Baruch ata Adonai Elohenu melech haolam, borei pri haetz.
Praised are You, our Eternal God, ruler of the Universe, Who creates the
fruit of the tree.*

8th Reader: A Feather

In this strange, strange time, when we are living in a way that we have never lived before, sealed away from each other, meeting on screens, let us remember hope, let us remember movement, let us remember the way that birds are still flying overhead, inviting us to return to the world again one day, free. Rub the feather on your skin, and together, as a flock of dreamers, let us recite these words:

*Bountiful are you, Eternal Mother-Parent-Father, who invited
Noah to send out birds from the ark
in which he and his family were sealed away,
those birds which call out – hope, hope, hope.
To them. To us. For now and for all times.*

Leaders: We will now be divided into breakout groups. Each group will have a facilitator and we will all come back together in about 10 minutes.

Leaders: The Four Questions

The four questions we ask at Passover begin with: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” Tonight, we will ask four different questions.

9th Reader: Why are we different from all other people?

We are different from all other people because we come from every other people. Hitler could have killed all the Jews in the world, but if another Hitler were to rise up tomorrow who sought to kill all the LGBTQ people in the world, his solution would fail, for we are born into every family, nation, faith, on every part of the planet.

10th Reader: What is our sacred role?

Because we come from all other peoples, we are bridge-builders and connectors. Because we live our lives in many different ways, between genders and sexes and varied ways of loving, we stand at the doorway of Possibility, and it is from this that we derive our sacred role in the world.

11th Reader: How are we the same as all other people?

We bleed as all people bleed, and we love and laugh and cry and sing as do all human beings. We want what everyone wants – peace and prosperity, freedom and equality, families and communities. Before we are transgender, bisexual, intersex, lesbian, gay, we are human, and we share our humanity with everyone in the world.

12th Reader: What is our story?



We were once slaves of our own people, left out of our people's story. We were unseen, hated, called an abomination worthy of death. But with mighty hands and outstretched arms, we have taken control of our destinies. Had our ancestors at Stonewall and other protests not begun

our liberation, we and those who follow us might still be enslaved to the pharaohs of the present.

13th Reader: So even if all of us were endowed with wisdom and were thoroughly versed in the Torah, it would still be our duty to tell of our movement toward rights, inclusion, and freedom from oppression in the Narrow Place. We cannot tell it all, cannot name all the names of the people who led us out of oppression and into Freedom. But for each tale we tell, others shimmer behind them. And for each name that we remember, others call out from the past. May all who are hungry for this story come and listen. For to dwell on the story of our liberation is indeed praiseworthy and part of the journey toward freedom for everyone.



Leaders: The First Cup

This cup is for the past. The water in this cup is clear, to remind us of our long historical invisibility. We drink tonight to those who were left out of the stories of our people. We drink to those who labored to restore their memories. And we drink to those who did not live to see this moment, knowing that we're part of a chain of generations who will not complete the work, but are still obliged to continue it.

*Brucha at-Shechinah, Yo-tzer-et ha-olam
Bo-reit ma-yim cha-yim.
Blessed are you, Shechinah, Creator of the
Universe, Who made living waters.*

Leaders: 🎵 All the World is a Narrow Bridge

Reb Nachman of Bratzlav

*Kol ha'olam kulo, gesher tzar meod,
v'haikar lo l'fached klal.
All the world is a narrow bridge, and
the essential thing is to not succumb to fear.*



Leaders: The Second Cup

This cup is for those who fought back. The water in this cup is strong enough to carve great canyons from solid rock. The water of this cup gave our people the courage to rise up at Stonewall and other places. We drink this cup to remember them and be inspired by them. As we drink in this cup we take in its power.

*Brucha at-Shechinah, Yo-tzer-et ha-olam
Bo-reit ma-yim cha-yim.
Blessed are you, Shechinah, Creator of the
Universe, Who made living waters.*



Leaders: The Third Cup

Like rain, like streams, like rivers flowing toward the sea, the water of this cup is about change, about movement, about transformation. This is the cup we drink to honor what we are doing in our lives right now. We take it into ourselves and merge with its fluid creativity, for life began in water and we are mostly water ourselves.

*Brucha at-Shechinah, Yo-tzer-et ha-olam
Bo-reit ma-yim cha-yim.
Blessed are you, Shechinah, Creator of the
Universe, Who made living waters.*

Leaders: 🎵 **Sing to God a New Song** - Psalm 96:1

*Shiru l'Adonai shir chadash.
Shiru l'Adonai kol ha'arets.
Shiru l'Adonai barchu shemo.*

Basru m'yom l'yom yeshuato.

Sing to the Eternal, Sing a new song.
Sing to the Eternal, all across the land.
Sing to the Eternal. Bless the Eternal's name.
Sing every day of the Eternal's salvation.



Leaders: The Fourth Cup

This cup is for those yet to come. The water in this cup is clear, but this isn't the cup of invisibility. It's a cup that holds clarity of sight, clear hearts, clear minds, clear action. Let all who are thirsty come and drink.

*Brucha at-Shechinah, Yo-tzer-et ha-olam
Bo-reit ma-yim cha-yim.
Blessed are you, Shechinah, Creator of the
Universe, Who made living waters.*

Leaders: For another 10 minutes we will be divided into facilitated breakout groups, and then we'll come back together for the conclusion of our Pride Seder.

Leaders: We will now continue our Seder with the Birkat HaMazon, the Grace after Meals.

14th Reader: Birkat

In the ancient Grace after Meals we say: "Blessed are you, Eternal One, Creator of the universe, who feeds the world with Your goodness, with grace, with loving kindness and tender mercy. You give food to all flesh, and Your loving kindness endures forever." We say these words knowing that many people, including our people, Jewish and queer, have often lacked food, comfort, safety, and spiritual sustenance. But we say these words, after telling our stories and sharing this meal, with a commitment

to do our part to make them true. As we have been given food and drink, may all who are hungry and thirsty be nourished, in body and in spirit, through Your bounty and through our actions. And let us say: Amen.

Leaders: ♪ *B'rich rachamana malka d'alma
ma-reh d'hai pi'ta.*

*You are the Source of Life for all that is,
and Your blessing flows through me.*

15^h Reader: Nirtzah: Conclusion

At Passover we open our doors to Elijah. Tonight our doors are open to everyone, in this mystical way, and we are gathered here, out and proud. We are the teachers and prophets the world has been waiting for. Let us reach out hands, energetically, so that all of us are joined together in sacred touch. Let us breathe together for a moment in silence and feel the blessings of who we are flow through us.



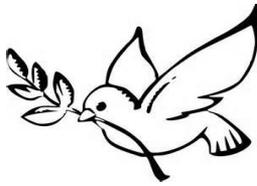
Everyone: The Seal of Completion

Though neither the work nor the remembering
will ever be finished in our lifespan,
we have completed this Seder.

May our words here tonight
have meaning throughout the coming year;
may all of us feel a deep sense of pride
when the calendar next swings to the end of June.
May we recognize that liberation is not a destination,

but an on-going labor of love,
and that no one is free until everyone is free.
May it be so, speedily and soon, and let us say,
'Next year in...'
Not next year, but: 'Now.'
Not anywhere else, but here and now,
everywhere and always.'

Amen. Amen. Selah.



Leaders: It's an old Sha'ar Zahav tradition at the end of a service for everyone to rise, link arms, and join together in song. We began doing this in the years when we were a new community, in a time when it was dangerous for people like us to touch in public, as it still is in many places in the world. But in our own community, reaching out to touch each other was a powerful form of healing and an affirmation of who we are and about the ways that we're all connected. So please rise as you are able and joyously reach out your arms across your screen, and, linked together in this way, soulfully and energetically, please join us in our closing song.

♪ **Oseh Shalom**

Oseh shalom bimromav
Hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu
Ve'al kol yisrael / Ve'al kol ha'olam
Ve'imru Amen

The One who makes peace in the high places
Shall make peace upon us
And upon all Israel / upon all the world
And say Amen

The Story of this Seder and Haggadah

In July 1995 at the 6th Aleph Kallah in Colorado there was a meeting of the “Gay and Lesbian Mishpocha.” Ray Schnitzler brought copies of the Berkeley Queer Minyan’s “Queer Pride Seder,” written with Susie Kisber. Mark Horn brought a copy back to the Gay and Lesbian Committee of B’nai Jeshurun in New York, and wrote a text unique to B’nai Jeshurun, using elements of the Berkeley Haggadah. That text, “The Stonewall Shabbat Seder,” was first used in 1996 at a Seder held on the Shabbat before Gay Pride Day in New York.

Mark Horn gave a copy of that text to Andrew Ramer. In 2004 he gave copies to Rabbi Angel and Joss Eldredge, a member of Sha’ar Zahav’s Queer Torah Study Project, who began writing a Haggadah based on it for use at CSZ. She shared her work with Andrew, and with guidance from Rabbi Angel they created an expanded text for CSZ. Then a call was put out and many members responded with words that were used for the first CSZ Pride Freedom Seder in 2005. Over time texts were edited and passed back and forth between Ramer and Horn so many times that it’s often impossible to know who wrote what.

The text we read tonight has been edited and condensed from previous versions. This year we added one new item to the Seder plate, a feather. With thanks to everyone whose work shaped and reshaped this Haggadah over the years, and to everyone who helped to create and manifest this Seder. And we thank all of our tribe, known and unknown, who had the vision, strength, and courage to leave the Narrow Place in order to claim our seats at the Jewish table.

For permission to reprint anything in this Haggadah, please contact:

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav,
290 Dolores Street, San Francisco CA 94103
(415) 861-6932 sharonh @ shaarzahav.org

