



FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA

A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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A Passover Covenant

I have used the following covenant to guide my decisions about crafting the following Passover Haggadah. The following text was adapted from the Unitarian Universalist principles, the charter of the United Nations, and the five mindfulness trainings that inform my spiritual life.

I take seriously the charge to be a “spiritual leader” of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia and therefore covenant...

- To affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every being;
- To promote conscience, equity, and compassion in all my relations;
- To accept others and to encourage their intellectual, moral, and spiritual potential;
- To promote the right to a free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- To help build a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- To respect the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part;
- To remain determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

I am therefore determined...

- To keep succeeding generations from the scourge of war and poverty;
- To reaffirm fundamental human rights by promoting better standards of life for all;
- To prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species;
- To cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking and consuming;
- To ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society.

And for these ends, the promise of affirming life is made real when dedicating my life

- To practicing deep listening and loving speech;
- To seek ways to live in peace as good neighbors;
- To deepen my own understanding of the transcending mystery and wonder that creates and upholds life which is affirmed in all cultures.

I have finally resolved

- To acknowledge the limitations of my own knowledge;
- To embrace ambiguity with dignity; and
- To promote wholeness, in all our relations, in the name of all that is holy.

In peace,

Rev. Nate



A Freedom Passover Seder

First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia
April 10, 2009



Opening Words

In this season of wholeness we gather to reflect upon the Passover tradition, a Jewish festival commemorating when Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity. Passover is an eight-day celebration that begins with a Seder, “a ritual meal that reenacts that ancient deliverance and emphasizes the freedom of the Jews under the guidance of God” (Kariuki 2005). The term *Passover* derives from passages in the Book of Exodus where “the angel *passed over* the homes of the Jews which were marked with the blood obtained from ritual animal-sacrifices. The same angel murdered the first-born son and first-born animals of every Egyptian family whose doorway was not so marked” (Robinson 2007).

Aware that we derive from traditions that were born of violence, slavery and persecution; aware that we derive from legends that promote retribution through violence; we gather on this holy day to reflect upon the meaning of *true freedom*.

We seek to understand the meaning of true freedom by reflecting upon patterns of enslavement and violence in our lives in our way of thinking. We embody the essence of true freedom by intentionally decorating this table with items that promote and affirm wholeness. We do so by telling stories of our own liberation from enslavement and express our hopes for a world community with equality and liberty for all. We do so by beginning our Seder by collectively dedicating our chalice. Together we say,

May the light we now kindle
Inspire us to use our powers
To heal and not to harm,
To help and not to hinder,
To bless and not to curse,
To serve you, Spirit of Freedom.

Passover Haggadah, #453
Singing the Living Tradition

Opening Reading

The following words come from the Torah – Song of Songs: “Rise Up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.”

Our Freedom Table

Traditionally the Seder plate is complete with

- a roasted bone (Zeroah) symbolizing the animal sacrifices the Israelites made to God before they left Egypt – as a community whose rituals symbolize peace, this evening we use a roasted root vegetable;
- a roasted egg (Baytzah) is traditionally a symbol of new life and used to remember the offerings made in the Temple of Jerusalem – as a community dedicated to honor all species, we use a decorated egg with seeds inside;
- a mixture of fruit and nuts (Horoset) represents the mortar used while the Jews were enslaved;
- bitter herbs (Maror) symbolizes the bitterness endured by the Jews during slavery and parsley reminds us of the meager diet of the Israelites while in bondage.

Aware that many of us, our families members, and ancestors have been enslaved by addictions such as alcoholism, we replace wine with juices and ciders that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in our bodies and in our consciousness. Together we gather around a table free from patterns of enslavement. Just as we are set free by our practice of mindful consumption so are we collectively emancipated by practices that cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for ourselves, our family, and our society.

Before we begin we open our hearts to one another to discuss any questions we may have about our Freedom Seder. *(Once ready open the Seder with the following song.)*

Opening Song

We'll build a land where we bind up the broken.
We'll build a land where the captives go free,
Where the oil of gladness dissolves all mourning.
Oh, we'll build a promised land that can be.

Come build a land where sisters and brothers,
Anointed by God, may then create peace:
Where justice shall roll down like waters,
And peace like and an ever flowing stream.

*The following text was adapted from the
“UU Haggadah” prepared by Reverend Elizabeth Putnam*

Kiddush

Baruch atah adonai, elohenu melech haolam, borey pr'I hagafen. Blessed are you, O God, who brings forth the fruit of the vine.

The First Cup:

Blessed are you who have kept us alive, sustained us, and permitted us to reach this season. *(All drink the first cup.)*

Washing the Hands

Blessed are you, spirit of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us to wash our hands. *(Dip fingers in water and wipe them.)*

Parsley

We are blessed with the fruit of the earth. This green herb symbolizes the coming of spring, and the renewal of life and hope. *(Dip parsley in salt water and eat.)*

Ahvikomen and the Breaking the Matzah

(Break the middle matzah in two and hide one half for the Afikomen. Raise the matzah plate and recite the blessing.) This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy come and celebrate this freedom meal. Now we celebrate it here; next year may we be in a promised land – a place of peace, nourishment, and safety. Now, however, we are still enslaved by systems of domination by patterns of conquest and war. Together, may we build a land where next year may we all be free!

What is this land?

In traditional Passover Meals we say, “next year may we be in Jerusalem.” What is the land of Israel? It is an ideal of liberty rather than a specific place. My Israel is not a country. Even if we performed this ritual in Jerusalem, we would still say “Next year in Jerusalem, next year in the city of peace.” For where ever we are, we are not yet free of war, of hatred, of injustice. Division and agony thrive. Someday we hope to see all creation celebrate in a land dedicated to wholeness.

The Four Questions:

The youngest present is invited to ask:

- Why is this night different from all other nights?
- On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why, on this night, only unleavened bread?
- On all other nights, we eat herbs of any kind; why, on this night, only bitter herbs?
- On all other nights, we do not dip our herbs even once; why, on this night, do we dip them twice?

An Elder's Reflections

(Uncover the matzah and begin the reply.) If a child asks these questions explain the traditions of the Passover and your own interpretations of the meaning of *true freedom*. Discuss with her the nature of peace and justice so that she may begin to work out her own ideas on the meaning of our living tradition. If a child asks, what is the meaning of this service to you? Answer honestly and with integrity and tell stories of your own emancipation from bondage. If a child asks, what is this tradition about? Speak candidly and with compassion about the cycles of suffering caused by destructive practices. For the child who is too young to ask, tell the stories of freedom through song and through art. Show that out of pain there is hope; out of sorrow and slavery comes life and joy. And together each generation may discern ways to embody principles of true freedom, not only as an act of devotion but as a way of life.

Freedom Stories

(All invited to briefly share a story of freedom from your lives.)

Hymn

We'll build a land where we bring the good tidings
To all the afflicted and all those who mourn.
And we'll give them garlands instead of ashes.
Oh we'll build a land where peace is born.

Come build a land where sisters and brothers,
Anointed by God, may then create peace:
Where justice shall roll down like waters,
And peace like an ever flowing stream.

The Second Cup

(Raise the Cup) We speak of the Israelite's departure from Egypt because we all know that in this life and in every generation it has been necessary to seek liberation. In our collective memory the world has experienced suffering in epic and gruesome chapters. Including, but not unfortunately restricted to, the death of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and many others in the Holocaust; the deaths in the atomic blasts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; in the killing fields of Cambodia and the streets of Rwanda and in the Sudan; and the millions dead and dying around the world from HIV/AIDS; and the wars in the Middle East seem to blind us to gestures of peace. We treasure heroic resistance, from the Warsaw Ghetto, to the Montgomery bus boycott, the Stonewall Bar resisters and those who continue to resist all over the world. May we draw upon the strength of leaders from every tribe, every nation, every religion that has prophetically witnessed for peace.

Sprinkling of Water on Crafted Egg

Our Seder plate contains a colorful egg symbolizing of the force of life eternal, of renewal, and of the springtime in which this holiday is so joyously celebrated. Others say the egg is a symbol of the Jewish people and their strong spirit; for an egg is the only food that, when subjected to the cooking fire, grows harder rather than softer. We sprinkle the egg with salt water to remind us once again of the ever-present mixture of life and death, of joy and tears, of plenty and suffering.

The Ten Plagues

We spill water from our cups in recounting the plagues, because it is incumbent on us to reduce our pleasure as we remember the sufferings of the Egyptians. Tradition tells us that when the angels rejoiced in the drowning of Pharaoh's army, God rebuked them, saying, "Are not these my people also, and the work of my hands?" No matter how high the cause, we grieve for all those on all sides whose lives are disrupted or destroyed in the struggle – whether in Israel or Palestine, or their all to common equivalents around the shrinking globe.

Spill a drop of water for each plague as they are name:

Blood	Dam
Frogs	Tz'fardeyah
Vermin	Pinim
Beasts	Arov
Cattle Disease	Dever
Boils	Sh'khin
Hail	Barar
Locusts	Arbeh
Darkness	Choshech
Slaying of the First-Born	Machat b'chorot

Thus were our ancestors redeemed from slavery. But Pharaoh changed his heart, and hastened after the departing Israelites with his army. At the shore of the Red Sea, Moses stretched forth his hand, and the waters parted, and the children of Israel walked across upon dry land. The Egyptians tried to pursue them, but the waters returned and covered the chariots, and all the host of Pharaoh were drowned.

And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Moses and Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dances. And Miriam sang unto them: “Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

Song: Dayenu

Ilu hotzi, hotzianu, hotzianu mi-Mitzraim, hotzianu mi-Mitzraim, DAYENU.
Ilu natan, natan lanu, natan lanu et-hashabat, natan lanu et-hashabat, DAYENU.
Ilu natan, natan lanu, natan lanu et-hatorah, natan lanu et-hatorah, DAYENU.
Ilu hichni, hichnisanu, hichnisanu l’eretz Yisrael, hichnisanu l’eretz Yisrael, DAYENU.

Da-da-ye-nu, Da-da-ye-nu, Da-da-ye-nu, Da-ye-nu, Da-ye-nu,

Translation:

*Had he brought us out of Egypt, only brought us out of Egypt, It would have been enough!
Had he given us the Sabbath, only given us the Sabbath, It would have been enough!
Had he given us the Torah, only given us the Torah, It would have been enough!
Had he brought us into Israel, only brought us into Israel, It would have been enough!*

One of the greatest prophets in the modern era, whose death occurred around the season of Passover, was Martin Luther King Jr., who said “‘the old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind.’ It destroys community and creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers... So we will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will not hate you, but we cannot in good conscience obey your unjust laws. And in winning our freedom, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.”

Together we call out the ten plagues in human history:

1. the making of war
2. the teaching of hate and violence
3. despoliation of the earth
4. perversion of justice and of government
5. fomenting of vice and crime
6. neglect of human needs
7. oppression of nations and peoples
8. corruptions of democracy
9. subjugation of science, learning and human discourse
10. and erosion of freedoms

The Third Cup

(Raise the third cup and drink after the blessing.) Let us raise our cup for a blessing of solidarity: a unity of every generation, of every tribe and nation sate. For we recognized that throughout human history we are both the oppressor and the oppressed, we are the persecutors and the persecuted, we are ones who banished and ones who have been exiled. The story of Exodus is the story in which we are all apart. With humility we now bless the matzah.

Blessing the Matzah

(All take a piece of matzah and eat after the blessing.) Praised be the divine in all things and beings and the essence of all that which gives birth to and sustains life.

Hymn

We'll be a land building up ancient cities
Raising up devastations from old;
Restoring ruins of generations.
Oh we'll build a land of people so bold.

Come build a land where sisters and brothers,
Anointed by God, may then create peace:
Where justice shall roll down like waters,
And peace like an ever flowing stream.

Bitter Herbs

(All dip some herbs in charoset, and eat after the blessing.) Blessed are those who hands tended to the bitter herbs. For we use these herbs to symbolize how the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Israelites with hard labor, forcing them to make bricks without straw, and to so all manner of toil in the field.

Begin the Hunt for the Afikomen

(Call the children who will be hunting for the afikomen, the piece of broken matzah hidden at the start of the Seder, and have them begin looking. The Seder cannot finish until it is found and restored, and the hunt can take some time. Continue with the other parts until the afikomen is found, if it is not found before the rejoining part of the Seder, then everything should pause until it is found. Let the kids know that this is a crucial part of the Seder, so they understand that they are doing something important for the group while they hunt.)

The Cup of Elijah and Miriam

(Lights are dimmed and the door is opened.) This fourth cup is called Elijah's cup. In Jewish tradition, the prophet Elijah is the messenger who will herald the era of the Messiah, the time of justice and perfect happiness, when all people shall be free. A place is set of Elijah, that he might join us. Next to Elijah's cup on our table is a glass of water. This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of the living waters. These are God's gift to Miriam, which gave new life to Israel as they struggled in the wilderness. We open our doors and our hearts in the hope of the coming of Elijah and Miriam. Elijah the Prophet, come to us soon. Bring us justice and freedom. Miriam, come to us soon. Dance with us to heal the world.

Song

Eliahu hanavi Eliahu Hatishbi Eliahu Eliahu Eliahu ha
Giladi Bimherah biyamenu yavo aylaynu im
Mashich ben David Im Mashiach ben David.

The Afikomen

(When the afikomen is found, the children should bring it forward. Rona will take it and the other half that has stayed during the Seder, and raises both arms over head so that all can see, and rejoins the halves, while saying the following.)

What is broken shall be made whole; what is shattered shall be restored. Our hope is to find what is lost, to bring together what has scattered, to heal the world.

Closing Words

Now we have concluded our freedom ceremony that drew upon Jewish customs that affirm wholeness. As we have lived to be with one another this evening, may we live to celebrate it in the future. May all who have triumphed over adversity rejoice, and may all whose trials continue find hope and comfort our benediction:

ALL: Next year in the Promised Land!

Closing Hymn

Come, build a land where the mantles of praises
Resound from spirits once faint and once weak;
Where like oaks of righteousness stand her people.
Oh come build a land, my people we seek.
Come build a land where sisters and brothers,
Anointed by God, may then create peace:
Where justice shall roll down like waters,
And peace like an ever flowing stream.

Freedom Meal

(Rejoice in the food prepared for us this day, this day of freedom. Please keep chalice burning throughout the evening.)

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