

PASSOVER

FOUR CUPS TOWARD FREEDOM



EXPLORATION OF LIBERATION AND HOW TO
RECLAIM THE PASSOVER SEDER FOR OURSELVES



PASSOVER IS A HOLIDAY OF RECOVERY.

Leaving Egypt is not just about our story and journey on the road to freedom. It is a foundational roadmap to liberation, both for a community and individuals and offers us a story of recovery. Each year, we retell it as a reminder to leave behind constrictions and slavery, and instead choose freedom and sovereignty.

Jewish tradition commands us, as we are telling the story, to see ourselves as if we have left Egypt. Egypt is not just a country, an ancient place, or a space. It is not just the setting of the enslavement that we've endured. It is also an edict about how we leave Egypt internally.

The word for Egypt (Mitzrayim) in Hebrew also means straits or a narrow place – a space that oppresses us. When Moses kills the Egyptian, he may have killed the real person, but he most certainly has killed the Egypt in him – the Metzgeri, that which oppresses him from the inside. Every Passover we are resetting our intention and our commitment to recovery, freedom, action, and personal sovereignty. Our Torah is an immersive experience.

We must not just read the story, but ask ourselves, "How am I leaving Egypt today?" It is imperative that each of us find our own independence and choose freedom and recovery.

Leaving Egypt is the journey and leads to the actions we must take to find freedom. It starts with awareness, a yearly reminder to take inventory.

We ask:

- What am I enslaved to?
- What am I choosing to leave behind?
- What is oppressing me?

Then with the awareness, we actively make choices and engage in the discipline to return to our true essence – the best version of ourselves. Passover gives us the opportunity to clear ourselves of fermented, embellished, and puffed-up egos. We get rid of the chametz (leaven) so that we can rediscover the core values of who we are.

As we move towards freedom, we will encounter many challenges and obstacles, but the seed of freedom has been planted. The darkness we leave behind in Egypt means that we are inching toward the light. We must make our way towards revelation and, finally, the Promised Land.

Rabbi Igaël Gurin-Malous and the T'Shuvah Center Team

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During the Passover seder, it is customary and a part of our spiritual choreography to drink four cups of wine, corresponding to the four different expressions of freedom by G-d mentioned in the Torah. These four cups were enacted by the Rabbis of the Talmud as a means of derekh herut - a path to freedom. The essential nature of this practice is related to opening ourselves to a sense of freedom and possibility, not drunkenness (Pesachim 118a).

This year, we invite you and those around you to focus on this path toward freedom with five reflective experiences - one for each pause in the seder related to the cups.

May we be blessed with a renewed sense of liberation and companionship on our path toward freedom together.

First Cup **Kiddush | Sanctify**

The word 'kiddush' is built from the root word 'kadesh' in Hebrew, which means both to sanctify and separate. By reciting kiddush, we elevate something as uniquely sacred. With our first cup, we are invited to reflect on our 'before's and 'after's this year.

Prompt:

What are some of the most significant moments of transition for you this year? What were some of the markers of these changes? What can you designate as "holy" with hindsight"?

Second Cup **Haggadah | Telling**

In Proverbs 12:25, we learn, "If there is anxiety in a person's mind let them quash it, And turn it into joy with a good word." We know that there is power in sharing our experiences with others and having them reflect back our truth. Telling our stories and engaging with our truth cultivates a sense of both authenticity and connection. This cup invites us to think about the practice of storytelling.

Prompt:

What have I learned this year about myself? What stories do I want to share about my journey with those around me?

**Third Cup
Birkat HaMazon | Blessing
the Meal**

At this point in the seder's narrative, the Jewish people have been freed from slavery and experience a journey toward a new sense of self. So too, we focus now on what brings us nourishment and sustenance.

Prompt:

How might you sustain yourself as you continue to pursue liberation this year? What are the values you want to prioritize and hold dear?

**Fourth Cup
Hallel | Praise**

In talmud Taanit 26a, we learn "We recite Hallel only on a satisfied soul and a full stomach." During this moment in the seder, we express gratitude for the journey that occurred - both inward and outward.

Prompt:

In what ways do I tend to express gratitude? What is a gratitude practice that you would like to cultivate? What are you grateful for from yesterday, and now for today?

**Fifth Cup: Aspirational
Geulah | Redemption**

We add in a fifth cup that leans toward redemption.

Prompt:

In what ways can you set yourself up next year to feel holy, seen, liberated, and grateful? How might the people in your life support you?

