



A PASSOVER SEDER™



A Passover Seder™



IN PREPARATION FOR A PASSOVER SEDER™

Before the Seder™ do what you would have otherwise were there not going to be a Seder™. Remember that in other lands (indeed, even in this land) people still believe in God™. Try to watch 'National Geographic™' reruns on television. Keep all food prep under 15 minutes when cooking for the Passover, as if they were *coming for you* and you had to get away fast. If you cannot prepare your food quickly, place it in a satchel and go to sleep. Have a burly friend break down your door in the dead of night and attempt to take you away. Evade this friend, grab the satchel, dash from your house, arrive at the Seder™.

A Note On Pronunciation:

Please do not pronounce the ™s after many words in the Seder. They are there to reflect the Seder's acknowledgement of a growing corporatism that has overrun most aspects of our culture. Please acknowledge them and harden yourself against them.

A Note On Irony:

Irony is deadly. Using irony ironically can maybe work, sometimes, but it feels more and more to me like a postmodern way to avoid responsibility for anything said or thought. Feel free

to say “Hence The Irony” after prayers for the sake of nostalgia, or to express the irony that by being so “sacreligious” we are having a communal ritual experience, but also feel free to say anything else that you’d like there, much the same way that the word (God) is treated elsewhere.

A Happy Note:

The use of pronouns is permitted at The Passover Seder.

The Last, Yet Still Very Important Note:

All text in ***bold italics*** is meant to be read only if the Seder happens to fall on Friday the 13th.

ORDER OF A SEDER™

1. The First Cup
2. Dirty, Dirty, Dirty
3. Get Green
4. The Second Cup
5. Fragmentation
6. A Passover Story
7. Self-Sacrifice
8. Hillel, or Make Your Own Passover Story
9. The Fourth Cup
10. The Festival Meal

THE FIRST CUP

All read:

Thank you, (God™), for providing us this weed. ***Yo! That’s some crazy shit, dude! I smoked that shit once, I saw demons. No shit! Demons!*** With it we can forget things that we need help forgetting. With it we may gain the necessary distance to keep our lives in a sort of order. With it, we may make prettier things, and think they are much prettier than they actually are. We will try not

to smoke it all the time and forget about You, but You have given us pleasure without guilt and for that You have fallen by the way-side. You probably should have had the foresight to make it act in a way that makes You prettier also. Though, on further reflection, there have got to be some people out there who do believe. So let us say, 'Hence The Irony!'



Leaning on the left side, smoke the joint.

DIRTY, DIRTY, DIRTY

Wash your hands but do not say the blessing.

Fill the second cup.

GET GREEN

The 'master' of the 'house' takes a bit of parsley and dips it in some salt water and distributes it to everyone at the table. Before eating the parsley, say this prayer:

Thank you, (God™), for providing us this vegetable. Sorry about fucking up the Earth so badly, but we had shit to do. **Like, feed brains to our cows, for example.** But let's not talk about that right now, okay, and let us say, (Hence the Irony!)

THE SECOND CUP

All read:

Thank you, (God™), for providing us this wine. With it, we can reduce the inhibitions that we usually feel around each other. With it we can say things which we would ordinarily never say and do things which we would ordinarily have far too much self-consciousness to do. With it we can both say and do these things and not regret it until the next morning, if we are unfortunate enough to remember them at all. And let us say, (Hence the Irony!)

Drink The Second Cup

FRAGMENTATION

The 'master' of the 'house' breaks the middle matzah in the plate. He leaves half of it there and excuses himself to the bathroom. Maybe, just maybe, he's hiding the other half, and maybe, just maybe, if anyone can find it after the meal has been eaten, they will win a special prize.

Fill the Third Cup

A book says that many years ago, the Jews™ were slaves in Egypt. The book we are reading tonight is a translation of a Haggadah prepared by the Ktav Publishing House in New York City in 1949. That book is a translation of the story of the Exodus in the Bible, a story about Jew-persecution and Jew-flight. Our translation is an attempt to reassemble fragments handed down through history and piece them together into a new whole that we can better understand.

A book says that many years ago, the Jews™ were slaves in Egypt. Like most other rituals in the tradition, the Passover ritual celebrates the survival of the Jews™. Unlike many, it is also time to kick back, recline, and get wasted. As the ritual starts we imagine ourselves as slaves and we are liberated through the recitation of the story.

A book says that many years ago, the Jews™ were slaves in Egypt. To live in New York in the twenty-first century is to be dwarfed by information, saturated by advertising, constantly choking back the gag reflex of one's own skepticism. If we have rejected the belief systems of our parents and the television and the culture at large, and the 'alternative culture' is an invention of media systems to create better consumers, what can we do? Can we escape from the tyranny of being unable to truly believe in anything but our own selves, the slavery of digging a solipsistic hole lined with the smooth-sounding velvet of our own bullshit? If so, we must rewrite the story and take control, together. We begin the recitation of our story of the Jews™ when the youngest person sitting at the table recites a series of four questions.



THE FOUR QUESTIONS

On all other nights, we may drink, smoke pot, do our homework, watch teevee, recover from another miserable day in capitalism, try to rationalize our lack of moral fiber, or surf the gleaming roads of the information superhighway, baby. Tonight we sit around a table with a bunch of people who we might or might not know, enacting a ritual which many of us have never participated in before. What are we doing here?

On all other nights, we can eat bread if we want to. Tonight we are obligated to eat matzah instead. Sup wit dat?

On all other nights, most of us would not eat any bitter herbs. Those of us who might would do so without considering them bitter, or even as herbs. Tonight we'll be eating bitter herbs at least once, calling them "bitter herbs," and dipping them into all sorts of shit. Eh?

Let's face it, on all other nights, many of us slouch. But tonight we are supposed to recline even if we have good posture, or our chairs are very comfortable. Why the mandatory relaxation?

THE ANSWER


We read this story tonight because the Jews™ are a hardy race of people who are pretty good at surviving whenever someone tries to kill them. Even now that the Jews™ live in relative plenty and security, they aren't very interested in being killed again. We read this book to remember that distinctions that people today rarely consider used to mean that soldiers could and would break into your house and kill you, just like that.

There are those out there, Douglas Rushkoff and Freud among them, who see the Passover story as not grounded in any historical truth. They feel that it served as a handy metaphor for reaffirming the Jewish tradition and explaining a time in history in which many people converted to Judaism. In this interpretation, the ten plagues (which we will get to soon) represent the pagan gods of the Egyptians, the Jews were never really slaves (except, in a metaphorical way, to said pagan gods), and Moses was an Egyptian. This interpretation might be more in line with the interpretation of this Passover Seder, as we are using the Passover story to craft our own kind of belief in our connections to each other and to humanity in general.

In biblical times, telling this story was so important that wise old men would sit around and kibitz about when it should be told. These arguments became part of the story itself. They also kibitzed about such things as whether the words 'all the days of your life' meant the days and the nights also. There seemed to be a heavy dispute over the difference between 'The days of your life' and 'All the days of your life.' (The Passover story also included a large digression about Laban The Syrian. To this day, countless numbers of Jews™ do not understand the importance of Laban The Syrian to the Passover Story.) To enact this story is to kibitz, and to kibitz is to open up to conversation and connection --to communicate without a crackly Nokia 5140 or a Palm 7.

There are other fringe benefits to the recitation of a Passover Seder™. We affirm our ties, mediated as they may be, to the collective ethnic history that at least some of us share. We also get to say 'delivered us from the house of bondage' a number of times, and to mention Rabbi Jose of Galilea. We can discuss the 'Rod of Moses™' and give each other salacious winks.

To help us understand how we should be understanding the Passover Story, we are given four sons to use as models. Is it a coincidence that there are four sons in the Polenberg™ family? Nobody knows. Each of these four sons asks a different question about the Passover story, and is given an important answer about belief.



The first son asks, 'Why has God™ given us these customs?' Give him what he wants, for he affirms the system. Teach him to manipulate it for his benefit. He will earn Nike™ sneakers, a web™ design job, a Miata™.

The second son asks, 'So what do you really think of this God™ thing anyway, and all these rituals where we have to wait so long to eat such weird food? And what's with that stuff in the Windex bottle, anyway?' By saying 'You' instead of 'I,' he makes it clear that his hip ironic retrofuturism will not let him believe in anything that you try to consider real. Tell him he'd have been well fucked back in Ol' Egypt when we were in the house of bondage. No Air Jordans for the second son.

The third son asks 'Wuzzat?' He's not very bright. Pat him on the head and say 'God™ brought us out of the house of bondage. Just wait, and you can eat.' Wipe the drizzle off his chin.

The fourth son can't even ask a question. Put words in his mouth for him. Try to make them really good words, even if you aren't a really good person.

Archetypal sons notwithstanding, we figure that something really did happen. It started when the Jews™ migrated to Egypt, probably because of a drought. They were then enslaved by the Egyptians because, par for the Jewish course, they excelled without becoming assimilated in the society where they lived. We know that they are no longer slaves because we get to sit around and recontextualize the religion, because we're free.

The cracks in this story's foundation are conveniently mortared up by God™. God™ frees the Jews™ by delivering a series of plagues onto Pharaoh™ until he acquiesces and releases them. There were ten of these Plagues™, each worse than the last. Another kibitz-fest the scholarly Jews™ would engage in was exactly how many attributes of God™ you could attribute to each plague. The big question: four or five attributes per plague? Either way, the Egyptians were flat out fucked.

All say:

YIKES!

THE TEN PLAGUES

Spill a drop of wine for each of the plagues

blood
frogs
vermin
beasts
cattle disease
boils
hail
locusts
darkness
slaying of the first-born



Sing the ten plagues

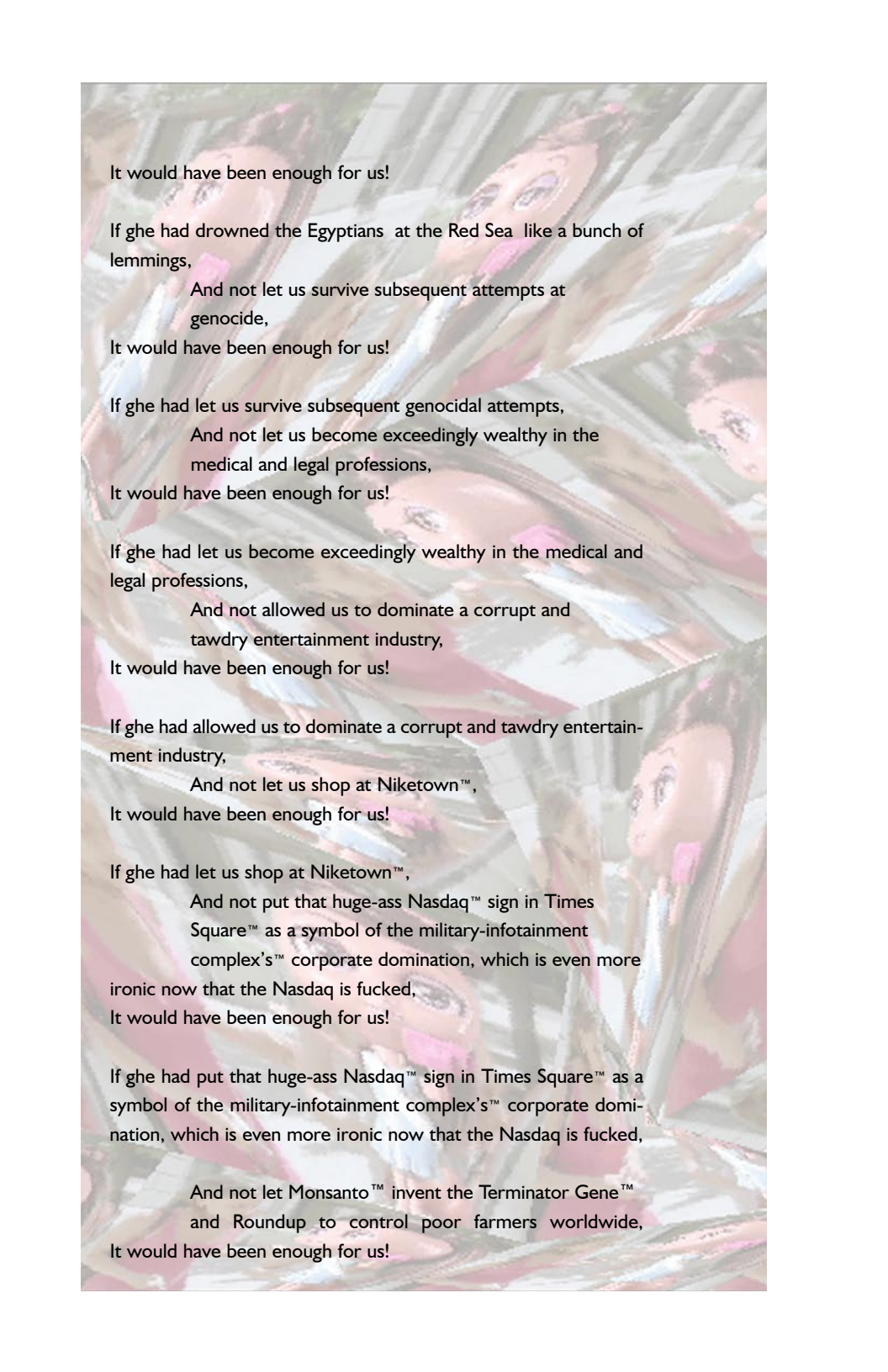
DAYENU (OY! IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!)

(note: 'ghe' will be substituted as a gender-neutral pronoun where 'he' would have been used in olden times. It rhymes with 'twee'. The 'h' is silent.)

If we are going to bother to believe in God™, we should believe that Ghe sure has done a bunch of good stuff for us!

If ghe had brought us out of Egypt

And not drowned the Egyptians at the Red Sea like a bunch of lemmings,



It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had drowned the Egyptians at the Red Sea like a bunch of lemmings,

And not let us survive subsequent attempts at genocide,

It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had let us survive subsequent genocidal attempts,

And not let us become exceedingly wealthy in the medical and legal professions,

It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had let us become exceedingly wealthy in the medical and legal professions,

And not allowed us to dominate a corrupt and tawdry entertainment industry,

It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had allowed us to dominate a corrupt and tawdry entertainment industry,

And not let us shop at Niketown™,

It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had let us shop at Niketown™,

And not put that huge-ass Nasdaq™ sign in Times Square™ as a symbol of the military-infotainment complex's™ corporate domination, which is even more

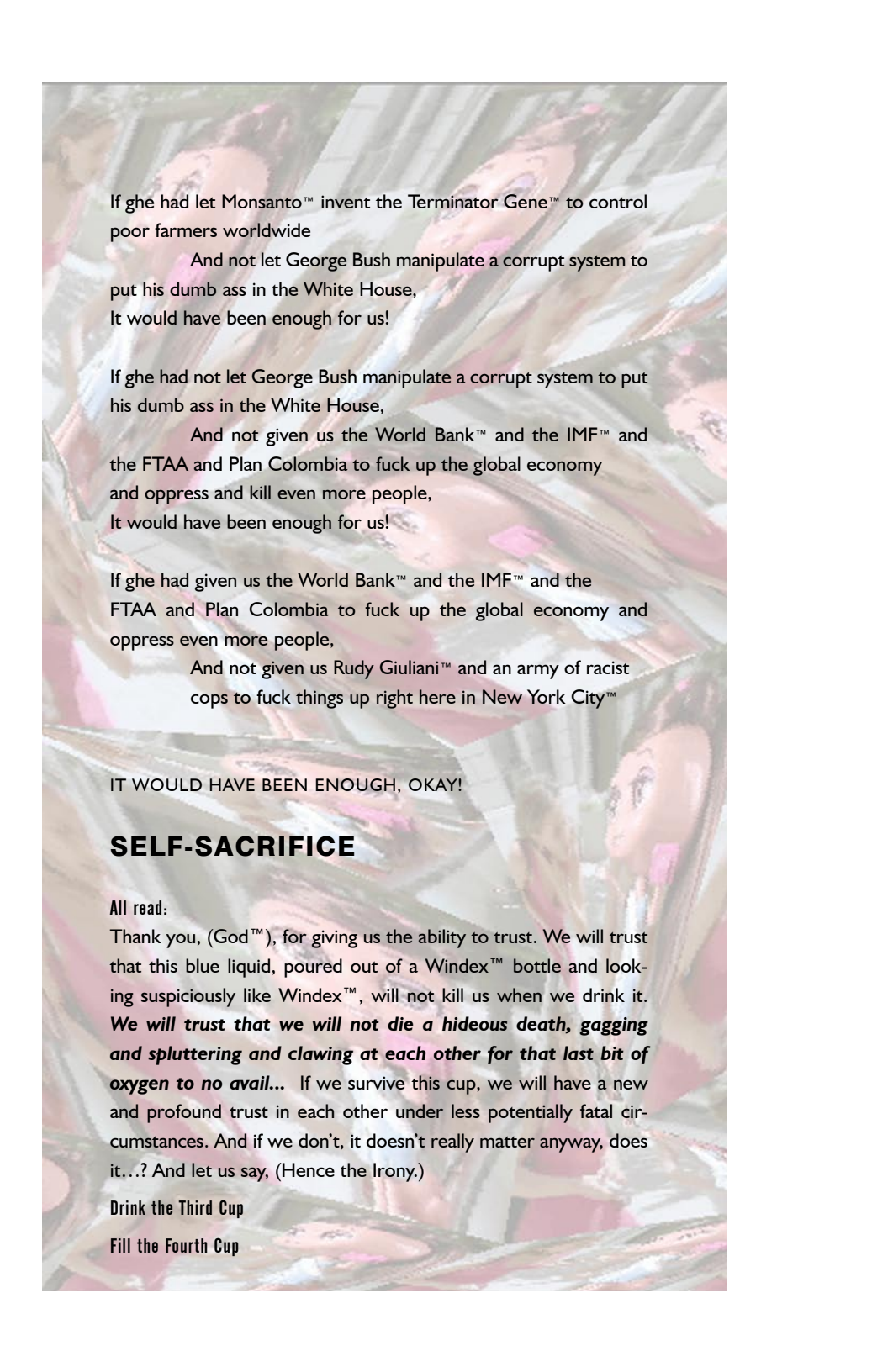
ironic now that the Nasdaq is fucked,

It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had put that huge-ass Nasdaq™ sign in Times Square™ as a symbol of the military-infotainment complex's™ corporate domination, which is even more ironic now that the Nasdaq is fucked,

And not let Monsanto™ invent the Terminator Gene™ and Roundup to control poor farmers worldwide,

It would have been enough for us!



If ghe had let Monsanto™ invent the Terminator Gene™ to control poor farmers worldwide

And not let George Bush manipulate a corrupt system to put his dumb ass in the White House,
It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had not let George Bush manipulate a corrupt system to put his dumb ass in the White House,

And not given us the World Bank™ and the IMF™ and the FTAA and Plan Colombia to fuck up the global economy and oppress and kill even more people,
It would have been enough for us!

If ghe had given us the World Bank™ and the IMF™ and the FTAA and Plan Colombia to fuck up the global economy and oppress even more people,

And not given us Rudy Giuliani™ and an army of racist cops to fuck things up right here in New York City™

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH, OKAY!

SELF-SACRIFICE

All read:

Thank you, (God™), for giving us the ability to trust. We will trust that this blue liquid, poured out of a Windex™ bottle and looking suspiciously like Windex™, will not kill us when we drink it. **We will trust that we will not die a hideous death, gagging and spluttering and clawing at each other for that last bit of oxygen to no avail...** If we survive this cup, we will have a new and profound trust in each other under less potentially fatal circumstances. And if we don't, it doesn't really matter anyway, does it...? And let us say, (Hence the Irony.)

Drink the Third Cup

Fill the Fourth Cup

BACK TO THE ANSWER

The three important symbols of the Passover Meal are...

THE PASSOVER OFFERING

THE MATZAH

THE BITTER HERBS

Point to the Offering:

The Passover Offering reminds us that God™ gave us a chance to spare our first-born children. It also gives us a convenient name for the holiday – reputable scientists tell us that God™ passed over the houses of the Jews™ which were marked with blood from the offering.

Point to the Matzah:

The Matzah is here to remind us that we had to tear-ass out of Egypt to get the jump on Pharaoh and his posse, who were sad-dling up to bust a cap into us. If we had waited for it to rise, we woulda been slaughtered.

Point to the Bitter Herbs:

These bitter herbs are here to remind us that being in slavery sucks. Stick a fistful of those bad boys in your mouth. Not so pleasant, huh? But you still have your freedom...

BLESSING OVER THE MATZAH

All read:

Thank you, (God™), for saving our ass, even if the bread didn't have time to rise. Was that me kibitzing again? I'm sorry. And let us say, 'Hence the Irony.'

BITTER HERBS:

First, combine bitter herbs and charoset on a spoon.



NEXT



YEAR?