



A PASSOVER SEDER 2007

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BOOYAH!

I stand by this man. I stand by this man, because he stands for things. Not only for things, he stands on things, things like aircraft carriers and rubble and recently flooded city squares. And that sends a strong message, that no matter what happens to America, she will always rebound with the most powerfully staged photo-ops in the world.

–Steven Colbert

The devil is right at home. The devil — the devil, himself, is right in the house. And the devil came here yesterday. Yesterday, the devil came here. Right here. Right here. And it smells of sulfur still today.

–Hugo Chavez

“Why do they hate each other? Why do Sunnis kill Shiites? How do they tell the difference? They all look the same to me.”

–Senator Trent Lott

Congressman Mark Foley (R-Fla.): “Do I make you a little horny?”

Teen: “A little.”

Foley: “Cool.”

IN PREPARATION FOR A PASSOVER SEDER

Before the Seder do what you would have were there not going to be a Seder. Know that people everywhere believe in (God) and that terrible things are being committed in (God)'s name at this very moment. Ask yourself: How do I live in this world? Keep food prep times under 15 minutes when cooking for the Seder, as if Fred Phelps Sr. was *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 Andreas break down your door in the dead of night, a knife clutched in his teeth. Evade him somehow, grab the satchel, dash from your house, arrive at the Seder.

A NOTE ON IRONY:

I have come to believe over many years that irony is a force that fights against meaning. I don't want to poop on anyone's dancefloor, though, so feel free to say "Hence The Irony" after prayers for the sake of nostalgia for past Seders, or to express the irony that by being "sacrilegious" we are having a genuine communal ritual experience, but also feel free to say anything else that you'd like, much the same way that the word (God) is treated elsewhere. Moaning "Condoleeza" here is still appropriate, though we wish it were not.

JUST IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING:

The use of pronouns will always be permitted at A Passover Seder.

THIS NOTE REMAINS RELEVANT:

Any way we struggle against the world we live in must give us enough joy to find strength.

INTERACTIVITY SPECIAL BIG FUN TIME!

There is a blank piece of paper and a pen in front of you. Please imagine a song. The first lyric to this song is "It is no longer punk to be a Jew." Please write the next lyric, or, if you are feeling inspired, the next couple of lyrics to this song on the piece of paper, and any notes about what genre the song should be, transcription, etc.

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ORDER OF A SEDER

- 1. The First Cup**
- 2. Dirty, Dirty, Dirty**
- 3. Get Green**
- 4. Fragmentation**
- 5. The Second Cup**
- 6. A Passover Story**
- 7. Oy! It Would Have Been Enough!**
- 8. Rebirth**
- 9. We Now Return To A Passover Story**
- 10. Hillel, or: Make Your Own Passover Story**
- 11. The Fourth Cup**
- 12. The Festival Meal**

THE FIRST CUP

All read:

Thank you, (God), for providing us this weed. With it we can forget the things that we need help forgetting. With it we may gain the necessary critical distance to keep our lives in an illusion of order, though probably not enough distance to watch Fox News. Or ABC News. Or CBS News. Or MSNBC News, with the exception of Keith Olbermann. Or CNN. Or C-Span. Or cute otters frolicking on YouTube. Well, maybe we can watch the otters. Awww, wook at the wittle otters. Wait, what? Stay on target! Anyway, let us not trust in this, for the more we smoke it, the smaller the chance we will find this critical distance we are looking for, and the greater the chance that we will whirl around in a paranoid, neurotic feedback loop. A paranoid, neurotic feedback loop. A paranoid, neurotic feedback loop. With it we make pretty things, and think they are much prettier than they actually are. Look at the blinky it's blinking it's blinking it's BLINKING! We will try not to smoke pot all the time and forget about You, d00d, but 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 crazy pothead God-fearing folks out there who believe that it does. So let us say, ("Hence The Irony!")

Leaning on the left side, smoke the first cup, as long as you don't work for a multinational corporation with random drug testing, or it won't put you to sleep.

DIRTY, DIRTY, DIRTY

Do not wash your hands, and do not say the blessing. Why wash your hair? It's just going to get dirty again anyway.

GET GREEN

The 'master' of the 'house' takes a bit of parsley or some other green thing 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, MY SUV FUCKING KICKS SERIOUS ASS! WHEN WE RUN OUT OF OIL WE'RE GONNA, WE'RE GONNA, WE'RE GONNA GET ON A SPACESHIP AND FLY THAT SHIT INTO THE SUN AND GO OUT IN A BLAAAAAZE OF GLORY! BOOYAH! And let us say, (Hence the Irony!)

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 he's hiding the other half, and maybe if anyone can find it after the meal has been eaten, they will win a *special prize*.

Fill The Second 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 written version of an oral text about Jew-persecution and Jew-flight. This translation is an attempt to reassemble fragments handed down through history and piece them together into something that we can relate to and try to understand.

A book says that many years ago the Jews were slaves in Egypt. Like roughly half of the rituals in the Jewish tradition, Passover celebrates survival. As the ritual begins we are to imagine ourselves as slaves, and through the recitation of the story we are liberated. To facilitate our liberation we get drunk, kick back and recline. This has *absolutely nothing to do* with trauma and recovery.

A book says that many years ago the Jews were slaves in Egypt. To live in America in 2007 is to watch a government drunk on power continue to curtail the rights of its own citizens and oppress the people of the world, economically, culturally, and militarily, even as it is clear to everyone but those

who are in power that the citizens of the world have had enough of its crap. It is to watch a loudly spoken mandate by the people go almost completely ignored by their elected representatives. It is to have a feeling of amazement at the sheer size of the balls of each of the liars, as they repeat lies that have been proven false with a smug indifference too callow to be believed, and as they threaten yet another country with aggression for supposed crimes which are committed by both ourselves and our client states.

This Seder has always been a struggle to create belief within the commodified, homogenized world that we live in. Is this kind of struggle the privilege of those who are able to take their own freedom for granted? If the freedom we celebrate at the end of this ritual is grounded in oppression, how can we claim to be free at all? Is it just a matter of us being tiny hypocrites, while other people are larger hypocrites? Do we deserve to go down in flames with the American Empire? Why not?

We begin to recite our story of the Jews when the youngest person sitting at the table asks four questions.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Note: If the youngest person at the table is a hikikomori, or “withdrawal”, they can ease their way back into society by performing the Four Questions via remote audio and video from the other room. A Rental Sister will be provided to help facilitate their reentry into the Seder after the recitation of the questions. Also, this hikikomori may substitute whatever questions he or she would like for the question in parenthesis.

On all other nights, we may drink, smoke pot, work on projects, watch Heroes, play DDR, make blinkies, code, recover from another miserable day in capitalism, think about the tensile strength of bidirectional filament tape, or scan the same 5 pages on the Internet over and over again until we’ve convinced ourselves we’ve read them. 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. (Yo, ‘**sup** wit dat?)

On all other nights, we can eat bread if we want to. Tonight we are obligated to eat matzah instead. And the process has to be supervised by a Jew from when the wheat is cut from the shaft, and baked within 15 minutes of having been exposed to moisture, or it ain’t Kosher. (Yo, ‘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. (**Yo**, 'sup wit dat?')

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. (**Yo**, 'sup wit dat?')

THE SECOND CUP

All read:

Thank you, (God), for providing us this wine. With it we can say things which we may ordinarily never say and do things which we may ordinarily have far too much self-consciousness and dignity to do. Verily, 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!)

Sip or Drink The Second Cup. If you don't finish it now, please finish it during A Passover Story.

A PASSOVER STORY

Note: The word 'kibitz' has the same i sound as "bits", twice.

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 are not very interested in being killed again.

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. Another metaphorical interpretation goes like this, yo -- once freed, the Jews are led out of Egypt to wander into the desert for 40 years which serve as a sort of womb for their rebirth. They have no responsibilities, wander aimlessly, and are fed by God. As they receive the 10 commandments from Moses, via God, they are reborn as a civilization.

These interpretations seem to be more in line with this Passover Seder, as we use the Passover story to craft belief out of our connections to each

other and to our collective understanding of the world we live in. And even if this fails, it's good kibitzing. In biblical times, telling this story was so important that wise old men would sit around and kibitz about when it should be told. They 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. When Laban The Syrian is removed from the Hagaddah, they feel a kind of aimless loss, but don't understand why.) They kibitzed about whether each of the Plagues that (God) delivered onto Egypt came with Wrath, Indignation, Trouble, and the Messengers Of Evil, or whether they came with His Bruning Anger, Wrath, Indignation, Trouble, and the Messengers Of Evil. A full half of the Passover story seems to be about a bunch of rabbis sitting around and kibitzing about completely superfluous shit. Though reading about this kibitzing, you are forced to kibitz in its recitation, opening up a space for dialogue and connection, or at least an opportunity to kibitz about the kibitzing.

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 our connection to 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? Each of these sons asks a different question about the Passover story, and each is given an answer about belief.

The first son asks, 'Why has God given us these customs?' Then he goes back to reading The National Review. Give him what he wants, for he affirms the system. Teach him to manipulate it for his benefit. He will earn dope-ass Nike sneakers, a no-bid cost-plus Iraqi reconstruction contract, Lindsey Lohan's "affection", a Hummer fucking H2.

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 while he used to say "what's with that stuff in the Windex bottle, anyway?," now he just looks pissy. By saying 'You' instead of 'I,' he makes it clear that his attitude is for quitters, and goddammit, winners never quit. He

does not realize that his right to free speech was given to him by the United States Army, the ungrateful fuck. Slap him across the face a few times screaming "YOU GO BACK TO AFRICA AND DO YOUR GAY VOODOO LIMBO TANGO AND WANGO DANCE!" Tell him he'd have been well fucked back in Ol' Egypt when we were in the house of bondage, and to go back to kvetching on his blog.

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.

Regardless of what Doug Rushkoff or Freud thought, this book posits that something really did happen. It started when the Jews migrated to Egypt, possibly because of a drought. They were then enslaved by the Egyptians because, par for the Jewish course, they excelled without becoming assimilated in their society. We know that they are no longer slaves because we get to sit around and recontextualize the religion. Booyah.

Fill The Third Cup from the weird-looking bottle which may or may not have a psychedelic bear on it.

What happens is that (God) saves the Jews from Pharoah by visiting these ten plagues on the Egyptians, each worse than the last. This is a good time to point out that there's almost no grief in the Passover ritual. The only time we're supposed to grieve is during our recitation of the plagues. Many Haggadahs don't even bother notifying us that we are supposed to grieve, though they make us spill out drops of wine without telling us why. Instead, they dwell on the aforementioned kibitz-fest by the rabbis about exactly how many attributes of (God) you could attribute to each plague. (It's also important to point out that the more new, postmodern, and Reconstructionist the Haggadah is, the more they try to make a big deal out of the grief thing. The source text, however, was much more about how badass God was than about how bad we felt for smiting the people who had kept us enslaved.) Either way, the Egyptians were fucked. Will plagues be visited upon the Jews for playing the role of Pharoah in Israel today?

THE TEN PLAGUES

All say: YIKES!

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 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 lemmings,
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

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

And not let us survive subsequent attempts at genocide,
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

If ghe had let us survive subsequent attempts at genocide,

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 given us CACI, Titan, Blackwater, Bechtel, Halliburton, and
scores of others to profit off an illegal war,***

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

If ghe had given us CACI, Titan, Blackwater, Bechtel, Halliburton, and scores
of others to profit off an illegal war,

And not given us The Westboro Baptist Church,

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

If ghe had given us the Westboro Baptist Church,

And not given us Mark Foley's emails,

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

If ghe had given us Mark Foley's emails,

And not given us the city of Boston, arresters of LED terrorists

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

If ghe had given us the city of Boston, arresters of LED terrorists

***And not given us Diebold, suers of the city of Boston for not picking
their voting machines, because their machines are the best, because,
because, they just are, OK? And they should have picked them.***

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US!

If ghe had given us Diebold, suers of the city of Boston for not picking their
voting machines, because their machines are the best, because, because,
they just are, OK? And they should have picked them.

And not given us the vile operatives of the Republican party,

If ghe had given us the vile operatives of the Republican party

***And not given us a Democratic party that long ago sold out any notion
of populism and whose idiocy and spinelessness lets the Republicans get
away with more heinous crimes than they might otherwise,***

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FUCKING ENOUGH, OKAY?

REBIRTH

All read:

In previous incarnations of A Passover Seder, we would enact our own death by drinking a suspicious-looking blue liquid out of a windex bottle right about now. But we have seen enough death and simulations of death for a while. Thank you, (God), for allowing us to live, and persevere, and grow. Instead of simulating our death, let us celebrate our rebirth as more feeling people. Let us try to remain firm in our beliefs, yet open and questioning enough to change them when necessary. Let us not abandon a thirst for the truth. And let us say, (Hence The Irony!)

Drink the Third Cup

Fill the Fourth Cup

WE NOW RETURN TO A PASSOVER STORY

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. Carbon-dated and molecularly analyzed fragments looted from the National Museum of Baghdad 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 all saddled up to bust a cap into us. If we had waited for it to rise, we woulda been slaughtered. So no bread, no corn syrup, nuh huh. Booyah!

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. This year, maybe stick that fistful up your ass instead. And don't be getting

any of your friends to help you with that, you have to do it yourself. And imagine that the water you'd use to wash them down (or up, as the case may be) was owned by a multinational corporation like Bechtel, charging you exorbitant fees for it. Then imagine that the water also comes from runoff from a factory farm and the hormones have caused you to grow the opposite gender's sexual organs. Cup those organs in your hands and stroke them gently. Feels good, right?

BLESSING OVER THE MATZAH

All read:

Kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz kibbitz matzah. Matzah! Booyah! (Hence the Irony.)

BITTER HERBS:

First, combine bitter herbs and charoset on a spoon. Then, all take their cellphones out of their pockets. All cellphone users should find partners with cellphones, preferably sitting next to them. One of the two partners will turn off their cellphone. The other partner will enter the number of the turned-off cellphone into their cellphone. The group should dial the cellphones in synchronicity. When every phone is connected to a voice mailbox, all recite the prayer into the cellphones.

Thank you, (God), for saving our ass again. We eat the bitter herbs tonight to remember how bad it was before you saved our asses, but temper it with sweetness because we've suffered enough. Let us remember that we will never be aware of how enslaved we are, and that we enslave others by doing nothing but living our own American lifestyles. And let us say, (Hence the Irony.)

HILLEL, OR, MAKE YOUR OWN PASSOVER STORY

Before the prayer, fill out the Mad Lib

THE FOURTH CUP

Thank you, (God), for allowing us to live another year, to pursue our hopes and aspirations, to attempt to strive at the edge of our periphery and stride, unafraid, into the void of mystery. We survive, and we remember. And let us say, (Hence The Irony.)

Drink the Fourth Cup

THE FESTIVAL MEAL



Next Year?