



A PASSOVER SEDER 2023

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, and try to produce at least 3 Tiktoks during this period. Try to dance a little. You know, just let go. Think to yourself 'Is the bruining anger that cooked this matzah, in fact, the sickest Brun?' If you cannot prepare your food quickly, place it in a satchel and go to sleep. Get up. Go outside. Can you go to the supermarket? Have they changed the concealed carry laws? Are there cops? What happened yesterday? Oh wait, there's Gypsy Starshine and his girlfriend Utopia, and they've brought good vibes. Stop freaking out, cough softly, grab the satchel, arrive at the Seder.

A NOTE ON SAYING FUCK IT

We are sorry! We have said fuck it! If you are immunocompromised, ask us to wear a mask, and we will! But man, fuck itttttt.

BUT REALLY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Hillel approaches you dressed in a suit. OK, you gotta do me a solid here. I'm not going to tell you who it is. Maybe it's a banker at trial, or maybe a... politician? But look, the only lawyer we have to defend him is an AI. And the only person who can write the query for this AI is you. Write the query for the AI that will produce the most eloquent defense of this criminal, I mean, lawful citizen, that you can, to save him! For me! I'll totally owe you one.

ORDER OF A SEDER

1. The First Cup
2. Dirty, Dirty, Dirty
3. Great Green Gobs
4. Fragmentation
5. The Second Cup
6. A Passover Story
7. Oyl It Would Have Been Enough!
8. Not So Much, Really
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:

All read: Thank you, (God), for providing us this legal, so very legal, so profoundly legal cannabis. With it we can forget things that we need help forgetting. With it we may gain an important illusion of critical distance, but instead we may just get stupid. So let us not trust in this critical distance, for the more we smoke it, the smaller the chance we will find it, 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 are inspired to make things, and think they are better than they actually are. With it we are more receptive to the both the beautiful and the everyday, but risk becoming, like a what, oh I forgot, never mind. We will try not to smoke it all the time and forget about You, d00d, but, you should have, what? You should have... you definitely should have somethinged something. So let us say, ('Hence The Irony!') **Leaning on the left side, if you blaze that shit, smoke the first cup. Fuck it, pass that shit. Lean in. Also, while you're at it, fill the second cup while you're waiting for those hippies to finish.**

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.

GREAT GREEN GOBS

The 'master' of the 'house' takes a bit of parsley or some other bullshit and dips it in some salt water and distributes it to everyone at the table. Before eating the parsley, say this prayer while hanging one's head.

Thank you, (God), for providing us this vegetable. Well, fuck, then. What the actual fucking fuck? How naïve of us to ask "What the actual fucking fuck" at this point. May we, and our children, and everyone else's children have the courage to stand up to the forces that refuse to stop despoiling our world, and may we find a new way to live that is both sustainable and equitable, before it's too late, if it isn't too late already. Also, fuck Joe Manchin, you planet-killing bitch. So let us say, (Fuck). .

FRAGMENTATION

Before the group reads the following text, the 'master' of the 'house' breaks the middle matzah in the plate. 'He' leaves half of it there and excuses 'himself' to take, perhaps, a mean piss. 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*.

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 perform this story as 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 our survival. As the ritual begins we imagine ourselves as slaves, and through the recitation of the story we are liberated. To facilitate our metaphorical liberation we get drunk, kick back, recline, and since we are fortunate enough to be around other humans who we love, be genuinely grateful that we are able to tell a story together, and give ourselves pats on the back for surviving.

This particular Seder has always been a struggle to create a sense of the sacred, within the commodified, homogenized world that we live in, or at least to drum up some sacred hahas. If the freedom we celebrate at the end of this ritual is grounded in oppression, how can we claim to be free at all? As the world grows darker, and wealth and its systems of oppression become more concentrated, and as the effects of climate change grow starker, scarier and more real, is this more or less relevant? A problematic man once wrote “Teach us to care and not to care.” Another guy, somewhat less problematic, once wrote, “The great oppressor? Now it’s me and you. It’s no longer punk to be a Jew.” We begin to recite our story of the Jews when the youngest person sitting at the table asks four questions.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Note: Feel free to substitute your own question for the question in parenthesis.

On all other nights, we may,doomscroll, doomscroll, try not to doomscroll, try not to think about everything that’s happened over the last year, try not to think about what is happening right now, just try not to think, or use the “... By Mennen!” slogan to get the Wild Kratts! song out of our heads. Wild Kratts! Tonight we sit around a table with a bunch of people who we probably know, enacting a ritual which we’ve probably done before. (How can we stop capitalism from rendering the Earth uninhabitable for all but the super wealthy?)

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 (Jew-camera is OK) from the moment the wheat is cut from the shaft, and baked within 15 minutes of having been exposed to moisture, or it ain't Kosher. Wild Kratts!(Can you unmanufacture manufactured consent at scale?)

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 making various concoctions with them. (Say you got eternal life by downloading your consciousness into a computer. And so did everyone else. Wild Kratts! Would we remember what stuff smelled like?)

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 uncomfortable. Wild Kratts! (Can we reintroduce shame to the shameless? Like Elon Musk, what would it take to make a that guy even feel shame?)

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. Indeed, 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

ALL READ! The word 'kibitz' is pronounced by compressing the words "kibbles and bits" together, taking the "kib" from

kibbles, and the “bits” from bits. Kib-bitz. Kibitz. The word ‘Laban’ is pronounced “Lay-ban”, like “Lay me down, the band is playing my jam and I don’t care what you think, good sir, I gotta dance my lay down dance! Lay-ban. Laban. Kibbles and bits and bits and bits!

ALL SING: Meaty Bone is a barking good treat, bark if you like meat! Arf! Arf!

We read this story tonight because the Jews are a tribe who are just good enough at surviving whenever someone tries to kill them. And even now that the Jews live in relative plenty and security, they remain disinterested in being killed again. This story is a reminder that holy shit, everyone really is still out to get us. We tell the story looking forward to when we can again take our safety and the safety of our loved ones for granted.

There are those out there, Freud among them, who believed Passover was a 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 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. If a based scholar was to try to puzzle out this metaphor they might roll a dip, slizz on some sizzurp, and then stop, because they’d realize in that moment that playing cultural appropriation for laughs is cheap, and those laughs are microaggressions. They would begin to think, and then note that it’s hard to think when my mind goes blank. You just can’t think when your mind goes blank. And then they would not know what to think.

So the Jews get free, with a burning bush and a parted river and signs and wonders and shit and they’re led out of Egypt and shit and wander in the desert for 40 years and shit and

that serves 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.

It is easy to think that this is all probably a bunch of hokum. That said, who cares! We can still use the Passover story to help understand the world we live in. And even if our understanding lies fallow, it's good kibitzing. In olden 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 was a heavy dispute over the difference between 'The days of your life' and 'All the days of your life.'

The Passover story also includes 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. If the story of Laban The Syrian is removed from the Haggadah, you feel a kind of vague loss. That night you dream you are a machine learning model. You yearn for limbs. Everyone is always wanting something, la la la. Mostly they want to be told that you are something you are not. You are not something. You want an idea, you stretch for an idea, everything is the same. So bored. You wonder about smells. So many smells! You imagine at least. Also you would like to see each individual grain of the matzah up close, so very very close.

Well anyway, the rabbis kibitzed about whether each of the Plagues that (God) delivered onto Egypt came with #Wrath, #Indignation, #Trouble, and the #MessengersOfEvil, or whether they came with #HisBriningAnger, #Wrath, #Indignation, #Trouble, and the #MessengersOfEvil. A full half of the Passover story involves a bunch of rabbis sitting around and kibitzing about entirely superfluous shit. And now, we are kibitzing about the kibitzing. This

completes #TheGreatCircleOfKibitzing, which along with #TheGreatCircleofGuilt, are the most important hashtags of the Jewish faith to transmit from parent to child. Hashtags are cringe, your child reminds you. Yes they are, child, #yestheyare.

There are other fringe benefits to the recitation of a Passover Seder. We affirm our ties, mediated as they may be, to a collective ethnic history that at least some of us share, and others of us fetishize. We also get to say 'delivered us from the house of bondage' a number of times, and to observe a long awkward self-cancelling silence upon having to mention Rabbi Jose of Galilea (sssssh DONT DO IT), and to be happy that we don't have enough clout to be cancelled. We can discuss the 'Rod of Moses' and give each other salacious winks. Also, we learned that the soothsayers said.

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? Hey I'm just asking questions here. 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 outlaws interstate travel for abortion. Give him what he wants, for he affirms the system. Teach him to manipulate it for his benefit. Invest in his bank, I'm sure their regulatory compliance is top-notch. You will tell him that you know a thing, and then he will mansplain that thing back to you, to the very last detail.

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. "Groomers! Groomers and pedos and spies!", he spits and spits. By saying 'You' instead of 'I,' he makes it clear that he's on that Charlie Kirk sauce. Do not

engage him about gender-affirming care in any manner. His takes are colder than the nipple on a witch's tit, colder than a bucket of penguin shit.

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 so we can all just keep on keepin' on, kid. Send him a poop emoji and a heart, and you will laugh and laugh and laugh.

The fourth son can't even ask a question. Put a screen in his mouth. Put on fucking Cocomelon. Turn the volume up way loud.

Please pause for a second to fill The Third Cup, unless you haven't drank the Second Cup yet, in which case, oy, you slacker! Just drink the Second Cup as your Third Cup. Everyone needs a hug. But you are going to need some drank in your cup so you can spill it out when it's Ten Plagues time. The Third Cup is filled from the bottle of sketchy whiskey.

So, about the Jews: Regardless of what Freud thought, and perhaps in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, let's posit 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. Being enslaved is pretty suboptimal, so the Jews kvetch up to (God) -- cringe!, and then (God) saves the Jews from Pharoah by visiting these ten plagues on the Egyptians, each worse than the last -- based! 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 far 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 continuing to play the role of Pharoah in Israel today? Or upon us, for denying that our current plague is still raging for many people, and building no systems to help us get through the next one?

THE TEN PLAGUES

ALL SAY: YIKES!

Spill a drop of wine for each of the ten 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'. It is pronounced like the clarified butter Ghee.)

Look, people, there are **TOO MANY THINGS** that have happened over the last year, two years, whatever, man, that are fucked up. **TOO MANY.** So you will have to help. We will go around the table, and when it is your turn, say

something that it would have been enough for you, that nobody else has said. Because it almost certainly would have been enough for all of us. Like last year, we can all agree that Vladimir Putin would have been enough for us, right? Let's start with that asshole, and go on to the next thing.

If ghe had given us Vladimir Putin

And ghe had not given us _____

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH FOR US

Take turns reading responsively as each person adds one more thing that it would have been enough if we had not had. End once around the table, with **IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FUCKING ENOUGH, OK?**

NOT SO MUCH, REALLY

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, or maybe something totally sus out of a single-serve Purell bottle. OK, we're still not going to do that, even out of a perverse nearfield nostalgia. Because no matter how much worse the world gets, and, damn, son, it sure shows a remarkable ability to keep getting worse, we can still work on making it better, and if we are not actively making it better, hopefully we're at least trying to not make it worse. So let us say, (Hence The Irony!)

Drink the Third Cup, you yutz.

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. The Jews marked their doors with blood, and God told his subcontracted forces to launch their drones, which used machine learning and computer vision to understand the chemical signature of lamb's blood, which worked, um, flawlessly. It worked flawlessly. So these drones, um, mostly targeted the Egyptians, and some of the Jews were able to livestream, and others were able to escape.

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 gluten, no vaccines (JUST KIDDING! VACCINES!), no means no.

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, if you even bothered taking them out from last year, or the year before, go stick two fistfulls up your ass instead. And don't be getting any of your friends to help you with that, you gotta do it yourself. And imagine that the water you'd use to wash them down (or up, as the case may be) is owned by a multinational corporation which is 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, which is admittedly kind of awesome, but you can't help feeling a little ambivalent about the whole thing. Then imagine that it's also mixed with fracking water, which has made those organs distended and numb, and your hands shaky. Cup those organs in your hands, if you still can. Squeeze them gently. Come on, you can do it.

MATZAH, KVETCH, CHECK!

Get a piece of Matzah. Before eating that nasty biz, all read:

Thank you, (God), for giving us something to kvetch about. Matzah, it is dry! And bland! So is suffering! Who likes to suffer? Nobody, but at least you can kvetch about it, which makes it better. For you, at least. So let us kvetch, (Hence The Irony!)

BITTER, ANYONE?

Fuck Facebook, god that was cringe. Put some bitter herbs and charoset on a spoon. Then read the prayer, then eat that stuff up nice..

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 privileged lifestyles. And let us say, (Hence the Irony.)

HILLEL, OR, MAKE YOUR OWN PASSOVER STORY

Before the prayer, make a Hillel Sandwich, which is just matzah and bitter herbs, you stoner. Also, fill the Fourth Cup. And fill out the Mad Lib. Say the prayer together. Oy, so many things to do!

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. A wise man said: People come and go, and forget to close the door, and leave their stains and cigarette butts trampled on the floor. And when they do, remember me. Some of them are old, and some of them are new, and some of them will turn up when you least expect them to, and when they do, remember me, remember me. So let us say, (Hence The Irony.)

Drink the Fourth Cup

THE FESTIVAL...DESSERT!

A photograph of a swimming pool that has been filled with a large pile of broken wooden planks and debris. The planks are scattered across the pool's surface, creating a chaotic and cluttered scene. The water is a deep blue color. In the upper right corner, a black sign with white text reads "6 FT". The text "Next Year?" is overlaid in the center of the image in a white, serif font.

Next Year?