



Artwork by Camron King

Berkeley Hillel & Friends Passover Companion

2021 / 5781

Dear Berkeley Hillel Community,

Chag sameach and Happy Passover! Last year, we had our first Passover apart; quarantine and shelter-in-place had just begun, students went home, and the Berkeley Hillel building was empty. It has been a truly unprecedented year, and we admire you all for your resilience in this time of uncertainty.

While we had hoped to be together for Passover this year, we are heartened and encouraged by the arrival of the vaccine, the arrival of Spring, of longer days and more sunlight. The story of Passover is one of journeying out of narrow spaces into freedom. While the road will be long, we certainly see glimpses of freedom, and hope for continued expansiveness.

This is a companion to add some insights, stories, and fun to your Passover experience! From our homes to yours, we hope you have a wonderful Passover!

With love,

Your Berkeley Hillel Staff

Everything is Alive: The Passover Seder

By: Rabbi Adam

In the podcast “Everything is Alive” (<https://www.everythingisalive.com/>) a host interviews inanimate objects. The interviewer questions a can of soda that has been sitting on shelf, a lamppost that has seen so many different events, a grain of sand or a subway seat. In the interview we get a sense of how these objects might feel, our connection to these items seem unimportant to us, and in clever ways, truths of ourselves are revealed.

At your Passover seder, pick an inanimate item from the table or the Haggadah. Have someone interview the item. While being interviewed, try to put yourself in the items ‘shoes’ to fully appreciate the teaching and symbolism of the item. Here is a list of some items you can interview, along with some questions to begin your inquiry:

Matzah

- What is like to not be part of Jewish life all year?
- Do you ever dream or think about fully growing into bread?
- Does it bother you that you are symbol of affliction?

Seder Plate

- Do any of the items ever fight with one another?
- Be honest, do you have a favorite?

Karpas

- What is it like to be brought in so early in the seder?
- Are you envious of any other item in the seder?
- What is it like to be dipped in salt water?

Salt Water

- What is it like to be a symbol of tears?
- Do feel a special bond to karpas?
- Are there particular types of karpas that you better connect?
- What is the meaning of the seder to you?

Wine

- Do you feel any pressure being the first part of the seder?
- What happens to you after we fill Elijah’s cup?
- Are there types of wine glasses you prefer?
- How does it feel to have someone take some of you out during the 10 plagues?

Other items to interview:

Charoset, Marror, Shank Bone, Matzah Ball Soup

Here is a model interview of the Haggadah:

Interviewer: What is it like being used only two nights a year?

Haggadah: I've got to be honest with you, I'm really jealous of all the other prayer books that get to be used so frequently. Some are even used every day! I understand that I'm part of a special celebration that commemorates the liberation of the children of Israel, but I sometimes dream of being used like the prayer book. No one really knows me by heart, other than the 4 questions the kids sing or particular parts of me. But I'll tell you what I love; the fact that kids and families always talk about the stain from grape juice or matzah crubs that bring them wonderful memories of former seders. It makes me feel like I'm part of something more than just the words on the page. While I do wish I was used more often, I really feel bad for my Israeli cousins who are only used one night the whole year!

Interviewer: Do you feel connected to your relatives (other Haggadot)? Are you all in touch during the year?

Haggadah: I do feel connected. You know, inside we are all the same and our essence connects me to the rest of my family but the outside is so different. We all look so different, we might tell the same story, but it is remarkable how something that has the same message can come in so many different shapes, sizes and colors. It is amazing a family like myself, that shares so much of our core can look so different. I'll tell you, more than anything else I love the fact that my family is probably the most diverse family in the world. You find me another book with the same message and story that looks as varied as my family!

Interviewer: How did you feel about the mass reproduction of the haggaddah by Maxwell house?

Haggadah: Wow you went there. It is really painful to talk about. You know Maxwell just used my family to sell coffee. In 1932 they wanted to sell coffee and they used us. They essentially cloned us for profit, and didn't bother to fully appreciate who we are. I'm sorry I just can't talk about it. Can we move on to the next question?

Interviewer: What does it feel like to be used for so many years? I know you date your origins back to the time of the Temple and I think much of you was written from the Talmud, correct?

Haggadah: Yes, our family actually traces our roots back to the time of the Exodus from Egypt. The reality though is that much of who we are today stem from the time of the 2nd Temple. We were taken from my distant cousins the Mishnas and Talmuds. Good guys but always arguing. You know what I think is pretty impressive is our oldest living relative is Saba Raba/Great Grandpa Sarajevo born in 1350. Pretty amazing that they are still alive in National museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I dream one day to see them and hear the stories of close to 700 Passover seders! You know they're valued at over \$7mm, puts the Maxwell house family to shame.

Interviewer: Do you have a favorite section?

Haggadah: Most of my family really likes Magid/Telling of the story, it is the time that the family is fully engaged people pay most attention. It has the best stories. Frankly it is the majority of who I am. But you know me, I'm an alternative Haggaddah, I even have an orange on my seder plate inside. My favorite part is Hagadyah. First it sounds like haggaddah, but mostly it means that the family really loves me. They stayed till the end, didn't leave after birkat hamazon/grace after meals, but celebrated with me. While I'm sad it is over, I love that they are so happy, and the 4 cups of wine don't hurt.

Interviewer: Do you mind if I read a little of you out loud?

Haggadah: Really you mean that! It's my favorite thing to have people read from me. Can I ask a favor?

Interviewer: Sure what?

Haggadah: Will you read the table of contents, the order of the seder. It gives me chills every time I hear it, knowing the seder is about to begin.

Yachatz

By Micah Lesch

I have always found that Yachatz -- the time during Passover when we break the larger of the three matzos and hide the larger part, known as the Afikomen -- to be, at the same time, the most fun and the most distressing part of the Seder. The fun part will occasionally involve a scavenger hunt. In many houses, an adult will hide the Afikomen for the children to find, and in other homes, it's the reverse. Regardless of who searches for the Afikomen, the Seder cannot officially conclude until it is found. Just like with any Jewish tradition, however, this custom varies in scope and meaning across denominations and communities.

In the mystical tradition, for example, the middle Matzah cracker symbolizes the heart, which we break to represent our own hearts breaking at the continued injustices that surround us. The act of breaking the Matzah is designed to push us to confront and open our eyes to the suffering around us that we, as human beings, have the tendency to avoid. This symbolic significance often spurs open and unfiltered conversations at my family's Seder about which injustices we observe throughout the year but also have the tendency to avoid, passively believing that there is nothing we can do to mitigate them.

Given the events of the past year, I have lost count of these sorts of moments -- times when the overlapping crises of our time -- the myriad ramifications of COVID-19, racial justice, gun violence, homelessness, food insecurity, climate change -- seem insurmountable, overwhelming, and impossible to solve or even appropriately address. So, should you be inclined and able to participate, here are some local volunteer opportunities (some of which our [Social Justice Fellows](#) have already taken advantage of!) wherein you can support just some of those communities that are most in need right now:

- 1) Youth Spirit Artworks Tiny House Village Construction
 - a) What? Join fellow students, staff, and other Jewish and non-Jewish volunteers from around the East Bay to put the finishing touches on the nation's first EVER Tiny House Youth Village for unhoused youth!
 - b) When? Saturday March 27th and Sunday March 28th, 9am -- 12pm; 12pm -- 4pm
 - c) Where? 633 Hegenberger Drive, Oakland
- 2) FOODZ Mutual Aid Network
 - a) What? Join post-grad and youth folks to help serve food to over 400 unhoused people in Oakland with the new grassroots group, Foodz!

- b) When? Monday, March 29th any time between 12pm and 7:30pm
 - c) Where? Tamarack: 1501 Harrison St, Oakland, CA 94612
- 3) Organize food donations with the [Berkeley Food Network](#) or the [Alameda County Food Bank](#)
- 4) Help cook meals that will be distributed to unhoused communities with [Urban Adamah](#)
- 5) Support unhoused, impoverished, and disabled folx achieve health and self-sufficiency with [Building Opportunities For Self-Sufficiency](#)
- 6) Help curb rising rates of gun violence in East Oakland with [Faith in Action - East Bay](#)
- 7) Distribute meals to unhoused communities with [Food Not Bombs](#)
- 8) Restore ocean health and help protect local critical marine habitat with [Shark Stewards](#)
- 9) Work as an Adult Literacy Tutor with [Berkeley Public Library](#)
- 10) Encourage your member of Congress to vote to rebuild for a just and sustainable future for all with [Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action](#)

Charoset: A Story & Recipe

Bar Ben-Harush, Israel Fellow

Passover food was never a big deal for me personally, but one thing I always loved and could never get enough of is Charosset. Traditionally, eating Charosset is meant to symbolize the clay the Israelites used to build the Egyptian cities, but in my family eating Charoset symbolises that we are tired with reading the haggadah and are just looking to get some proper food in us. The reason for this delay in eating usually happens in my family due to my dad, who insists on reading every last bit before eating, and singing every known passover song at the end of the meal when we all are trying to manage a bad case of food coma. Powering through yet another verse of a Chad Gadya while half asleep always gives me a renewed appreciation for the struggles the Jews had in Egypt. Maybe that was my dad's plan all along.

If you want to try and make our version of Charoset, It's incredibly easy and tastes incredible. All you need to do is soak a pack of dates (without the pit) in about a cup of water overnight, heat up half a package of margarine in a pot, add the dates with the water to the pot, add diced nuts and raisins to your liking, two tablespoons of sugar and a pinch of salt, and you're done!

Noa Grayevsky, Therapist at Berkeley Hillel

"They say that other country over there, dim blue in the twilight, farther than the orange stars exploding over our roofs, is called peace, but who can find the way? This time we cannot cross until we carry each other. All of us refugees, all of us prophets. No more taking turns on history's wheel, trying to collect old debts no one can pay. The sea will not open that way. This time that country is what we promise each other, our rage pressed cheek to cheek until tears flood the space between, until there are no enemies left, because this time no one will be left to drown and all of us must be chosen. This time it's all of us or none."

- Aurora Levins Morales

Artwork by Nadav Mendoza

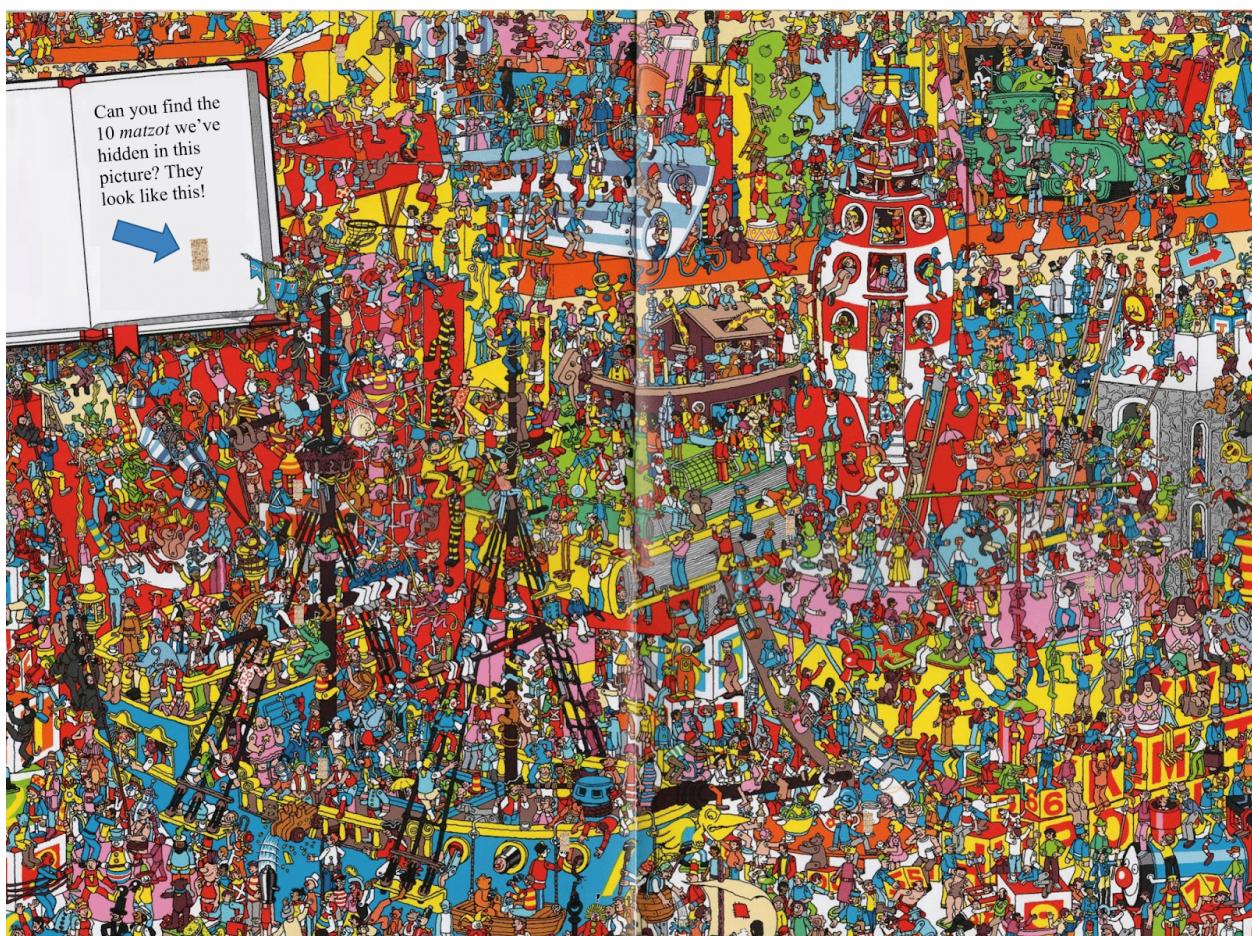


Nadav, on his artwork: "Very simple yet meaningful . The colour of the sea and the heavens, blue, having a connection with the Divine and leading us ,the Jewish people, to the path towards freedom. The path is pure and serene symbolising a fresh start. A fresh start as a nation along with a clear path towards freedom. According to early Zionists, blue and white are colours that are associated with Judaism and the state of Israel at least contemporary. I feel this piece of work really shows the symbol and transition from being slaves to freedom to modern day meaning. Many tallit gadol are usually blue and white and also the State of Israel's flag has the same colours."

Where's Matzah?

Leigh Levinson, on behalf of Mishelanu

Last year, I helped facilitate a virtual seder for my extended family. The "Whitman family seder" is always held on the East Coast, so this virtual seder was the first time I met many of these relatives. Retrospectively, I realize that the "novel" event would be the first of many opportunities for connection with those far away. It came in a time that could feel physically isolating yet warm due to rekindled connections. I have come to appreciate the ways that virtual gatherings can take advantage of technology and offer new, fun experiences rather than revamping or adapting older activities. One activity I particularly enjoyed introducing to my extended family, as well as my first grade classroom, was an Afikomen hunt like none they would ever think to have at the seder table. 6 year olds and 60 year olds alike were able to collectively experience a beloved tradition in a new way. While I don't wish another virtual seder upon us, I appreciate the hidden gems these times have brought to my attention and sweet moments that fill me with gratitude. Please enjoy this colorful mess, maybe find Waldo, and participate in an afikomen hunt with anyone and everyone this year!



This image is from an article in [Hey Alma](#). Check out the link for more Afikomen fun!

Ma Nishtana – An Engineering Perspective

Alon Amid

One of the more interesting parts of the Hagaddah is Ma Nishtana (The Four Questions). Asking questions is a basic pillar of learning and the pursuit of knowledge. It is also an indispensable part of the process of building, making, and solving problems – the bread and butter of engineering.

The question “Ma Nishtana” is a particular question we often ask in the fields of science and engineering, and are able to utilize the answer to our advantage.

Observing differences is an efficient way of identifying events and their causes.

Those of us in the fields of engineering that require coding or programming should be very familiar with the concept of “Ma Nishtana”.

Observing differences is one of the basic tools of the profession: The `diff` program which identifies differences between two files. Version control systems which use a history of differences to provide efficient checkpointing of projects rather than saving complete version of each checkpoint. The ability to perform “undo” and “redo” operations by keeping track of the differences that each action generates.

In the broader engineering fields and sciences, we run an experiment, change the experiment and run it again, and then ask, Ma Nishtana? What Changed? What is different?

By identifying what is different, we can try to explain the reason for the difference, and what will be the implications of this difference on the problem we are solving.

A software engineer writes a program and several tests for it. They change the parameters of a test, and the tests fails. Ma Nishtana? How can they fix it?

A mechanical engineer tests the forces that get applied on a particular type of engine. They then change the shape of the piston or crankshaft. Ma Nishtana? Which one is more efficient

A structural engineer tests the stress of a particular type of concrete. They then change the mix of concrete material, and run the experiment again. Ma Nishtana? Which mix is best to use when constructing a building (or a Pyramid :))?

An electrical engineer chooses a modulation for a transceiver. They then use the transceiver in an a different environment and observe a higher bit error rate. Ma Nishtana? Is a modulation which work well for television broadcasting work similarly for carrying GPS signals?

The Haggadah teaches us to ask these questions and identify the differences from a very young age. In fact, it requires the youngest person in the Seder to ask these questions. So in some way, the Haggadah is training the engineers of the future.

Recipe Corner

From the Berkeley Hillel Kitchen Interns

Fruit Compote

Alex Kaplan

"This is one of my favorite recipes that my grandma used to make at our seders. After she passed, my aunt started making it, and last year with quarantine I decided to make it for the first time myself. Such a yummy sweet treat during the Seder!"

Fruit Compote

3 large red apples

3 pears

2 oranges

1 package strawberries (more the merrier)

1/2 cup golden raisins

2 cups semi-dry white wine

1 cup orange juice

1/2 cup apple juice

2 sticks of cinnamon

1. Peel fruit and cut up
2. Put all ingredients but strawberries in a large pot
3. Boil the ingredients & then cover and simmer for 15 minutes
4. Add strawberries and simmer for another 2 minutes
5. Enjoy! (If your fruit is not soft enough for your liking at this point you may choose to continue simmering for longer)

Meringue Cookies & Chocolate Mousse
Rivkah Bar-Or

Meringue Cookies

Ingredients

3 egg whites at room temperature

¼ cream of tartar

¾ granulated sugar

¼ tsp of vanilla extract

½ tsp of white vinegar

Directions

1. Wipe bowl with white vinegar
 2. Preheat oven to 200 F and line a pan with parchment paper
 3. Using a stand mixer combine egg whites and cream of tartar
 4. Whisk until soft peaks form
 5. Add in granulated sugar and vanilla
 6. Whisk until stiff peaks form
 7. Using a piping bag and a metal tip pipe 2 inch rounds of meringue
 8. Bake for 90 to 120 minutes
 9. Turn off oven and leave oven door open and leave meringues over night
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Chocolate Mousse

Ingredients

3 tbsps of unsalted butter

6 ounces semisweet chocolate

3 large eggs

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of cream of tartar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tbsps of sugar ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of heavy cream, cooled 1 pint (save some for toppings)

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of vanilla extract

Directions

1. Place butter and chocolate in a bain marie until chocolate is melted
2. In a stand mixer, whisk together egg whites and cream of tartar until they form soft peaks **about 3 minutes** add in sugar and continue to whisk until stiff peaks form **about 3 more minutes**
3. Whisk together heavy cream and vanilla until the cream holds stiff peaks
4. Fold whipped cream into chocolate
5. Add meringue to mixture and fold **DO NOT STIR**
6. Let cool for at least 2 hours before serving
7. Top with whipped cream and fruit

English Toffee Bars
By Michael Karish



English Toffee Bars (Passover)

You will not believe how unbelievable these cookies are!

**3 pieces matzo
1 cup (2 sticks) butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 (12-ounce) package chocolate chips
1 cup finely chopped nuts (walnuts, peanuts)**

Line a cookie sheet with foil. Butter foil. Lay matzos on cookie sheet in 1 layer, side by side. Melt butter; add brown sugar and boil for 5 minutes. Watch carefully. Pour melted mixture on matzos and spread evenly. Bake in preheated 325 degree oven for 8 to 10 minutes. Turn off oven; sprinkle on chocolate chips and put back in oven to melt chips, about 8 minutes. Take cookie sheet out of oven, and spread chips across evenly; sprinkle on nuts and press lightly into chocolate. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Break into pieces. Store in refrigerator.

Chocolate Walnut Candy (Passover)

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

At the end of the seder we cry out “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

Next year, in person!

Next year, in good health and good spirits!

Chag Sameach!