

## PARTICIPANT BOOKLET

# Meals of Freedom for Life

**An introduction to the Passover Seder and its narrative guide, the Haggada, for Christians who wish to understand its continuing significance for Jews and its relationship to the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion).**

---



## INTRODUCTION

1. As we gather in this springtime, many things are being freed and returning to life.
  2. Ground freed from frost and cold, warming up.
  3. Trees freed from winter rest, growing leaves and buds.
  4. Plants freed from hard earth, sprouting.
  5. Daytime freed from long nights, brighter and longer.
  6. Animals freed from hibernation, roaming.
- 
1. All creation freed from slower, darker, colder winter, coming back to life as God's world, showing God's glory!
  2. Jews and Christians choose this time to celebrate, to remember when they were trapped and closed in – a cold, dark time.
  6. But God came and set them free, brought life back to them as God's people, praising God and showing God's glory.
  3. As Christians, we celebrate Easter, when God brought Jesus back to life, freed from the power of death. And we celebrate it in a meal that reminds us—
  4. Jesus isn't the only one who is free – we are, too! Free from the power of death, free from fear, free from evil's control.

**All. Free to be God's people!**



1. And God is “Ruler of the Universe,” so the full address is:  
[6] “O Lord our God” [4] “Ruler of the Universe.”
  1. Say it with me: **“O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe.”**  
And again: **“O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe.”** Great!
  3. So then we just need to add the blessing: “Blessed are you!” With me: **“Blessed are you!”**  
What? **“Blessed are you!”**
  1. Whom do we bless? [6] “O Lord our God” [4] “Ruler of the Universe.””
  1. Let’s put it all together: **“Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe!”**  
[Repeat as necessary, until the group is comfortable with saying the blessing.]  
We’ll start every blessing with this simple phrase, so hang onto it and keep it ready!
2. Okay. All is ready. Things are in order. And we know the blessing. Let’s get started.

### LIGHTING THE CANDLES

5. The Passover feast begins, just like every Sabbath, with lighting of the candles. In each family tonight, we will select someone to light the candles and say the blessing at each table  
Go ahead and do that now at your table, using this litany:

*Someone lights the candles saying:* “We light and bless the candles to welcome the Passover.”

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,**  
*Candlelighter:* who has made us holy through your commandments  
and commanded us to light the Passover lights.

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,**  
*Candlelighter:* for you kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us  
to this moment. May this place be made holy by the light  
of your presence; shine on us in blessing and give us peace.



### RECITING THE KIDDUSH

5. The Seder begins with the *Kiddush* [Kidd-ush], making the holiday holy with a blessing and a cup of wine. Wine is sweet and joyous, reminding us of how sweet freedom is, and what joy it brings us. In the Seder **meal**, there are four sections; each is connected to a cup of wine.
2. A fifth cup, the Cup of Elijah, is placed at the empty seat in expectation that God will act again in the future, when Elijah comes and all people are set free.
1. Fill all your cups now, with each person at the table serving someone else. Also fill Elijah’s cup.  
[wait until the cups are filled] Now, before we drink any wine, let us say the blessing together:  
**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.**  
**Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who makes the people Israel and its festivals holy.**

1. Now share the first cup of wine in your family group.

*Everyone drinks a first cup of wine.*





**SEDER TABLE**

3. The Seder table is different from a regular dinner table. There is the special flat Passover bread – matza, a bowl of salt water, and a Seder plate with special foods:

- A bone
- An egg
- Bitter herbs
- Parsley
- Charoset* (chopped apples mixed with wine [and nuts])



**Pronunciation:**  
Remember that “ch” is like the German Ach!, even starting a word. And accent the ro.

6. The Haggada gives us four specific questions to ask at the Seder. Each one sets this night, this meal, apart as special, different from all others. What makes this night different from all others? Asking questions helps us learn. Let’s have several of the fathers in our family groups lead us to our questions.

1. (or A): On all other nights we eat all kinds of bread and crackers.  
All Children & Youth ask: **Why do we eat only matza on ?**

1

2. (or B): On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables and herbs.  
All Children & Youth ask: **Why do we eat bitter herbs, maror, at our Seder?**

2

5. (or C): On all other nights we don’t usually dip foods. Tonight we dip parsley in salt water and bitter herbs in *charoset*.  
All Children & Youth ask: **Why do we dip twice?**

3

4. (or D): On all other nights we eat sitting up straight.  
All Children & Youth ask: **Why do we sit or lean on a pillow tonight?**

4

6. We have asked many questions.  
Let us search for the answers as we read and tell the story of Passover.

**Pronunciation:**  
Pess-ach  
  
mah-roar  
  
cha-ro-set

## JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT

4. Long ago a cruel king named Pharaoh ruled the land of Egypt. He made the Hebrew people there his slaves. They had to work very hard building cities and palaces for Pharaoh. The Jews were hungry and tired. To make their work easier, they sang songs.



*Sing a song: I've been working on the Pyramids. All the livelong day.*

*I've been working on the Pyramids just to pass the time away.*

*Don't you hear the whistle blowing, rise up so early in the morn;*

*Don't you hear the captain shouting, "Hebrews, blow your horn!"*

*Hebrews, won't you blow, Hebrews, won't you blow, Hebrews, won't you blow your horn?*

*Hebrews, won't you blow, Hebrews, won't you blow, Hebrews, won't you blow your horn?*

## MOSES IS WORRIED

2. Moses was a Hebrew who knew what the other Hebrews were suffering in Egypt. He had grown up there and later moved out to another land, where he was a shepherd for his father-in-law. But Moses knew how bad life was for his Hebrew people. He worried about them. Moses wondered how he could help them best.

## BURNING BUSH

4. One day when Moses was taking care of his sheep, he saw a burning bush and heard God's voice coming from the bush. God told Moses to go back to Egypt to free the Hebrew slaves and take them away from cruel Pharaoh.



### "Go Down, Moses"

*All Leaders:* When Israel was in Egypt's land, let my people go;  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, let my people go.

*Refrain (All):* **Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,  
Tell old Pharaoh: Let my people go!**

*All Leaders:* The Lord told Moses what to do, let my people go;  
To lead the children of Israel through, let my people go.

*Refrain (All):* **Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,  
Tell old Pharaoh: Let my people go!**

6. Moses returned to Egypt. He went to Pharaoh and told him,  
"Let my people go!" But Pharaoh refused to listen to him.



*All sing 2x:* **Pharaoh, Pharaoh, Whoa baby, let my people go! Huh!  
Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah**

**TEN PLAGUES**

2. Pharaoh was acting like God, deciding which Hebrews would live and die, and controlling their lives. So God did things that Pharaoh couldn't, to show who really is "ruler of the universe." These acts of God were called plagues.

5. One day swarms of insects covered the land and ate all the crops.
3. One day there was a great storm of thunder and hail.
4. Later the sun didn't shine for days and there was only darkness.
6. And one day Pharaoh woke up and there were frogs all over the place.

*All Leaders speak:* One morning when Pharaoh woke in his bed,



There were frogs in his bed and frogs on his head.  
Frogs on his nose and frogs on his toes  
Frogs here, frogs there, frogs were jumping everywhere.



3. Every plague frightened Pharaoh, and each time he promised to free the slaves. But he didn't keep his word. He was very stubborn. So God made each plague worse, until there were ten in all.

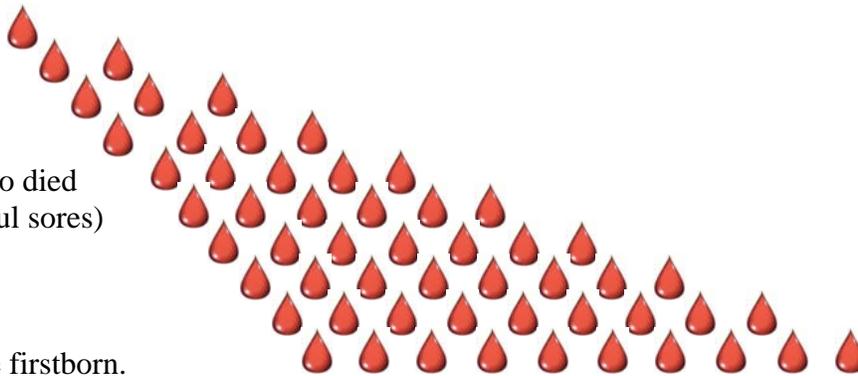
5. The plagues finally convinced Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go free, but the Egyptians suffered terribly from them. God doesn't want anyone to suffer, so we remember the Egyptians by taking a little bit out of the cup of joy that we will drink when we finish the story.

1. Fill up your cups around the table with the wine of joy. *[wait until the cups are filled]*

Now, we will each dip our little finger into the wine and take out one drop for every plague. Our joy cannot be complete while other people suffer.

Okay, we'll name the plagues, and everyone dip out a drop of wine for each plague, setting it on the side of your plate or on your napkin:

2. Blood
4. Frogs
6. Gnats
2. Flies
4. Animals who died
6. Boils (painful sores)
2. Hail
4. Locusts
6. Darkness
1. Death of the firstborn.



5. In that tenth plague, the oldest child of every mother – animal as well as human – died.
3. But Moses had warned the Hebrews to put the blood from a lamb over the door of their homes. When the angel of death came – the last plague that killed all the firstborn – the angel saw the blood and passed over the Hebrew families, so their oldest children didn't die. That's one reason this festival is called "Passover," and why lamb is sometimes eaten.

5. Pharaoh agreed to let the Jewish people go. In fact, he told Moses, “Get out!” So the Hebrews gathered everything quickly, snatching up their bread before it had time to rise, and fled behind Moses. When they baked the bread it became hard and flat, much like the matza of the Seder.
2. The life that the Hebrew slaves endured in Egypt was bitter – hard, cruel, and nearly impossible. But when Moses led them out, through the Red Sea and away from Pharaoh’s army, they passed over to another life. In that life, God would lead them and guide them and provide for them. They passed over from bitterness to blessing. That’s another reason the festival is called “Passover,” and bitter herbs are part of the meal.
3. When Moses and the Hebrews came to the Red Sea, God made a path through the sea so that they could escape from Pharaoh’s army. After they were safely on the other side, out of Egypt and into freedom as God’s people, Moses’ sister, Miriam, led them in songs of thanks to God. Let’s sing together, to tell the story and celebrate the freedom of the Passover.

### “Go Down, Moses”

4. (*singing*): As Israel stood by the waterside, let my people go;  
at God’s command it did divide, let my people go.



*Refrain (All):* **Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land,  
tell old Pharaoh: Let my people go!**

6. (*singing*): When they had reached the other shore, let my people go;  
they sang the song of triumph o’er, let my people go.

*Refrain (All):* **Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land,  
tell old Pharaoh: Let my people go!**

1. The Hebrews became God’s people through the Passover, and every generation of their children and grandchildren and all their descendants down to this very day celebrate the Passover. When God made the Hebrews free, God made them all free. It isn’t just a story about way back then, over there, “once upon a time” – since God did that once, all the Hebrews and all their Jewish descendants are free to be God’s people.
5. Drinking the second cup of wine celebrates that freedom, remembering that ten drops were dipped out in sorrow at the suffering of the Egyptians in the plagues. Everyone share now in saying the blessing and drinking from the second cup of wine!

*All:* **Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.**

*Everyone drinks the second cup of wine.*



**SHARING THE PASSOVER FOODS**

3. It's finally time to eat!!

As we eat the foods on the Seder table we recall the story we just told.

Let's see if we can answer the four questions we asked at the beginning.

*A (or 1):* On all other nights we eat all kinds of bread and crackers.

*All Children & Youth ask:* **Why do we eat only matza on Pesach?**

1

2. We eat only matza to remember that the Jews left Egypt so quickly that they had no time to let bread rise so they could bake it.

1. Before we eat the matza we say two blessings. One thanks God for giving bread to eat all the time and the other thanks God especially for giving matza to eat on Pesach:

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,  
who brings forth bread from the earth.**

**Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,  
who made us holy by your commandments and has commanded us to eat matza.**

*Everyone eats some of the matza.*



*B (or 2):* On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables and herbs.

*All Children & Youth ask:* **Why do we eat bitter herbs, maror, at our Seder?**

2

6. We eat horseradish, a bitter herb, and dip maror into the charoset to remind us how distasteful – how yucky! – life was for the Hebrews as slaves of Pharaoh. Charoset looks like the clay and straw that the Hebrews used to make bricks for building Pharaoh's cities and palaces.

1. Before we eat the maror, let us say the blessing:

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who made us holy by your  
commandments and has commanded us to eat the bitter herbs.**

*Everyone dips a piece of Romaine into charoset, adds some horseradish, and eats it.*

*C (or 5):* On all other nights we don't usually dip foods. Tonight we dip bitter herbs in charoset and we dip parsley in salt water.

*All Children & Youth ask:* **Why do we dip twice?**

3

4. We dip parsley into salt water. Parsley is green and reminds us that it is spring and new life will grow. Salt water reminds us of the tears of the Hebrew slaves and of the Egyptians who died. We remember that the freedom we celebrate is always tinged with suffering.

1. Before we eat the parsley, let us say the blessing:

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the land.**



*Everyone dips* PARSLEY *in salt water and eats it.*

Karpas earlier?

## The Egg and the Bone

5. There are two other symbolic foods on the Seder plates: an egg and a bone. The egg is another reminder of spring, the time of new life when the Jews were freed from slavery in Egypt. Traditionally, it represented the offering made in the Temple at the time of the Passover festival.

*Everyone eats their egg.*



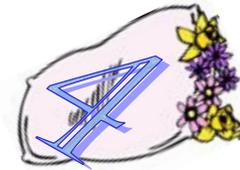
2. The bone reminds us of the night of the last plague, the tenth plague. The angel of death was coming, so God told the Hebrews to put lamb's blood on the door frames of their houses. They roasted lamb and used the blood so that the angel of death would "pasach" – pass over – their homes and let their children live. So the festival is called "Pesach" [pess-ach].

**Pronunciation:**  
Pasach: puh-sach  
[like German Ach!]

*D (or 4):* On all other nights we eat sitting up straight.

*All Children & Youth ask:* **Why do we sit on a pillow at the Seder?**

3. Only people who were free were allowed to recline or lean on a pillow at mealtime; slaves were not. The Jews sit or lean on a pillow to recall that once they were slaves, but God has set them free.



## DAYENU [Die-ay-new]

1. We have heard of many things that God did to set the Hebrews free. By telling the story and sharing the meal, Jews today take part in the freedom. They celebrate what God has done for them. In a special song, they praise God for each step of the journey, every act of God that led them to freedom. The song shows that any one of those things – even just one – would have been enough to know God's power. But God did it all – and so the Jews can celebrate their freedom every year!
4. *Dayenu* means "enough"; or, "for that alone we should be grateful." It is a song of praise at the end of the Passover feast to celebrate God's great generosity.

Let us sing together a sample of this special song that thanks God for freeing the Hebrews.

*A leader sings the verse and all sing the refrain (see the Leader's Guide for more verses):*

1. **Had God led us out of Egypt, only led us out of Egypt, but not split the sea before us, da-ye-nu. Refrain.**
2. **Had God split the sea before us, only split the sea before us, but not given us the Torah, da-ye-nu. Refrain.**

**Refrain:** da-da-ye-nu da-da-ye-nu da-da-ye-nu da-ye-nu da-ye-nu (da-ye-nu)  
da-da-ye-nu da-da-ye-nu da-da-ye-nu da-ye-nu da-ye-nu

## THIRD CUP

1. Because each of these acts of God was a blessing to the people, the third cup is known as the cup of blessing. Fill the third cup of wine and let's all say the blessing before we drink it!

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.**

*Everyone drinks the third cup of wine.*



**CUP OF ELIJAH**

2. The extra cup of wine on the table is the cup of Elijah.
4. One place at each table is left empty for Elijah when he comes.
5. Some believe that Elijah visits each Seder to wish everyone a year of peace and freedom.
3. Elijah as a wandering prophet is also the symbol of the humble traveler.
6. Opening the door for Elijah symbolizes the hope that Elijah will arrive to mark the coming of the Messiah and the complete freedom of the Jewish people. Not all Jews are free, and certainly not all people are free. Let's open the door and invite Elijah to come in with the promise of total freedom for all people one day. (*Someone opens the door.*)

**FROM SEDER TO COMMUNION, FROM PASSOVER TO THE CROSS**

5. Every Jew celebrates the Seder to remember "what God did for **me** when God brought **me** out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:8) – not something long ago and far away, but something personal.
1. God doesn't only set the Jews free – God wants all people to know that they are free to be God's people. So God frees all people from the power of sin. And that happens when Jesus defeats death for us. That's what Good Friday and Easter are all about.
6. Just as the lamb's blood on the Hebrew homes protected them from the angel of death, Jesus' blood on the cross protects us from the power of death. That is why we call Jesus "our Passover"; that is why we call Jesus "the lamb of God."

2. Since we are not Jews, we do not celebrate the Seder. We celebrate the meal with Jesus' blood and Jesus' body which we call Holy Communion. For us, too, it isn't long ago and far away. The gift of freedom, in bread and wine, is "given and shed for you." It's personal and it's shared in community.



3. The story is different, but God is the same. Communion is also a story of God's power people. Just as the Seder is the family meal Communion is the family meal of God's



The story we remember in Holy that sets people free to be God's of God's people who are Jews, people who are Christians.

4. As we celebrate Holy Communion, we can listen and watch for words and gestures, for objects and foods, for ideas and images that connect it to the Seder. Those things connect us to the Jewish people. We are all free to be God's people, because God has set us all free – in the Exodus, and in and through Jesus' death and resurrection.
6. Just as the Seder concludes with the final glass of wine, let us finish our time together with our own celebration, sharing in the fourth cup. With it we praise a God who is so great that everyone finds their story of freedom in God's story. Fill one another's cups and let's say the blessing:

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,  
who creates the fruit of the vine.**

*Everyone drinks the fourth cup of wine.*



## CONCLUSION

5. Thank you for coming to this introduction to the Seder. We hope that you have enjoyed it and have learned about its focus on God's power to set people free. Because Jews and Christians both experience that power, albeit in different ways, we can use our freedom to work toward peace, toward shalom, between us and among all people.

1. Let us say a blessing together:

**All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who provides for everything. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, for taking the Hebrews out of slavery to freedom, for giving them Torah which taught them how to live, and for bringing them to the land of Israel. May Zion be blessed with peace and may all people live in harmony and contentment – in shalom. Amen.**

4. We end with a song of hope for the Jewish people and for ourselves.  
Let's gather in a circle with our arms on each other's shoulder, singing and dancing.

**All: Shalom my friends. Shalom my friends. Shalom, Shalom  
We'll see you again, we'll see you again. Shalom, Shalom.**

שָׁלוֹם  
SHALOM



Revised version, January 2011.

Created by Ruth Doty, Jane Elliott, AIM, Karin Kahler,  
Ann Lindholm, & Margaret Wolff,  
Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus, PA.

Adapted and edited by the Rev. Peter A. Pettit, Ph.D,  
Director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding  
of Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA.



With thanks to Rabbis Barbara Goldman-Wartell, Amy Eilberg, Allen Juda, and Jonathan Gerard.

### Sources:

"Passover" booklet from Wegmans Food Markets, Inc.

Saypol, Judyth Robbins. *My Very Own Haggadah*. Kar-Ben Copies, 11216 Empire La, Rockville, MD 20852 ©1974.

Thompson, Barbara Balzac. *Passover Seder: Ritual and Menu for an Observance by Christians*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984.

Zimmermann, Mark. *The Seder Meal* (a placemat). Creative Communications for the Parish, 2009.

Zion, Noam and David Dishon. *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah*. Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997.