

Pass Over to Freedom

A Spiritual Journey



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The progression from slavery to freedom comes from the “Four Languages of Freedom” in Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh’s Kabbalah text *Sod Adonay Lee-ray-av*. The material is © to Dr. David Sanders and Kabbalah Experience and can be shared with permission from the author.



**“How does one
become a butterfly?”
she asked pensively.**

**“You must want to fly so much
that you are willing to give up
being a caterpillar.”**

Trina Paulus, Hope for the Flowers

Dedicated to the release of these young women abducted from their school in Chibok, Nigeria whose lives are not forgotten by their fellow humans. As long as any of them remain captive none of us is free.

Abigail, Aishatu, Amina, Asabe, Awa, Awagana, Blessing, Christiana, Christy, Comfort, Confort, Deborah, Docas, Eli, Esther, Falta, Fatima, Febi, Filo, Gloria, Glory, Godiya, Grace, Hadiza, Halima, Hamsatu, Hana, Hanata, Hanatu, Hasana, Hauwa, Helen, Ihyi, Jinkai, Juliana, Jummai, Kabu, Kauna, Kume, Kummai, Kwadugu, Kwanta, Ladi, Laraba, Liyatu, Lugwa, Lydia, Maifa, Maimuna, Mairama, Margret, Mary, Maryamu, Monica, Muli, Muwa, Mwa, Naomi, Nguba, Palmata, Patiant, Pindar, Racheal, Rahab, Rahila, Rakiya, Rebeca, Rejoice, Rhoda, Rifkatu, Ruth, Safiya, Salomi, Saratu, Saraya, Sicker, Serah, Solomi, Suzana, Tabitha, Talata, Yana, Yanke, Yayi, Zara.

A tradition is a vehicle for carrying something through time. If wisdom is embedded in a tradition, it has a better chance of travelling safely through the centuries. For this to work the wisdom must be packed in things that do not degrade with time, things that can be unpacked at every station—things like symbols, myths, stories. These are things that no matter how often you unpack them will travel onward for another generation to unpack, and unpack differently. Sometimes the wisdom may emerge brilliant and obvious, sometime obscure and esoteric, and sometimes people will find nothing there at all. But if the tradition continues, the wisdom will keep travelling, in the hope that, at another station in the flow of time, another generation will find it and embody it once more.

David Kaetz, Making Connections

Guide to this Pass Over Seder:

The Seder Plate includes the traditional foods eaten at a Seder—and some foods that reflect newer traditions—each serving a symbolic meaning for the journey to freedom.

Artichoke: to symbolize the heart of compassion (in place of shankbone)

Charoset: made of apples and nuts (there are nut free alternatives), to symbolize the mortar used for laying bricks

Chazeret: romaine lettuce—to symbolize the sweet that ends up bitter

Beitzah-Egg: to symbolize new birth

Karpas: a vegetable to be dipped in salt water to symbolize tears of relief and awakening from numbness or apathy

Matzah: thin, unleavened bread to symbolize the need to move quickly and not procrastinate

Maror: bitter herbs (horseradish), to symbolize the bittersweet challenge of freedom and compassion for the unenlightened aspects of self and others

Wine: we drink 5 cups of libation to symbolize the stages of liberation

Orange: introduced as a symbol of gender inclusiveness

Miriam and Elijah's Cups: Filled with water (Miriam) and wine (Elijah) to symbolize a future vision of harmony and equality for all beings



*“Personalize your experience to become aware of
the constrictions and limitations you
place upon yourself.”*

This Kabbalah teaching unpacks the Passover Seder into an introspective journey of liberating ourselves from that which enslaves or constricts us.

The Hebrew word for Egypt is **Mitzrayim** which means narrowness or constraint. **Mitzrayim** is not only a geographical location--it reflects a state of mind and emotion; to be in your personal **Mitzrayim** means then to be in narrowness--the experience of what constrains and constricts you.

So, when we talk about leaving Egypt, it is more personally relevant to insert narrow thinking, limited perspective or emotional confinement in the place of the word Egypt.

With this in mind let us “How will this experience make a difference for my life?”

Let us begin.

From the film: Room

Mouse is on the other side of this wall.

What other side?

Jack, there's two sides to everything.

Not on an octagon.

Yeh, but...

An octagon has eight sides.

But a wall like this, okay, a wall like this, see? We're on the inside and the mouse is on the outside.

In outer space?

No in this world. It's much closer than outer space.

I can't see the outside-side.



How many sides are there to freedom? Can you see the outside-side?

Each of us constructs rooms in which we find the comfort of walls to steady ourselves against, to prop us up with a sense of security and to enjoy what privacy allows. These rooms and their walls can also limit us; they can serve as places to hide, to be captive to (perceived) incapacities or to block us from exploring what is possible. There comes a time when each of us will experience those walls as a deterrent to growth, as an impediment to engaging with others or discovering a more realized self.

Is this a time to put a crack in the wall to let the light shine through, to open a window for a new melody to blow in, to let go of fear that holds us back? Can the crack be large enough, or deep enough to dissolve the barrier to experience what the outside-side is?

THERE IS A
CRACK IN
EVERYTHING,
THAT'S HOW
THE LIGHT
GETS IN.

*The birds they sang
at the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
has passed away
or what is yet to be.
Ah the wars they will
be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
bought and sold
and bought again
the dove is never free.*

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

Leonard Cohen, Anthem

The teachings of Kabbalah identify a five-stage process of liberating oneself from all forms of enslavement. We drink five cups of wine during which we respond to the inner call to liberate ourselves from whatever constrains us. This five-stage process corresponds to the five stages of freedom represented in the story of the exodus of the slaves from Egypt.

Stage one: There is a respite from the crushing work during the period of the plagues. You are still a slave even if you have been granted (temporarily) relief of forced labor. At any moment Pharaoh can reverse the decree and once again no path to freedom.

Stage two: It is Passover night and you are feeling the exhilaration of crossing the Egyptian border, tasting freedom. But are you really free? Will fear turn you back or will your oppressors ever let you be free? Still you are taking first steps.

Stage three: You have spent a week traversing the desert and when you face an impasse, a sea that you cannot cross, at that very moment the “past” has caught up with you-- Leaping into and crossing the sea, never to return to the former identity. The past is “dead” on the shoreline but what is known and comfortable may still be a regressive pull back to the past.

Stage four: It has been a long trek with many challenges on the journey (lack of food, attack) to independence--but with each day the specter of the past fades and your identity of being a slave dissolves. Arriving at Sinai is the next stage of freedom from you—a bold transforming from a slave to a person with a people, a destiny and a mission.

Stage five: What felt like an initial long trek has now become a generational wandering of the desert for 40 years in order to fully attain the next stage of freedom—you now can enter the “promise land” to fully begin actualizing your independence from the past and creating a fully realized life.

The 5 stages of becoming free that correspond to the five cups of wine we drink?

Reflect (hoe-tzay-tea) – to feel the walls of separation and contemplate liberation from that which constrains you. Contemplate your place(s) of narrowness or habit and reflect on your ability to move forward.

Resolve (he-tzal-tea) – to overcome resistance, inertia or regret and take first steps toward liberation—what is your first step? What crack do you open in the cocoon that surrounds and protects you?

Release (ga-al-tea) – to relinquish the claim of the past and redeem yourself and others through compassion and through accepting what is. Who would you be if you released fully from that narrowness, habit or identity?

Reveal (la-kach-tea) – to create a new identity based on the new reality of what is now possible due to breaking free of the chains of the past. Commit fully to the responsibilities of your new chosen identity.

Realize (hay-vay-tea) – to arrive in each moment as a moment of liberation—to relax into your true nature, return to your natural goodness, your essence, and expand your circle of concern for all who are enslaved.

RRRRR

Karpas

We dip a vegetable into salt water, representing our tears: tears of relief, tears of the thawing of the numbness, tears of hope. Eat in silence and reflect on the emotions chained, trapped or repressed in you that when experienced help you to release their grip on you.

This is what respite and reflection offers us: A chance to let ourselves feel the effects of oppression and constriction; to let the numbness thaw and to feel our pain and the pain of others.

For how long have we lived without hope?

At what point did we forget we are free?

For how long have we not allowed ourselves to weep, to break down—in order to break free?



*The caged bird sings with a fearful trill,
of things unknown, but longed for still,
and his tune is heard on the distant hill,
for the caged bird sings of freedom.*

Maya Angelou

The First Cup: Reflecting and Imagining

In order to be free an alternate way of being is contemplated or a new identity is imagined. We experience a glimpse of what is possible, what potential is not being realized, what seems to be holding us back? The slaves in Egypt had a “temporary” respite when Pharaoh rescinded the order for daily work but was still far from setting them free.

We lift the first cup and say together:

Let this celebration be for happiness, freedom, meaning and insight. May our hearts be open to our family and friends at our table, and to all who gather tonight. Let this celebration connect us with all who are seeking respite and who are not yet free.

Reflect

Call into focus what outside-side you want to experience...ah to be free.



Breaking the Matzah (Ya-chatz):

Why do we break matzah in two? Some say that it demonstrates how back-breaking slavery can be; others say it symbolizes how badly we need to get a break from what oppresses us.

The Hebrew name for breaking the matzah in half is called Ya-chatz, related to the Hebrew word La-chatz which means pressure. Matzah is pressed-down bread. Sometimes it is only when the pressure is eased a little, when you get to notice how hard it really is or was that something snaps. Sometimes it is the pressure that creates a breaking point.

All: Take a matzah and crack it in two. Feel the pressure that you create and the release as the matzah yields. Reflect: "what doesn't break me makes me stronger" and what do I need a break from and a break through. Set aside the larger piece to be eaten later for dessert.

(The larger piece is the Afikomen and can be used in a hide and seek game to be discovered in time for eating it for dessert).

Matzah:

The leaving happened so fast. The slaves left in such a hurry that there was no time to let the bread rise. And so matzah.

Matzah: Why do we eat it? To taste our resolve to be free, to recognize that sometimes you can't wait. Sometimes you have to let go even if you aren't completely ready. Sometimes you can only let go when you are not ready.

No hesitation, no more room for doubt.

Take the smaller piece of the Matzah you broke and say together before eating it: It all starts with a first step.

All read:

*Faith is
Taking the first step
Even when
You don't see the
Whole staircase*
Martin Luther King

Second Cup: Resolving to be Free

But first...The Inner Ten Plagues

We remove 10 drops of wine to symbolize those inner obstacles that we need to drop in order to be free. You can create your own list of inner obstacles (they can also be seen as those characteristics that “harden our heart”—the inner Pharaoh inside us).

Blood	Can I tolerate my “disloyalty”?
Frogs	Can I disengage my pride?
Lice	Am I significant?
Wild Beasts	Can I take the risk?
Cattle Plague	Can I overcome my apathy?
Boils	Can I let go of guilt or shame?
Hail	Is it just more comfortable to stay put?
Locusts	Will my pessimism overwhelm me?
Darkness	Why try again since I have failed before?
Death of first born	What needs to die in order to be free?

The second stage of freedom was the moment of exodus, the crossing of the border, an escape out of Egypt into freedom. This occurred on the night of the full moon of the month Nissan—what we celebrate as the first night of Passover. Earlier the slaves were freed from the work of slavery. Now they were leaving the place of enslavement.

As we prepare to drink the second cup of wine we deal with doubt and fear, with inertia and possible regret.

*We notice our comfort zone,
the walls of the room,
the interior of the cocoon.
We notice what holds us back,
Those things or qualities we think we lack
And with curiosity we see a crack.
A momentary glimpse of light,
Could it be that I just might,
Find escape this very night.*

We lift the second cup and say together:

Let this celebration be for happiness, freedom, meaning and insight. May our hearts be opened to our family and friends at our table and to all who gather tonight. Let this celebration connect us with all who are seeking to be strong in their resolve to be free but are not yet free. What will allow us to stay determined? Who can we be if we are determined not only to free ourselves but to free others as well?

Resolve



Maror: Bitter root

All: Take a piece of the bitter root (horseradish, romaine lettuce or alternative).

All say: *Maror: Why do we eat it? To taste the consequences of clinging to an old story, of remaining stagnant and stuck, committing to change but not changing or holding a grudge. Through eating Maror we bring heightened awareness to the cost of still holding on to our past, to staying enslaved, constricted or constrained. Through eating Maror we bring heightened awareness of the cost of remaining bitter, of not forgiving those who caused us pain or hurt and hanging on to negativity for not releasing ourselves sooner.*

Holding Opposites: Maror and Charoset

Take the Maror and combine it with the Charoset mixture—blending bitter and sweet and sandwich it with matzah. Taste the mixture and prior to eating it say:

How do we redeem the past? Not by forgetting it but by acknowledging it and finding redemptive qualities in it. Our past experiences influence who we are but they do not limit our choices. The Charoset symbolizes the mortar for bricks used by the slaves in Egypt—now it is used to build a sandwich and add sweetness—that which does not break you makes you stronger and sweeter.

Song: **Let Our Stories Go**

Refrain:

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell inner Pharaoh, let my stories go!

When we had our first reprieve.
Let my stories go!
We allowed ourselves to grieve.
Let my stories go. (Refrain)

Things changed so fast before our eyes.
Let my stories go!
The bread it had no time to rise.
Let my stories go! (Refrain)

We trembled by the waterside.
Let our stories go!
Our consciousness, it did divide.
Let our stories go!
Until we reached the other-side.
Let our stories go! (Refrain)

Caryn Aviv (with some changes)

Third Cup: Releasing the Past

Read aloud: For seven days the slaves put one foot in front of the other. For seven days they carried the wounds and memories of their slavery. Each day, they looked over their shoulders. We're they actually free? They left Egypt behind, but the baggage of slavery was not flying free.

In every journey to freedom we can feel unable to change or, if we started to change, the urge to turn back. Relapse is common because what was-is familiar, is comfortable even if it is also not wanted or intolerable.

In the exodus story the moment of truth comes at the sea with the Egyptian charioteers at their heels—the escape to freedom appeared blocked. Courage is acting despite fear—it is knowing full well that there is only one way “out”—forward. So they entered the sea and once the waters reached their nostrils the sea split. The opening often reveals itself only after we take the risk.

Contemplate silently the following:

We must know we will never return.

We must be active in our own redemption.

We must come to terms with whatever has occurred and “redeem” it.

We lift the third cup and say together:

Let this celebration be for happiness, freedom, meaning and insight. There are moments of truth when we have to courageously enter what appears impassable or impossible—we may have no idea what is on the other side. We enter the sea and may not know when it will split open, but if we insist, persist or desist we will get to a new perception.

As you drink, imagine standing on the other side—the opposing bank and know that the past is no longer exerting a magnetic pull or constraining the creation of the new you. You are releasing yourself from any identity that blocks you from realizing who you are—the holy dove.

Release



Story: A hiker, having tarried too long realizes she needs to head down the mountain despite the darkening of the sky. Nightfall overwhelms her sight and yet she has to get down. Cautiously she measures her steps to a point of near exhaustion. She trips and tumbles forward without any sense of where she is, grasping, desperately hoping to find a foot or handhold, when, her hands grab hold, a branch; a lifesaving branch that leaves her dangling. But how long can she hold on, how long can her arms hold out till she can see if it is safe to move one way or another? Ah, the first lightening of the sky reveals her predicament. She is but a few inches from the ground, she is dangling at the bottom of the mountain.

Optional: Dip a portion of egg in the salt water. Eggs symbolize the birth of new life; the release that occurs when you enter the sea and it splits to reveal the path to the other side.

We take a break for we have contemplated and enacted the first three stages toward liberation. We now partake of the festive meal followed by a blessing of gratitude.

A story to resume the journey:

Two monks, an elder and his young apprentice are on a journey. They come to a river and at the bank of the river is a young woman. She needs to cross but is afraid. To the chagrin of the younger monk, the elder monk approaches her, lifts her up and carries her across the river. Once across he lets the woman gently down and the monks continue on their journey.

After several hours, the younger monk can contain himself no longer. “Master,” he asks: “Have we not taken a vow of chastity? Is it not forbidden for us to look upon a woman, let alone touch her? Yet you lifted her up, with her body against yours, and carried her across the river!”

The elder monk turns to his student and responds: “I put that woman down hours ago, you are still carrying her.”

Notice the stories you are still carrying. What would it take to lay those stories down at the river’s edge? What would it be like to let the waters wash over them, dissolve them and leave them behind? How long have you, will you, carry those stories?

Fourth Cup: Relaxing into your new “self”

At this stage it is not enough to “not be a slave”—we now choose a new identity—we recognize fully that in our choice to be free we will not be told who we need to be or live a borrowed identity.

We have the spaciousness to not only consider who we can be, we can notice the humanity of those who have hurt us, those who have stood or remain standing in our way. We make room in our story for their stories. We make room in our pain for their pain.

Please divide the artichoke leaves and the heart which serves to open us to our own hearts of compassion—for ourselves and others. Notice how the heart of the artichoke brings a new taste to the fourth cup of wine.

We lift our cups a fourth time and say together:

Let this celebration be for happiness, freedom, meaning and insight. May our hearts be opened to our family and friends at our table, and to all who gather tonight. Let this celebration connect us with all people who are aware of the possibility of transformation and are willing to risk letting go of former selves that no longer serve them to reveal who they are, now. Let us raise our cup and drink a libation to this fourth stage of liberation.

Reveal



In the exodus story the slaves transform. They are no longer a band of slaves, they are a united people, a free people, capable of living fully in the present and fulfilling a mission that is greater than themselves.

To celebrate this awakening to the new self it is time for dessert and a final taste of the broken matzah. We were whole to begin with, we then became fragmented and now symbolically “bringing our selves back together.” We return to wholeness and to celebrate we eat a dessert from the broken matzah.

Lean into it. Linger with the experience of the Matzah,

Wherever you have come in your process of liberation is a cause for celebration. Acknowledge your work tonight with a kind word, a smile, recognition for your self and for those on this journey with you.

Song: **Let My Stories Go**

Refrain:

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt's land
Tell old Pharaoh, let my stories go!

When we had our first reprieve.
Let my stories go!
We allowed ourselves to grieve.
Let my stories go!
Things changed so fast before our eyes.
Let my stories go!
The bread it had no time to rise.
Let my stories go! (Refrain)

We trembled by the waterside.
Let our stories go!
Our consciousness, it did divide.
Let our stories go!
Until we reached the other-side.
Let our stories go!
Egypt we have left behind.
Let our stories go!
Can we receive expansive mind?
Let our stories go. (Refrain)

Our old patterns, we have worn.
Let our stories go!
Reinvent and be reborn.
Let our stories go.
Can we be completely free?
Let our stories go.
Can I see beyond me?
Let our stories go? (Refrain)

Caryn Aviv (with some changes)

Fifth Cup: Realizing the Promise

*Out beyond ideas
of wrongdoing
and rightdoing
there is a field.
I'll meet you there.*

Jelalludin Rumi

Read:

Doors are figural in the Passover story. For hundreds of years the door to freedom had been shut, and that night it opened to walk through.

Elijah was a sacred messenger in his time prophesying a message of hope, a message for all generations. Elijah, it is said, is still waiting. Waiting for us to open the final door. For the newly formed people the field was a long stretch of desert—a blank landscape on which to paint their own future. They became confused, perhaps bewildered by their new found freedoms. They faltered. It was the next generation, the ones that would open the final door to the promise of creating an enlightened society. It is always the hope for the generation of shifts in our consciousness that can bring us to new awareness.

Pour from Elijah's and Miriam's cup a blend of wine and water

We raise high the fifth cup and say together:

Let this celebration be for happiness, meaning, insight and freedom. For ours is a sacred journey. We may falter but we won't turn back. With curious minds and courageous hearts we clear new paths and open new possibilities. May we fully see what is happening right now. May we fully choose our stories. May we continue to reflect on our resistances, resolve to move forward, redeem what we can and find release, enter into the serenity of relaxation and come to realization.

Realize



Sung to “There was an old lady who swallowed a fly”

One little kid
She learned her religion
She learned her religion
Before she was five
And was told that her god
Was the only one alive (and some other jive)
She swallowed the whole story
Hook, line and sinker
I don't know why
I don't know why
If she doesn't let go
She's going to comply

One little kid
She ate from the apple
She ate from the apple
Before she was eight
She learned to hate people
Her parents did hate
She swallowed the whole story
Hook, line and sinker
I don't know why
I don't know why
If she remains in that cage
She'll not learn to fly

One little kid
In an enlightened mind state
Sought liberation from her Seder plate
She finished the matzah, the maror and wine
Looked in the mirror at her lady divine
She swallowed the sea
And connected the waters
I don't know why
I don't know why
She is fully living now
Her old stories die.

Begin Being

Being Begin

Begin Being

Being Begin

Begin Being

Being Begin

Begin Being

Being Begin

Begin Being



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