

The Recovery Seder 5782  
The SAFE Foundation

# Recovery Seder Workshop



Prepared by **Rabbi Gary Katz**



## 1. *Kadesh* - blessing the day over the fruit of the vine

On all Jewish holidays, including the weekly Sabbath, Jews mark the holy time by saying a blessing over the fruit of the vine, called *Kiddush*. The *Kiddush* for Passover thanks God for giving us holidays of joy and celebration, in particular this holiday, called here, “the time of our freedom.” Please note that it is permissible, indeed essential for those of us in recovery to make this blessing over grape juice, instead of wine.

### קִדּוּשׁ

סְבָרֵי מָרְנוּ וְרַבָּנוּ וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וְתַתֵּן לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה מוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חֲגִים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן, אֶת יוֹם חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה,

זְמַן חֲרוּתֵנוּ מִקְרָא קִדְּשׁ, זְכָר לִיציאת מצרים. כִּי בָנוּ  
בְּחִרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, וּמוֹעֲדֵי קִדְּשָׁךְ  
בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, מְקַדֵּשׁ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְמַנִּים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחֵינּוּ וְקִדְּמָנוּ  
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe,  
who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, G-d, our G-d, King of the universe,  
who has chosen us from among all people, and raised  
us above all tongues, and made us holy through His  
commandments. And You, G-d, our G-d, have given us  
in love festivals for happiness, feasts and festive  
seasons for rejoicing day of this Feast of Matzot and  
this Festival of holy convocation, the Season of our  
Freedom a holy convocation, commemorating the  
departure from Egypt. For You have chosen us and  
sanctified us from all the nations, and You have given  
us as a heritage Your holy Festivals in happiness and  
joy. Blessed are You, G-d, who sanctifies Israel and the  
festive seasons.

## Seder – Order

*Kadesh*- blessing the day over the fruit of the vine

*Urchatz*- ritual hand washing

*Karpas*- eat a green vegetable

*Yachatz*- break the middle matzah

*Maggid*- tell the Exodus story

*Rachtza*- hand washing before meal

*Motzi Matzah*- eat matzah

*Maror*- eat bitter herbs or vegetable

*Korech*- eat bitter herb and matzah together

*Shulchan Orech*- eat a festive meal

*Tzafun*- eat a small piece of matzah for dessert

*Barech*- thank God for food

*Hallel*- praise God

*Nirtzah*- concluding songs

Blessed are You, G-d, our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Questions for Thought or Discussion

What are ways that you feel enslaved trapped, stressed by time?

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What are sanctified times for your recovery?

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What rituals do you use to sanctify time for your recovery and/or Judaism?

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**2. *Urchatz* – washing of the hands**

We wash our hands before dipping the karpas into salt water, as was the custom in earlier times to ritually wash the hands before eating bread or any food that would be dipped into liquid. Why did the rabbis enact a law that requires washing of the hands and not any other part of the body? They were very clear to tell us that it is not for physical cleanliness, as we are already expected to take measures to ensure that our bodies are clean and healthy.

One explanation is that the hands represent “action” and “doing.” In fact, the Torah tells us “הקל קול גַּעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדִים יַדֵּי עֲשׂוּ” “the voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau.” Esau’s name in Hebrew is the same as the word “to do” and hands are synonymous with doing and action. Most of the actions that we take or things that we do involve our hands in some capacity. Therefore, the rabbis required each person to wash their hands prior to eating these types of food so that it would remind us that

we need to use our hands in holy and correct ways and that we should strive to take actions that bring us closer to God.

Questions for Thought or Discussion

What actions do you take for your recovery?

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What actions do you find resistance in taking?

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What actions do you take to become closer to God?

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**3. *Karpas* - eating a green vegetable**

Passover always takes place in the spring and is sometimes called “the holiday of spring.” Spring is a time of rebirth as the warmth of the season brings new growth. So too, for the Israelites, freedom from slavery in Egypt was a rebirth. In this part of the Seder we eat a green vegetable to remind us of spring. We dip the vegetable in salty water, to remind us of the tears and the hardship of Israelite slaves.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

In recovery, we are always striving to continue to see ourselves as newcomers. What ways do you “keep it green?”

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What are ways that you make sure to remember the hardship and pain that your addiction caused you?

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What are other symbols of rebirth and renewal for you in recovery and Judaism?

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**4. *Yachatz* – Breaking the middle matzah**

The middle matzah is broken into two pieces and one of them is put away for the afikomen at the end of the seder. Often the piece which is the afikomen is hidden for the children to find as a way of keeping them involved in the seder.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

The middle matzah is broken at the beginning of the seder into two pieces to be used later on in the service of the seder at two different times. Only by being broken is it able to fulfill these two different functions. In what ways did the brokenness of your addiction enable you to be useful at a later point in your life to yourself and in service to God and others?

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## 5. Maggid – Telling of the Story of Exodus

### a. Inviting the poor

Before retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, we invite the poor and needy to join our Seder tables. The Matzah, flat bread that Jews eat on Passover is connected to the experience of the Israelite slaves. Since our ancestors were poor and hungry slaves in Egypt, we know what that is like and we stop here to make sure that we help any poor or hungry in our own communities. So too, since we have suffered various afflictions, we want to reach out and help those who are still suffering. It is an important lesson in Judaism and recovery that we learn from our experiences to help people who are still suffering. In fact, this is such an important lesson that just by speaking about our own suffering and recovery, we help those who are still suffering. Engaging in a lengthy discussion about our own issues and suffering without thoughtfulness of others who are still sick and suffering is just another form of self indulgence. We begin by reciting:

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהֵתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכַפִּין יִיתִי וְיִיכַל, כָּל דְּצָרִידָא יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח.  
הַשְׁתָּא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְׁתָּא עַבְדִּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנִי חוֹרִין.

“This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry, let them come and eat. All who are needy, let them come and eat the Passover meal with us.”

### Questions for Thought and Discussion

What ways do I look to give back and help those who are still suffering? How do I use my own affliction and suffering to help other people?

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What are you still hungry for?

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What are positive and negative ways that you fill your hunger for spirituality?

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### b. Asking questions

An important part of the Seder is teaching the story and traditions to children. In order to get children involved in the Seder, we begin the telling of Exodus story with a series of four questions. The four questions ask about parts of the Seder that are different than what we usually do, like eating Matzah instead of regular bread. In many Jewish homes that youngest member of the family asks the four questions. The four questions written in the Haggadah are just the beginning- they are meant to inspire other questions about the story and traditions, that children and adults ask during the Seder. Some people will even ask questions that already know the answers to, to create an atmosphere in which participants of all ages can involve themselves in telling the story of slavery to freedom.

Ma nishtanah halailah hazeh  
mikol haleilot?

מה־נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה מִכָּל־  
הַלַּיְלוֹת?

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin  
hametz umatzah; halailah  
hazeh, kuloh matzah.

שֶׁבְּכָל־הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנּוּ אוֹכְלִין חֵמֶץ  
וּמִצָּה; הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, כָּלוּ מִצָּה.

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin  
sh'ar y'rakot; halailah hazeh,  
maror.

שֶׁבְּכָל־הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנּוּ אוֹכְלִין שְׂאֵר  
יֵרָקוֹת; הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה, מְרוֹר.

Sheb'khol haleilot ein anu  
matbilin afilu pa'am ehat;  
halailah hazeh, shtei f'amim.

שֶׁבְּכָל־הַלַּיְלוֹת אֵין אָנּוּ מְטַבְּלִין  
אֶפְלוּ פְּעַם אַחַת; הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה,  
שְׁתֵּי פְּעָמִים.

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin  
bein yoshvin uvein m'subin;  
halailah hazeh, kulanu m'subin.

שֶׁבְּכָל־הַלַּיְלוֹת אָנּוּ אוֹכְלִין בֵּין  
יוֹשְׁבִין וּבֵין מְסֻבִּין; הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה,  
כָּלָנוּ מְסֻבִּין.

## Translation

Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat leavened products and matzah, and on this night only matzah.

On all other nights we eat all vegetables, and on this night only bitter herbs.

On all other nights, we don't dip our food even once, and on this night we dip twice.

On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining, and on this night we only recline.

### Questions and Thoughts for Discussion

What kind of questions are you asking? Are they questions focused on the problem or the solution? Do you look to ask questions to seek an answer for knowledge or action or are there times when you ask a question in order to ridicule, belittle, argue, or look smart?

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### **c. Plagues and grape juice**

The Book of Exodus tells how God sent terrible things to afflict the Egyptians, the ten plagues, so that they would free the Israelite slaves. When we tell this part of the story at the Seder, we spill some juice from our cups ten times, as we recall each plague. We do this to reduce our pleasure as we remember the suffering of the Egyptians. Even in our joy and thanksgiving, we are sad that others suffered so that we could have our freedom.



**d. Symbols of Passover**

The three main symbols of the Seder are *pesach*, *matzah*, and *maror*. *Pesach* is the animal sacrifice that was given on Passover in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. It reminds us of the lamb that the Israelites ate the night that God killed the Egyptian first born sons, but spared the Israelites. We don't sacrifice animals today, but we place a lamb bone on the Seder table as a symbol. *Matzah* is the flat bread we eat on Passover. It reminds us that the Israelites left Egypt in a hurry and did not have time for their dough to rise. *Maror* is a bitter herb or vegetable. The taste reminds of the bitter lives that Israelites lived when they were slaves.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

Similar to the Jewish first born being spared from the plague of the first born, what were you spared from by finding recovery?

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What freedoms have you found in recovery?

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What do you still seek to find more freedom from? What tools could you use to help with this?

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What experiences of bitterness have you needed to overcome to find freedom?

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**6. *Barech* - thanking God for food**

In Jewish tradition we thank God for food each time we eat. We say a blessing before eating thanking God for the type of food we are about to eat. In the blessing after a meal, Jews thank God for food and the good land that produces the food. Jews also ask God to be merciful and continue to sustain and support them. Saying the blessings over food helps us to be mindful of our how fortunate we are to have food and that our lives are dependent on God’s continued sustenance.

Questions and Thoughts for Discussion

What other areas in your life in addition to food reflect the blessings in your life?

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What other ways or times do you bless God?

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In what ways do you bring blessing into the lives of other people?

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**7. *Hallel* - praising God**

On many Jewish holidays we praise God. Jews often turn to the book of Psalms when praising God. Psalms is a book in the Bible of poems about what it feels like to be in a relationship with God. Psalms can be read or studied- and Jews often sing Psalms. We sing a selection of Psalms at the Seder, including Psalm 117, “Praise the Lord, all nations. Extol Him, all peoples. For great is His mercy toward us, And the faithfulness of the Lord is forever. Halleluyah- Praise the Lord.”

Questions for Thought and Discussion

How do you express your “praise” or gratitude to others or God?

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Does God need your praise? If not, what good does your praise accomplish?

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**8. Nirtzeh – conclusion of the seder**

The seder concludes with a prayer that our internal work done during it be accepted by God and that we merit to celebrate Passover next year in Jerusalem.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

What would a prayer written by you asking God to accept the work that you have done on yourself look like? Compose a short prayer to God asking that your work on yourself to become freer and to appreciate the freedom that you have been accepted.

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Where would you like to be in your life next year in terms of your personal growth, your relationship with God, your career, the relationships which are important to you and any other areas of your life?

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[718-GET-SAFE](tel:718-GET-SAFE)

[ask@thesafefoundation.org](mailto:ask@thesafefoundation.org)

<https://www.thesafefoundation.org>