

THE PASSOVER SEDER



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huzzah!

In preparation For The Passover Seder:

Before the Seder generally do what you would otherwise were there not going to be a seder, Remember that in other lands people still believe in God and all other sorts of complicated systems and symptoms. Try to watch "National Geographic" on television at least once. Prepare foods for the Passover in less than fifteen minutes, as if they were *coming for you* and you had to get away fast. If you cannot prepare your food quickly, place it in a satchel and go to sleep. Have a burly friend break down your door and try to kill you. Grab the food in the satchel and dash out of your house and bring it to the Seder.

Order Of The Passover

1. The First Cup

2. Washing The Hands

3. Eat A Green

4. The Second Cup

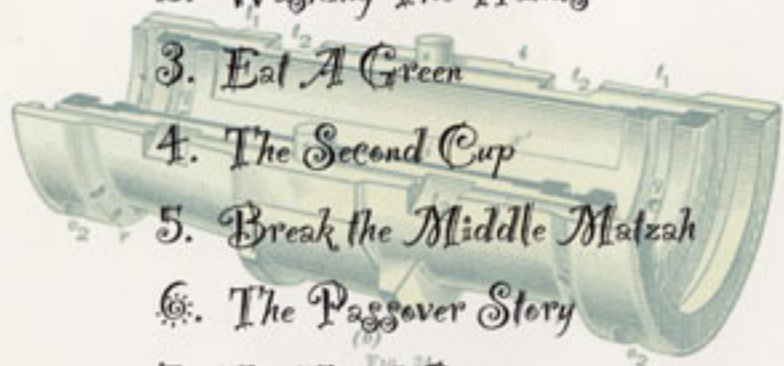
5. Break the Middle Matzah

6. The Passover Story

7. The Third Cup

8. Matzah And Herb (dude)

9. The Festival Meal



The First Cup

All read:

Thank you, (God), for providing us with this cannabis. With it, we can forget things that we need to forget. With it we gain the necessary distance to keep the tattered semblances of our lives in an (arbitrary) order. With it, the pinball machines are just so much prettier. Indeed, everything is so much prettier. With it, we make prettier things, and think that they are much prettier than they actually are. We will try not to smoke it all time time and hence, forget about You, but You have given us a thing to make things prettier and not have to remember to be guilty all at the same time, and for that You have fallen by the wayside. You should have had the foresight to make it act in a way that makes You prettier also. Though there must be some people who think that somewhere. And let us say, "Hence The Irony"

Leaning on the left side, smoke the joint.

Washing The Hands

Wash your hands but do not say the blessing. Now you are clean.



Eat A Green:

The "master" of the house takes a bit of parsley and dips it in some salt water and distributes it to everyone at the table. Before eating the parsley, say this prayer:

Thank you, (God), for providing us this vegetable. Sorry about fucking up the Earth so badly, but we had shit to do. But let's not talk about that right now, okay, and let us say, "Hence the Irony!"

The Second Cup

Thank you, (God), for providing us this booze. With it, we can create solidarity by reducing the inhibitions that we usually feel around each other in most kinds of normal human interaction. With it, we can speak relatively unconsciously and say things that we would ordinarily never be able to say. With it, we can do things which we would ordinarily have far too much self-consciousness to do. With it, we can 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!"

Drink The Second Cup



Break The Middle Matzah

The "master" of the "house" breaks the middle matzah in the plate. He leaves half of it there and excuses himself to the bathroom, inconspicuously hiding the other half of the matzah sometime during the process. Whoever finds the matzah after the meal gets a special prize.

The Passover Story

A book says that a whole bunch of years ago, the Jews were slaves in Egypt. Whether this book can constitute "history" is debatable. Whether what we construe as "history" can constitute a reliable knowledge of the past is also debatable. Whether any relationships we have at all with ideas or objects aren't tainted beyond trustworthiness by our perceptions of said ideas or objects is indeed also debatable. As much fun as all this debate would be, however, it is not our purpose tonight. Tonight we smile and accept the history of this book for the purpose of enacting the ritual together. No existential grousing for us, indeed. Instead we will give the ritual meaning by translating the story and reading it. The book we read, titled The Passover Seder, is a revision of last year's Passover Seder, which in turn is a translation of a Haggadah prepared by the Ktav Publishing House in New York City in 1949. That text is a translation of Exodus in the Bible, the original story about Jew-persecution and Jew-flight. So what is this now? A fourth-order translation? Yeesh. Any remaining shards of "authenticity" should be swept up and collected in the dustpan of cultural detritus we like to call The Revised Passover Seder. And so we're here, and so forth.

Like most other rituals in the Jewish tradition, the Passover ritual is pretty much entirely concerned with the liberation and survival of the Jews. Unlike many of these rituals, it is also a time to kick back, recline, and get butt-wasted. It is a time to question, and then celebrate the Jewish heritage. At the beginning of the ceremony we think of ourselves as slaves, and through the recitation of the ritual we are liberated. Wheeeee! And we didn't even have to leave the table!

The actual recitation of the story of the Jews starts when the youngest child sitting at the table recites a series of four questions.



The third cup of is filled from the Windex (TM) bottle.

The Four Questions

1. On all other nights, we drink, smoke pot, deal with our academic work, recover from another miserable day in capitalism, try to rationalize our lack of moral fiber, or surf the gleaming roads of the information superhighway, baby. Tonight we sit around a table with a bunch of people who we kind of know, enacting a ritual which many of us have never participated in before. Why do we have to read all this ritual text before we get to eat the food?
2. On all other nights, we can eat bread if we want to. Tonight, we can still eat bread if we want to, but if we're going to arbitrarily play along with the terms of this ritual we have to eat matzah instead. Sup wit dat?
3. On all other nights, a good percentage of us would not eat any bitter herbs. The rest of us who might consume bitter herbs would so without a self-conscious thought in our heads, not considering them bitter, or even as herbs. Yet if we're playing along like we're supposed to there's a pretty good chance that we'll be eating bitter herbs at least once, perhaps a few times, and labeling them as such. And what's up with that bottle of Windex (TM) on the table, anyway?
4. On all other nights, a good percentage of us tend to slouch. But tonight, we are supposed to recline even if our chairs aren't particularly comfortable. What's up with the mandatory relaxation here? Aren't we all supposed to be "slackers" anyway?

The Answer

We read this story tonight because the Jews are a hardy race of people who are pretty good at surviving whenever someone tries to kill them. Even though the Jews live in relative plenty and security, they aren't very interested in being killed again. We sit around reading this stuff to remember that distinctions that television-weaned children like us now consider arbitrary once meant that soldiers would break into your house and kill you, just like that. We attempt to reaffirm our ties to the collective ethnic history that at least some of us share. In any case, the ritual is a good excuse to say "delivered us from the house of bondage" a number of times, and to mention Rabbi Jose of Galilee. In biblical times, telling this story was so important that wise old men would sit around and, instead of doing anything truly important, argue about when it should be told. They also argued about such things as whether the words "all the days of your life" meant the days and the nights also. They also included something about Laban The Syrian. To this day, countless numbers of Jews do not understand the importance of Laban The Syrian to the Passover Story.

To help us understand how we should be understanding the Passover Story, we are given four sons to use as models. Each of these sons asks a different question about the passover story. Feel free to match the four sons up with the Four Polenberg Twins, an act which led to acrimony and tweaked ears during Polenberg Passovers for many a year.

The first son asks, "Why has God given us these customs?" Give him what he wants, because he affirms the system. Teach him to manipulate it for his benefit. He will earn Nike sneakers, a web design job, a Miata.

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 what's with that stuff in the Windex bottle, anyway?" By saying "You" instead of "I," he makes it clear that his hip ironic retrofuturism will not let him believe in anything that you consider

"real." Tell him he'd have been well fucked back in Ol' Egypt when we were in the house of bondage. No Air Jordans for the second son.

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. Just wait, and you can eat." Wipe the drizzle off his chin.

The fourth son can't even ask a question. Put words in his mouth for him. Try to make them really good words, even if you aren't a really good person.

Archetypical sons notwithstanding, we figure that something really did happen and it involved the Jews migrating to Egypt because of drought. Then they were probably enslaved by the Egyptians because they, par for the Jewish course, excelled without becoming assimilated in the society. We know that they are no longer slaves because we get to sit around and self-reflexively recontextualize the religion, because we're free.

Plugging the narrative dyke in this story (so to speak) is God. God (apparently) leads the Jews out of Egypt by delivering a series of plagues onto Pharaoh until he will let the Jews leave. There are 10 of these plagues. Another debate the Jews would engage in was exactly how many attributes of God you could attribute to each plague. (The big question: four or five per plague? Either way, the Egyptians were screwed.) In any case, each plague was worse than the last one.

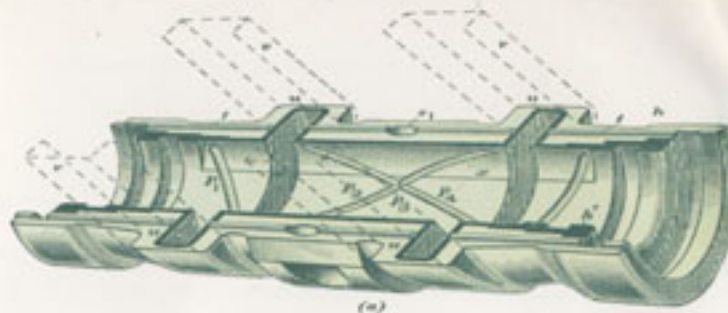
ALL SAY: *YIKES!*

THE TEN PLAGUES

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.



If we are going to bother to believe in God, we should believe that he/she/it sure has done a bunch of good stuff for us!

If he/she had brought us out of Egypt

And not drowned the Egyptians heinously at the Red Sea (if that really happened),

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had drowned the Egyptians heinously at the Red Sea (if that really happened),

And not let us survive subsequent genocidal attempts (if we, in fact, survived the last one),

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had let us survive subsequent genocidal attempts (if we, in fact, survived the last one),

And not let us take a sick sort of pleasure in feeling guilty about surviving these attempts,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had let us take a sick sort of pleasure in feeling guilty about surviving these attempts,

And not let us become exceedingly wealthy in the medical and legal industries,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had let us become exceedingly wealthy in the medical and legal professions,

and not invented capitalism to oppress the rest of the working people,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had invented capitalism to oppress the rest of the working people,

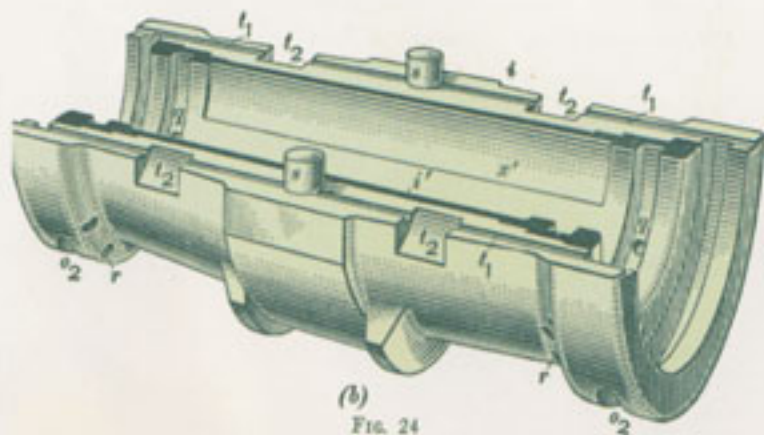
And not created the sign in Walt Disney World that says "In a meaningful, sincere manner, Walt sold America and Americans to foreign dignitaries. Walt Disney and Disneyland in a very real way have contributed to better understanding and a friendlier attitude on the part of world leaders toward the United States,"

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had created the sign in Walt Disney World that says "In a meaningful, sincere manner, Walt sold America and Americans to foreign dignitaries. Walt Disney and Disneyland in a very real way have contributed to better understanding and a friendlier attitude on the part of world leaders toward the United States,"

And not put Kate Winslet in the motion-picture blockbuster, "Titanic,"

It would have been enough for us!



(b)
FIG. 24

If he/she had put Kate Winslet in the leading role of the motion picture blockbuster, "Titanic,"

and not let us shop at Niketown,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had let us shop at Niketown,

And not invented the Pentium Processor with Multimedia Extensions,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had invented the Pentium Processor with Multimedia Extensions, and not created the Teletubbies,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had created the Teletubbies,

and not allowed a tide of Retrofuturism to sweep across the land,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had allowed a tide of Retrofuturism to sweep across the land,

and not drowned us in a sea of faux self-reflexive irony,

It would have been enough for us!

If he/she had drowned us in a sea of faux self-reflexive irony, and actually given us a way out of the hideous conflation of consumerism and rebellion that it has spurred

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FUCKING ENOUGH,
ALRIGHT!

Fill the Fourth Cup

The Repeatedly Foreshadowed Third Cup

Thank you, (God), for giving us even more booze, booze which looks suspiciously like something which would kill us if we drank it. By drinking it we will fake our own deaths (if indeed we survive and this whole thing isn't a cruel hoax), pretending to evade any further responsibility for our actions. Our insides, however, will become squeaky-clean and mirror-reflective. And let us say, "Hence the Irony."

Drink the third cup, leaning to the left side.

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 this God character gave us a chance to not have our first-born children killed. While this kind of thing goes against the omniscient/omnipotent thing that one was always taught about God, we're supposed to believe that God passed over (GET IT?) the houses of the Jews which were marked with blood from the offering.

Point to the Matzah:

The Matzah is here because we had to tear-ass out of Egypt while Pharaoh and his hired goons wanted to bust a cap into us. If we had waited for it to rise, we all woulda been slaughtered. So we have to eat it.

Point to the Bitter Herbs:

These herbs are here because being in slavery sucks. Ask anyone who has ever been a slave. These herbs are pretty damn bitter.

They're not quite as bitter as slavery, seeing as they only make your mouth pucker up for a few minutes, but they're just a symbolic representation, and not nearly as potent as the real thing. You didn't really want to be enslaved anyway.

Blessing Over The Matzah:

Thank you, (God), for saving our ass, even if the bread didn't have time to rise. And let us say, "Hence the Irony."

Bitter Herbs:

Dip Bitter Herbs in Charoset and say:

Thank you, (God), for saving our ass again. We're going to try to remember how much things sucked before you did, but we're going to temper that with something sweet because we don't want to remember it that vividly, because it sucked. And let us say, "Hence the Irony."

Eat The Bitter Herbs And Matzah Together

Eat a sandwich of Bitter Herbs and Matzah and say: In a book there was this guy named Hillel. He wanted to do what the book had said to do, so he made a sandwich just like the book said. Nobody else really thought to do that. For that, we put him in our book too. And let us say, "Hence the Irony."

The Fourth Cup

By now, we're pretty fucked up. Thank you, (God), for giving us the means to get fucked up and and enjoy ourselves. Isn't it a little bit funny that a ritual about survival has so much alcohol in it? So let us say, "Hence the Irony."

THE FESTIVAL MEAL

NEXT YEAR IN... JERUSALEM?

