



Seasons for Healing:

Drawing Spiritual Resources from the Jewish Holidays

Holiday Resource Sampler Volume 1 -Passover



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The National Center for Jewish Healing (NCJH) is a resource center dedicated to helping Jewish communities meet the spiritual needs of Jews living with illness and loss. Our goal is to ensure that no Jew be alone during times of illness and loss, and that the wisdom and support of the Jewish tradition and community be made accessible and meaningful.

NCJH sponsors conferences and educational programs for rabbis, cantors, mental health and health-care professionals and volunteers, and produces helpful, inspiring publications, including its newsletter, "The Outstretched Arm". It provides consultation, publications, conferences, as well as information and referral to Jewish communal organizations seeking to address the spiritual needs of Jews during times of illness and loss. NCJH is currently assisting in the development of Jewish healing programs in more than 30 cities in the U. S. and Canada.

The NJCH is a program of the Jewish Health, Healing and Recovery Network of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services (JBFCS). JBFCS is one of the nation's leading voluntary mental health and social services agency which touches the lives of more than 65,000 people each year through a diverse network of 185 community-based, residential and day treatment programs and extensive outreach and educational services.

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**As there are representations of God's name throughout this booklet,
please treat it with proper care and respect.**

Seasons for Healing: Drawing Spiritual Resources from the Jewish Holidays,
Holiday Resource Sampler, Volume 1: Passover ©2003

INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Jewish Healing is pleased to present you with "Holiday Resources Sampler, Volume 1: Passover", to give you a taste of the ways in which some of the themes, prayers and rituals of Passover have been creatively used by those in the Jewish healing movement to assist those struggling with illness, loss and other difficult life challenges and transitions.

Some of the themes and images may seem obvious, repetitive or simplistic, but when one is afflicted and struggling, what is obvious can take on new meaning and become a profoundly meaningful and even spirit-saving resource.

Many of these resources may be used in various ways and in a multitude of settings: one-on-one counseling; spiritual support groups; healing services; community education programs and more. Ideas and writings can be integrated into sermons and holiday materials designed for study and reflection.

This, then, is a "sampler" designed to whet your appetite and motivate you in your own creative process of uncovering Jewish holiday materials that speak to you and adapting them to your particular setting. The themes are profound and the possibilities are endless!

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SECTION ONE - RESOURCES

"Lahma Anya: Bread of Affliction: Seven Healing Lessons of the Matzah"

*Rabbi Simkha Weintraub, CSW, Rabbinic Director, NCJH, The NY Jewish Healing Center, JBFCs**

An article from "The Outstretched Arm", Volume 5: Issue 4, Spring 1997**

A Time of Questions

1. "Using the Symbols of Passover in Groups, Clinical Practice and Pastoral Care"
*Carol Hausman, Ph.D, Clinical Psychologist and Coordinator of the Washington Jewish Healing Network, Washington, DC**
2. The Four Cups and Other Questions Excerpts from "The Outstretched Arm",
Volume 5: Issue 4, Spring 1997
3. Why Is This Night Different? Excerpts from "The Outstretched Arm", Volume 2:
Issue 1, Spring 1999
4. "What Are the Questions?"
*Tamara Green, Ph.D, Founding Board Member, NCJH; Chair, Classics
Department, Hunter College, NYC*
An article from "The Outstretched Arm", Volume 5: Issue 4, Spring 1997

Contemporary Psalms for Passover

Debbie Perlman (z'l), Resident Psalmist at Beth Emet, the Free Synagogue, Evanston, Illinois

Taken from Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise, by Debbie Perlman ©
1998

"Journey to Freedom, Journey to Healing": A Guided Visualization with an Introduction for the Leader

Rabbi Susan Freeman, Founding Board Member of the NCJH; Hospice Chaplain, San Diego, CA.

* SeRaF participant. ** "The Outstretched Arm" is the newsletter of the National Center for Jewish Healing.

This section includes a variety of Jewish spiritual resources. Below are some suggestions of ways in which these materials can be used. Please remember that if you insert any of these resources into your own materials (newsletters, healing services, etc.), kindly add the appropriate credits.

* **Issues and themes** can be adapted and used to trigger discussion in individual, group or workshop settings (at a bedside, in the synagogue, JCC or JFS, in a counseling situation, as part of a support group session, in a model seder, etc.). Certain materials can also be used in groups or with individuals to encourage personal reflection or journal writing.

* The various **sets of questions** developed from the themes and symbols of the holiday can be used in many ways. They have been particularly effective in spiritual support groups for the ill, caregivers, bereaved, etc. as well as in clinical and pastoral counseling situations. In the synagogue, selected questions may be used as the core of a sermon or as the pre-text exploration of a Torah study session.

* Debbie Perlman's powerful **contemporary psalms** can be used in many ways:

- in a study session, workshop or support group session where participants can examine the themes embedded in the psalms and share personal connections to those themes (the session might also include looking at some traditional psalms with related themes)
- as encouragement for individuals or group members to compose their own prayers
- incorporated into services of healing

* The **guided visualization** may be utilized in both individual counseling and group settings. The introduction for leaders provides suggestions for presenting a guided visualization. It also serves as a model for a way to think about composing a guided visualization for other holidays, to explore themes such as forgiveness, darkness and light, revelation, memory, survival, etc.

LAHMA ANYA: BREAD OF AFFLICTION

Seven Healing Lessons of the Matzah

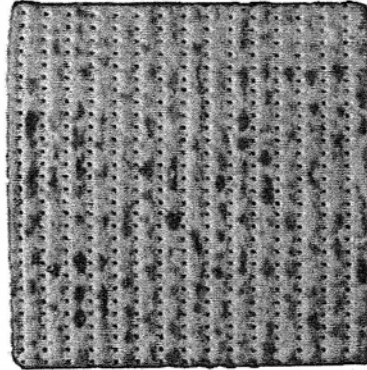
Maggid, the central "Recounting" section of the Passover seder ritual, begins with the following declaration, proclaimed as the matzah is raised for all to see:

*Ha Lahma Anya/This is the bread of affliction
that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt:
All who are hungry — come and eat!
All who are in need — come join in our Passover!
This year we are here; next year in the land of Israel!
This year enslaved, next year free!*

Around this sheet are several "healing lessons" the matzah may offer.

LAHMA ANYA — BREAD OF AFFLICTION

This simple, direct series of statements expresses how our historical experience of suffering must motivate us to call out to those in need, here and now, today. In this opening paragraph, we can sense at least two distinct tasks and interrelated challenges: to extend ourselves to others in (spiritual as well as physical) need and, in an ongoing way, to be honest about our own states of exile and subjugation. Implicit in this declaration is empathy that leads to action, inner sensitivity that translates into active support for others. A key to healing is this balance of reaching in and reaching out, healing ourselves by helping others...and, of course, letting others reach out to us.



H. Manischewitz, Co.

BREAD OF SLAVERY, BREAD OF FREEDOM

As a paradoxical symbol of both oppression and liberation, the matzah embodies the creative tension of the seder itself, a complex interweaving of celebrating freedom while identifying with bondage. Those bearing the burdens of suffering, pain, and disruption can easily relate to this ambiguity — treatments can

be both healing and worse than the disease, care can be helpful and harmful, medical struggles can be both stifling and life-affirming, disease may bring secondary gains alongside weakness and diminishment, and emergence can feel like a curse and a blessing. Just as one must not deny the horror and the loss, one must also not neglect the moments of joy, love, peace, and fulfillment.

NAHMA ILA'AH — CELESTIAL BREAD

The Zohar (the Book of Splendor, 13th century "bible" of the Kabbalah) calls matzah *Nahma Ila'ah* — "celestial bread." Leaven represents, metaphorically, boastfulness, untamed pride, and decay — matzah, conversely, represents the pure of heart, "tis a gift to be simple." back-to-basics, less is more. Departing Egypt meant leaving behind the fleshpots of its civilization, a false dependence on and subservience to material riches, and aiming for a life of spiritual quest and community. It would be unwise and unfair to simplistically parallel the Exodus from Egypt with the journey of illness (the latter is anything but freedom), but in the wilderness-wandering of suffering, many have found themselves freed from prior spiritual constraints into a new openness and a deeper relationship to self, others, nature, and God.

THREE MATZOT

Various interpretations have been offered for the use of three matzot in the seder ritual: they have been seen as representing the Jewish sub-groupings of Cohen, Levi, and Israel; the three sets of Patriarchs and Matriarchs

in Genesis; the unfree, the free who don't care and the free who care (see commentary by Ed Greenstein in *The Jewish Holidays* by Michael Strassfeld, page 18.) Certainly another helpful approach is to identify one with the ancient liberation from Egypt, another with the ultimate messianic redemption, and the third with our current state of being *beinonim*, "in-between." And isn't that where we all are — hanging in the balance, alive but not immortal, sandwiched between a fragile, limited, animal self and our eternal Divine image.

CONSUMING THE MATZAH FIRST

The seder ritual seems to have it backwards: One would think that we should first eat the *marror*, the bitter herbs, just as the bitter slavery preceded the liberation, when the matzah was created. But in truth, our chronology is not so simple — we need to have tasted freedom to deeply understand oppression. As flat and tasteless as it may seem to our jaded palates, freedom/matzah ought to be savored first — maybe its lingering aftertaste can help see us through suffering and affliction. This matzah-then-marror order also points to the ongoing need to free ourselves, again and again, or more and more, and urges us to confront every form of slavery, at each stage of life. Finally, the marror "sandwich" compels us to integrate its bitterness with the sweetness of the *haroset* (ironic, in itself, since, one would think, these "bricks of slave labor" ought not be sweet!) — and to frame it between two pieces matzah, our "freedom bread."

THE "PERILOUS PROXIMITY" OF HAMETZ AND MATZAH

It has often been pointed out that the three Hebrew letters comprising the words *hametz* ("leaven" itself, but also all forbidden foods on Passover) and *matzah* are virtually identical — indeed, to make them exactly alike takes but a smudge of the pen. How close health and illness, well-being and suffering, can be! A tweak of fate can turn us from the one reality to the other. Perhaps this ought also remind us of the shared vulnerability of those labeled "ill" and those deemed "well" and help us reconstruct a world where unhelpful barriers break down, and Jews/ people enable each other to bear the burdens of mortality with a deepened sense of community and relationship.

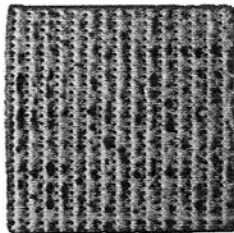
LEHEM ONIM: BREAD OF RESPONSE

The seder, of course, ought to revolve around an active exchange and discussion, a multi-level question-and-answer format meant to draw people's voices and associations out. A tempting pun on the word *anya*, affliction, reads it as stemming from the related Hebrew cognate, *onim*, answerers. This bread, of both slavery and freedom, is "food for talk." There may, indeed, be no "answers," but a live, real, honest, open-ended dialogue about suffering and redemption can yield a healing responsiveness, both internally and from others.

A happy, meaningful, liberating Passover to all.

RABBI SIMKHA Y. WEINTRAUB, CSW

Rabbinic Director, NCJH



*USING THE SYMBOLS OF PASSOVER IN GROUPS, CLINICAL PRACTICE, AND
PASTORAL CARE Dr. Carol Hausman*

Why is it that the Passover seder is attended by more Jews, affiliated or not, than any other ritual? Many Jews who celebrate no other holiday throughout the year find themselves wanting to attend a seder. Possibly, it is because the themes and symbols of Passover resonate personally with all of us. We have all been slaves in some way, and we all yearn for freedom from our slavery, whether psychological or physical. We have all been in the "narrow passages" and the Haggadah instructs us to think of ourselves as personally coming out of Egypt. Just as the Jews did so many years ago, we are inspired to strive to overcome our difficulties and to develop new ways of coping.

What are some of the symbols in the biblical story of the Exodus and in the Haggadah where we find meaning? And what are the questions these symbols suggest that we might explore in our own paths out of Egypt? How might these questions throw light on our own personal stories, particularly when we are struggling with illness or loss?

- Moses himself, a model of humility in the biblical story of the Exodus, who succeeded despite personal and political obstacles, is our role model.
As Moses turned to God for help, how can we search for the God of our ancestors as well as the godliness within us to help us enter the churning sea?
- The Haggadah represents our stories.
What are the stories I want to keep telling about my loved one? Can I find a way to incorporate the stories into my seder?
- The salt water is our tears and the maror/the bitter herbs are a metaphor for the bitterness we have all experienced.
What is the source of our own tears? What continues to make us still feel bitter? How might I learn to cast off this bitterness?
- The egg and the parsley reflect the cycle of life and death and the renewal that comes in the springtime.
As I move through a difficult time back into a renewed life, what is coming alive in me again?
- The shank bone represents the sacrificial lamb whose blood was used to mark the Israelites' door-posts. It was this blood that kept them from risk and harm.
What are the risks I have had to face, and what are the risks I might want to take as I look to the future?

- The way from Egypt to the Promised Land is through the wilderness. There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching.

Whose hand can I hold as I walk this path? Where do I get my support?

- The matzah is brokenness, though the piece of broken matzah called the afikoman which is "found" at the end of the seder also symbolizes redemption and a new sense of wholeness.

In my broken-heartedness, have there been paths of healing that have emerged for me?

Have I found places of greater strength within me helping me to move toward wholeness?

Several of the Passover themes came together for a patient and me as we were working together last spring. For a long time this young woman had been unable to get past the years of bitterness and resentment for what she perceived as mistreatment by her mother. Her mother died shortly before Passover. I suggested that she incorporate stories about her mother into her seder, and her siblings agreed to do that, ostensibly for their own children. They found that by the time the broken matzah was reunited, they were able to use that symbol of wholeness to look at a fuller picture of their mother. They began to feel some of the strength that was also part of their inheritance, and to realize that perhaps their own tears were not all tears of bitterness. Being together for the ritual of the seder gave them the ability to leap over the wall of reluctance that had been keeping them from having a more balanced perspective.

In our work with communities, spiritual support groups and individuals facing difficult moments, the symbols of Passover can help us make sense of and throw light on personal stories. What practical actions can we take? What are the prayers that can help sustain us in the journey from oppression to freedom?



Why Is This Night Different?

Each one of us is obligated to consider ourselves as coming out of Egypt.

Here are some questions for our individual journey of liberation....

- What in my life do I experience as "Egypt" this year?
- In what ways have I been set free?
- *Mitzrayim*, the Hebrew word for Egypt, means a "narrow place." How could my "narrow place" function as a place for growth?
- In what ways could I confront and express my powerlessness?
- What specific practical actions can I take?
- What outside my control can I trust to liberate myself?
- If I created three personal symbols from my own story which parallel those of the seder - the paschal lamb, matza, and the bitter herb -what would they be?
- What is my prayer as I take the steps in my journey of liberation?

From "The Outstretched Arm", Volume 2: Issue 1, Spring, 1999

WHAT CAN I POSSIBLY "TOAST"?



WHAT FOUR ELEMENTS IN MY TROUBLED LIFE
BRING ME MOMENTS OF JOY?



DURING THE DAY, DURING THE WEEK,
WHERE CAN I FIND A SENSE OF
TRANSCENDENCE AND REDEMPTION?



HOW CAN MY CUP BE IN ANY WAY "FULL"?



What are *your* Four Cups of Wine?
What four blessings can you speak, even now?

I must be the Wise
one – seeking
meaning from all
this pain and
suffering...



I must be the
Wicked one –
feeling disdainfully
unrelated to all this
to-do...



I must be the
Simple one – asking
'What is this?'...



I must be the One
Who Knows Not
What/How to Ask –
reach out, then, to
me



**How are you like
any of the "Four
Children"?
Like all of them?**

How can I make
this night different
than other nights,
experiencing measures
of freedom alongside
the imprisonment
of suffering?



How is this season of my life unique?



What gives me pause?



What narratives might
I read and recount to
lend meaning to this
juncture in time?



Perhaps the overarching
question of the Seder is:
Why is this night different
from all other nights?
Where can you take this
question to draw meaning
from this Passover?

What Are The Questions?

by DR. TAMARA GREEN, PH.D.
Founding Board Member of the NCJH and
Chair of the Classics Department at
Hunter College, New York City

When I was a child, the four questions that are asked at the beginning of the Passover seder puzzled me enormously. Oh, I understood the questions easily enough in the most literal way, but it always seemed to me that nowhere in the Haggadah were there straightforward answers to those questions. It took many seders before I realized that the questions were not as obvious as I had once supposed and that every year they might provoke different responses, and that not all of them had their source in the Haggadah.

On the other hand, even as a child, the questions asked by the *Arba'ah Banim*—the Four Children—seemed simple enough. After all, every child knows how to ask many questions; and even in my limited circle of friends and acquaintances, I certainly knew lots of children who were wise or foolish or simple, and even a few who seemed to me to be wicked. (I put myself, of course, in the first category.) It took many seders before I realized that not only might these questions have different answers each year, but that the question each child asks could be refracted through my struggle to make sense of how my illness has affected my Jewish life. What I have discovered at the seder table is that even now I am both the wise child and the wicked child; I am both the simple child and the child who does not know how to ask.

Sometimes I am the wise child. The wise child asks: "What are the laws and ordinances that *Adonai* has commanded us to observe?" Although the Haggadah simply declares that this child should be taught all the laws of *Pesach*, Torah adds that these commandments are observed for our own good so that we might remember that *Adonai* brought us out of slavery into the promised land. And so I ask, what has *Adonai* commanded of me? Has my illness become my own personal Egypt, and is there any wisdom that pain and suffering have brought me? I don't know. Is it for my own good? I hope not.

Sometimes I am the wicked child. The wicked child asks: "What does this ritual mean to *you*?" The rabbis add, for *you* and not for *her*. Too often, I want to say, "Leave me alone in my misery." Will I thus be left standing alone on the shores of the Red Sea, afraid that I will drown and disappear completely? How do I find the courage to take that first step and walk into the space *Adonai* has created for me? I don't know. Does my rage in the face of pain isolate me from the community and thus make me wicked? I hope not.

Sometimes I am the simple child. The simple child asks: "What is this all about?" And the rabbis answer: "It was with a mighty arm that



PASSOVER 5759

Ha Lahma Anya/This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.

*All who are hungry—come and eat!
All who are in need—come join in the Passover!*

*This year we are here,
next year in the land of Israel!*

This year enslaved, next year free!

Maggid, the central "Recounting" section of the Passover seder ritual opens with this extraordinary invitation. Who among us is not hungry? Who among us is not in need? Who among us does not dream of liberation? On this night, we are all invited to take part in the journey—we are all included as participants in the drama.

It is a night of symbols, a night of tastes and smells, a night of storytelling, and especially a night of questions. We are encouraged to ask questions throughout the seder—engaging us in a kinetic approach to learning. From year to year, we watch the questions and their answers, both stay the same, yet change and grow.

A wise rabbi has written, "The Haggadah should not be rote recitation, but rather a dynamic exploration that involves probing, empathizing, and creative interpreting." Each part of the seder, each piece of the ordered whole, is designed to bring us into a multi-layered experience of the transition from slavery to freedom. We are asked to see ourselves as if we were slaves in Egypt. We are given the opportunity to find our own individual stories within the ancient framework of the Exodus. We are challenged to tap into a place of deep understanding and remember to reach out to others who are enslaved.

Matzah, the central symbol of the holiday of *Pesach* is known as both the bread of suffering and the bread of freedom. This paradox reflects the creative tension of the seder itself—a complex interweaving of celebrating freedom while identifying with bondage. Those of us who bear the burdens of suffering, disruption, and loss, can immediately relate to this intense ambiguity. In this issue of *The Outstretched Arm*, we invite you to join our table, and explore with us selected components of the seder ritual.

May we all draw strength and insight from the enormous power of this collective effort.

What Are The Questions? continued from page 1

Adonai took us out of Egypt." Where is my deliverance from pain? Is there any reason why this has happened to me? I hope not. Will I be able to see *Adonai's* outstretched arm, and sense the divine presence? I hope so.

Sometimes I am the child who does not know how to ask. "As for the child who does not know how to ask, you should open the discussion for her by explaining, it is because of what *Adonai* did for me when I went free out of Egypt." How do I begin to seek freedom from my own narrow place? Can I shape the thoughts or give voice to the words that will help me find the path? Will *Adonai* be present in that place? I hope so.

At least I remember that there are questions to be asked, and for now that is enough.

CONTEMPORARY PSALMS FOR PASSOVER

By Debbie Perlman of Blessed Memory, from her book, Flames To Heaven

EIGHTY

For Readiness

In this final week before our redemption,
You bring signs and wonders:
One Finger, one Hand, two Hands of the Eternal
To untie us from the firmly knotted harness.

In that final week of fearful preparations,
When You showed Pharaoh Your power,
How could we comprehend terrors that appeared,
Surrounding us as well?

Numbed by our burdens, we looked for You
As we packed our simple possessions;
Numbed today by new terrors, we muffle our lives
With comforts, pushing You away.

And our hearts are hard as Pharaoh's,
As obeying current slaves,
We prepare our homes and neglect our souls;
We sweep the shelves clean, but look aside.

In this week of preparation, Eternal One,
Point us toward the burdens You call us to accept,
Taking them up willingly
Beginning to create a new place of wonder.

Prepare us, Eternal One, for the walk to freedom;
Prepare us to cut the binding of our fears,
To find the calm within the terror,
And hold it in our palm.

EIGHTY-ONE

B'Dikat Chametz

From the frown of hurried preparations,
Turn our eyes to greening branches.
You coax from dried stock.
Let us see again Your creation.

Again and again, You hold out spring;
Again and again, You offer endless chances
To be born in wholeness and healing,
To move toward You.

Searching, we find stale opinions,
Molding ideas, burnt crusts of stubbornness.
Peeking into corners, our eyes discover
The crumbled remnants of worry and anger.

Scraping clean the grime of winter,
Built of our worries and deficiencies,
We scour a shining surface, a clean place
To arrange the season's delights.

Sweep us clean, and burn the trite ideas
That stifle us and shield us from You.
Burn away these shattered endings
And start us again on the path toward freedom.

EIGHTY-TWO

A Song of Praise for Pesach

By Debbie Perlman

Hallelujah! Praise the Eternal!

We praise You in the pause before beginning,
The quiet glance and sigh
As we stand poised on the moment,
Filling our eyes with Your offer of freedom.

Hallelujah!
Praise the Eternal!

We praise You as we step forward together,
Hands held, heads raised, eyes focused
On the far distant dream of our redemption,
The place of Your vision for a holy people.

Hallelujah!
Praise the Eternal!

We praise You in the short passage,
As the children run ahead and back,
Each striving to be the first to see
And call out the beauty of the Promise.

Hallelujah!
Praise the Eternal!

And let us praise You when our legs are weary
And the bundles and burdens are multiplied
By the time they have been on our backs.
Help us to praise You then.

Hallelujah!
Praise the Eternal!

For You, Eternal Deliverer,
Bring us all out of our enslavement.
You open our minds to the freedom
Contained within each of us.

You, Eternal Deliverer,
Call us to adorn our freedom with deeds,
To be released to a dedicated freedom,
Free to praise You with the work of our hearts.

Praise the Eternal!
Hallelujah!

"JOURNEY TO FREEDOM, JOURNEY TO HEALING": A GUIDED VISUALIZATION

© Rabbi Susan Freeman, 2003



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VISUALIZATION FOR THE LEADER

In this guided visualization, slavery is likened to what is unhealed in one's life, and freedom is likened to healing. What do we mean by "healed" and "unhealed?" In being expansive in our understanding of these words, we may say that being "healed" does not necessarily mean the eradication of illness, grief or difficult circumstances. By drawing on the analogy of slavery to freedom, we broaden our perspective of what "unhealed" and "healed" might mean.

The slavery / freedom analogy may lead to various associations for participants. Perhaps they will associate the "slavery" of being unhealed with feeling heavy, foggy, muddy, stuck, held down, held back, weighed down, unclear, fearful, imprisoned, and so on. Conversely, perhaps they may associate the "freedom" of being healed with feelings of release, wholeness, clarity, peacefulness, confidence, burdens being lifted, and so on.

For instance, those who are suffering from a specific illness may draw on the guided visualization as a means to try to go beyond the daily struggles they experience. What states of being are possible besides those of feeling unendingly "enslaved" by illness?

In essence, slavery is to freedom what unhealed is to healed, with the understanding that healing is a lifelong journey toward wholeness. This guided visualization provides an opportunity for participants to explore the places where they feel enslaved and envision and experience a sense of freedom.

The leader should ask participants to close their eyes and sit with their feet flat on the floor with their hands resting comfortably in their laps. Allow a moment or two of silence and gentle breathing, then begin to read the visualization slowly, with plenty of pauses, allowing participants time to fully immerse themselves in the experience.

"JOURNEY TO FREEDOM, JOURNEY TO HEALING": A GUIDED VISUALIZATION

This is a journey from slavery to freedom.

Close your eyes and take several slow deep breaths. Feel your body as being very heavy. Take a few minutes to go through each body part, feet to head, and feel the heaviness, the weight of every limb, every bone . . .

You were a slave once in the land of Egypt. Remember when you were a slave among slaves. Go back. You were pressed hard: "Ruthlessly they made life bitter for [you] with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field. *Va-yemar-reru et-chai-yay-hem ba-avodah kashah b'chomer u'vil-vay-neem u've-chol avodah ba-sah-deh et kol avo-dah-tam asher avdu va-hem be-farech*" (Exodus 1:14)

Rub your fingers together. Feel the muddy dirt between your fingertips. Imagine the mud on your skin, the streaks of dirt on your arms and your legs, the crusty sweat on your brow. Note the muddiness on the surface of your body, but realize that this is not what is of most concern to you.

What is most troubling is a feeling of sluggishness circulating through you. The feeling of being a slave, being pressed. "And the taskmasters pressed [you] . . . *V'ha-nog-seem atzeem . . .*" (Exodus 5:13)

It's as if the mud fills your mind and body, as well.

The words of Pharaoh swirl through your head . . . "Be off now to your work! No straw shall be issued to you, but you must produce your quota of bricks!" (Exodus 5:18)

"You must not reduce your daily quantity of bricks. *Lo tee-gre-u mi-liv-nay-chem d'var yom b'yomo.*" (Exodus 5:19)

You feel heavy, weighted down by the imprisoning experience of being a slave.

Though you feel heavy and weighted down, you have an intense desire to be alleviated of your burdens; to be released from what is pressing down on you; to wash away the bitterness . . . wash away the mud.

You want to wash away the mud . . . From your skin, from your brow. Wash away the mud that fills your mind and body . . . Wash away the sluggishness circulating through you . . .

Words, emotions are stirring inside you. What are they? Listen to your inner voice. You can ask for help, you can call out. There is a Power, a Loving Force to help lift you, to help transform your burdens. The Mysterious embrace of God will receive and envelop your pain. What do your words say; what does your silence express? Listen. What do you hear?

Your intense desire to go free propels you along as a certain momentum builds in the environment around you. The momentum propelling you is the swelling wave of sentiment that surrounds you - to go; to leave the mud, the bricks, the bitterness and slavery behind.

Release the bricks in your arms and allow your bent-over body to straighten. Brush off the dirt from your skin, dry your brow. Breathe easier as you join in the journey away from slavery, towards freedom.

You are journeying away from slavery towards the sea, towards freedom.

As you glimpse the sea, you feel compelled to go towards the water. You feel an urge for the water to wash over your skin. Hurry to the water, splash some of the cool, cleansing water over you. Pour handfuls of water through your hair; splash water on your face, your shoulders; scoop water over your back . . .

The water is refreshing. Your skin is tingling, soothed. And you step away from the water.

Still, you want to clear the sense of muddiness from your mind; the internal, clogging feeling of heaviness.

It is night now. Lie down on the shore of the sea, away from the water. Still hold on to the feeling, the image of clear, refreshing water. Imagine this clear purity flowing through your body, cleansing your mind. A flow that is pure, clear, refreshing. Feel the clarity circulating through your veins, your arteries. Clarity of mind, clarity of body . . .

It is while you are lying down on the shore of the sea that the passageway to freedom is being prepared for you. As you prepare yourself, so too, the passage to freedom is opening.

“Then Moses held out his arm over the sea and the Eternal drove back the sea with a strong east wind all that night, and turned the sea into dry ground.” (Exodus 14:21)

It is morning now. The water that you had poured and splashed over you the day before is no longer there. “The waters were split. *Va-yee-bak-u ha-ma-yeem.*” (Exodus 14:21) And the sense of water flowing, washing through you is gone as well. What

remains is breath, clear breath – air which circulates freely around you, inside of you. Breathe in deeply; and exhale fully.

Breathe in deeply; and exhale fully. Enjoy your breathing; enjoy its fullness, its lightness.

“And the Israelites went in to the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.” (Exodus 14:21-22)

The walls surrounding you are water, yet they are totally secured by Divine Will. The massive ocean waves, the watery depths have obeyed the will of the Almighty. You fear no harm. You feel protected, as if a sturdy hand is guiding you.

Walk through the passageway to freedom. Walk along the dry ground. Walk through the walls of water on your right and on your left. Walk through the passageway to freedom.

The fullness of the experience of freedom envelops you. You are more aware than ever before. You feel certainty of God’s presence, God’s role in your journey.

When, shortly after you have walked through the passageway to freedom, God speaks, you know these words to be true:

“I, the Eternal One, am your healer. *Ani Adonai ro-feh-cha.*” (Exodus 15:26)

Alternative Experience:

Leaders or participants may choose to use the following overview as a supplement or substitute for the more developed Guided Visualization.. The paragraph below offers participants an opportunity to meditate on the same ideas in a less directed, freer-flowing way. One way to lead this type of meditation is to pause for some time in between each idea.

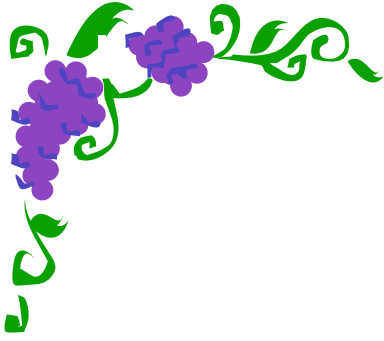
Begin by associating what is unhealed in you with being enslaved. 🌸 Picture yourself as a slave, burdened and overwhelmed by heavy, dirty work, but compelled to go towards freedom. 🌸 Your journey to freedom takes you to a body of water. At the edge of the water, wash the dirt from your body. 🌸 Feel the muddiness dissolve from your mind as well. 🌸 Your body is refreshed, your mind is clear; the waters part, and you walk through the corridor – passageway to freedom.

SECTION TWO- TWO MODEL PROGRAMS

The first model program represents a significant portion of a seder prepared by and for Jews with psychiatric conditions. It is an example of how a seder can be used to address the issues of a particular constituency. Here, many of the commentaries are actual voices of those who live with a psychiatric condition. Their reflections beautifully illustrate the layers of meaning that can be found in the carefully constructed order of the seder.

Empowering constituents to contribute to such a Hagaddah creates a profound interaction between the ritual and the participants.

This seder was prepared by Chaverim Shel Shalom, a program of Jewish Healing Connections of the Jewish Family and Childrens' Services of Boston, MA. Also included is a copy of the flyer used by Chaverim Shel Shalom to advertise this program, providing an example of a thoughtful marketing and outreach effort.



Chaverim Shel Shalom

a program of **Jewish Healing Connections**

of



Invites you to

**A Traditional
Passover Seder
for Jewish Adults
with a Psychiatric
Condition and
their friends**



Monday,
April 21, 2003

beginning at 6 p.m.

Temple Beth Zion Vestry
1566 Beacon Street
Brookline

kosher dietary laws observed

Please RSVP by Friday, April 11th

to Nancy Smith, 617-558-1278.

This free event requires pre-registration.

This Passover celebration is made possible with a special grant
from

Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston



Visit our website at jfcsboston.org

🌀Dedication🌀

This haggadah is dedicated to the memory of Ann Aronson, z'l, may her memory be for a blessing. She was a loyal member of Chaverim Shel Shalom who once said, "I feel like a slave to my illness, my cancer" even as she kept struggling to get out of the narrow place, even as she kept encouraging others to keep living to their fullest potential. She taught us not to give up ~ and to care about each other as she did, about all of us. We will miss her at the seder, but we know that her spirit is with us as we leave Egypt again this year.

🌀About Chaverim Shel Shalom🌀

A social group for adults 18 or older with a psychiatric condition, Chaverim Shel Shalom provides events free of charge to members to assist them in creating or re-establishing a connection with the Jewish Community. Membership is free. Members receive regular bulletins on upcoming events. Chaverim Shel Shalom is a program of Jewish Healing Connections. For more information call the Chaverim Shel Shalom Coordinator at 617-558-1278.

🌀About JF&CS🌀

For almost 140 years, JF&CS has played an important role in changing lives for the betterment of all people, no matter what their religious or cultural background. We help over 25,000 people per year, providing the highest quality of care through services for seniors, children and families in addition to programs specific to the needs of our community. We serve people of all ages and faiths in over 80 Greater Boston communities.

🌀Acknowledgements🌀

Chaverim Shel Shalom extends its thanks and gratitude to Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston for making this seder possible with a special grant. We also thank the Brookline – Brighton Service Development Fund for enabling Chaverim Shel Shalom to create this haggadah, reflective of the experiences of Jews with psychiatric conditions.

MAGGID

Telling the Story



Ha Lachma Anya

The Bread of Affliction

(selection in Aramaic may be read)

ALL: This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.

All who are hungry, let them enter and eat.

All who are in need, let them share the hope of Passover.

Now we are here--next year in the Land of Israel.

Now we are still in bonds. Next year may we all be free.



As Jews with psychiatric conditions, what is our affliction, what is our liberation?

Kathy: Our medication is our hindrance and our help. You're allowed your freedom when you keep up with your therapy.

Mike: Feeling sick is the hardship. Judaism helps me feel psychologically good. I feel good going to shul and studying.

Annette: Matza is the road to freedom. You have to move on with your life. You don't have time to stay in the past.

The Four Questions

(questions may be read in Hebrew)

All: Why does this night differ from all other nights?

On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night only unleavened bread?

On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs; why on this night only bitter herbs?

On all other nights we need not dip our herbs even once; why on this night must we dip them twice?

On all other nights we either eat sitting up or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?

Josh: Many thousands of years ago, our ancestors were enslaved by the Egyptians. Today some of us find ourselves enslaved by chains that bind our minds and our emotions. As we sit around the seder table with family and friends, sharing the story of our ancestors, we can be healed to some extent through our communal spirituality.

The Four Questions of Mental Health

Richard: What is oppressing us? Is it self-imposed such as lack of achievement or externally imposed such as parents or political current events that are out of our control, or both these things together?

Howard: How can this seder night help us and heal us?

Liz: How can we take care of ourselves and maintain a positive cycle?

Josh: If we were really serious about our healing, why don't we tell the story of our deliverance every night, not just Passover?

The Response On this seder night, we recognize that, as Jews with psychiatric conditions, we have a great deal to teach our community.

- Because we know about the unpredictability and pain of having a chronic illness, we are compassionate towards others.
- Because we know what it is to be labeled as "different" and "defective" by those who don't even know us as human beings, we are the contemporary embodiment of all Jewish history.
- Because we have experienced oppression and persecution firsthand, we each feel that we, personally, are struggling to leave oppression and persecution firsthand, that we, personally, are struggling to leave Egypt behind us everyday. In this way, we are mindful of the way we pray each morning, "Moses said to the people. Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt, out of a house of slavery; for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out of this place; no leavened bread shall be eaten."
- Because we have learned from each other and from sensitive caregivers about how to care for ourselves, we respond to the needs of others whom are less fortunate than we are, who don't know how to articulate their suffering.

About Difference

We Jews have experienced what it is like to be *different* ever since our father, Abraham, discovered that God is One and tried to tell the rest of the world. Through the ages we have been bullied, oppressed, degraded, punished, tortured, even murdered for our *difference* from other people. Jews who are considered *different* from other Jews, whether they are people from Ethiopia; people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender; or people with psychiatric conditions, have a lot to teach about how to accept and be enriched by *difference*.

Hannah: Are we different? What makes us different?

Sheryl: I don't feel different but the community at large seems to think so. When I was a child in school, they picked on me and bullied me. They thought I was retarded. They threw snowballs at me and beat me up.

Howard: I don't think I really am different from other people. I may be perceived of as being different, but I have a right to be myself. Everybody has the right to be who they are. If I cut myself, do I not bleed, the same as everyone else?

Richard: If you want to observe this holiday, will this make people who aren't Jewish dislike you or think that you're weird? (like eating matza for lunch in school or at the workplace) Is being Jewish a stigma, something to be kept private, or should you outwardly show that you're Jewish, like wearing a yarmulka outside the synagogue, or leaving school or work on special occasions?



A Night of Questions

Kathy: When mentally ill people meet each other we ask, "What are you on? What's your diagnosis? Have you ever been in the hospital? For how long? Where do you live? Who's your doctor? What is s/he like? What else have you been on? What were the side effects? Which shul makes you feel good?"

This is how we connect--by asking questions.

Avadim Hayinu

We were slaves; now we are free.

Avadim hayinu, hayinu. Ata b'nei khorin, b'nei khorin.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Mitzrayim, the Narrow Place.

Mitzrayim (Egypt) is not just a place on an ancient map
Where a narrow strait blocks the way between two seas.

Mitzrayim is a place in us

Where a narrow strait blocks the sea which is our soul
From reaching the sea which is its Source.

*Blessed are You who continues to seek us out,
Who calls to us from the narrowness of our lives
to the wilderness of freedom.*

*You rouse us to shatter the Pharaohs we enthrone within us,
To wrestle with the Pharaohs who curse the lives of the poor and powerless.*

When I Was a Jewish Slave

I have been a slave
to my depression
the inner Pharaoh

that enslaves, ensnares my spirit
strangles my soul as Pharaoh garroted
the will of the Israelites, its fire gutted
The penultimate plague of darkness
encompassed Egyptians for hours
my soul shrouded in darkness for days, weeks at a time
Pitom and Ramses storecities built up by Israelites
Blackness, dead ends, confusion
despair hopelessness, rage, death of self
constructed brick by brick
until my soul's light is imprisoned.

Ken

My experience as a Jewish slave in Egypt was
I had to keep kissing people's feet.
I felt they had the upper hand
And I had no say in this matter.

Sheryl

I was a Jewish slave in Egypt.
Everyday till all hours
I had to toil with the work
myself and the Egyptians.
The way I got through it
was to think about going to a better place,
imagining no more slavery
and being free.
Free of all slavery
And being free.
Free of all slavery, suffering.
I'm a slave to my illness, my cancer

Anne

I was a slave in Egypt.
What kept me going was knowing I'll be free.
Just like with my illness.
Even though there is no cure,
I hope there will be.

Steven

In Egypt I was a young woman,
A member of a Jewish slave family (my real-life family).
About 20 years old.
My job was to fetch water
wearing a wooden yoke about 5 feet across my shoulders.
On either side I carried wooden pails, to fetch the water.
I became angry and sad when I allowed my emotions to surface.
Thinking to myself how to get through another day.
I wanted to die.

But what kept me going was knowing
The day would eventually end and
I could expect rest in sleep.
But thinking about the other members of my family
And what they were going through and suffering
Made me go on.
My love for them and from them helped me the most
To keep on pushing in spite of
The nearly constant physical discomfort
And pain.
For they knew how I felt
Because they suffered just as much.
We gave each other constant
Love and encouragement.

Robin

I was a slave
To Pharaoh in Egypt
And I had to make the bricks
And mortar (called charoset in the Hebrew term).
My family are Levites, the builders of the Jewish People.

Larry

The Four Children

The Torah has four children in mind: one, wise, a second, rebellious, a third, simple, and a fourth, a child who does not yet know how to ask.

The Wise Child Asks: Why do I have to go through life with a psychiatric disability? How can I learn to acknowledge that having a psychiatric condition is a part of who I am, that I'm going to accept this part of myself and be in the world as much as I can?

Why did it take me so long to get here? I'm grateful that medication is helping me, but I've still got a long way to go. Now that I'm feeling so much better, I do a lot of mitzvot.

Why don't we treat psychiatric conditions like we do physical ones? Why don't we allocate more of our resources to housing and treating those whose psyches and bodies require shelter?

The Rebellious Child Asks: Why do I have a psychiatric condition? Why are You, God, doing this to me? Is this a test? Maybe I'm being punished for being nasty to my parents and other people. I used to hate everybody and I wanted other people to have problems, too.

Why are you, my caregivers, doing these things to me? You say you're trying to help me, but I don't believe you.

Why should I keep going? I give up. I quit. Forget it, I'm out of here. It's not worth the struggle. It's too hard.

(Some call this child "The Unenlightened Child", one who is clueless about the experience of being labeled with a "mental illness".)

The "Unenlightened Child" Asks: What are they to me? Keep them off the streets and out of my way.

The Simple Child Asks: What is wrong with me?

The Child Who Does Not Know How to Ask: I need others to speak for me. Sometimes when a psychiatrist prescribes medications, I may not know enough to ask about side effects. Sometimes I'm so blown away by what the doctor is saying, I can't say a word. For this child, you shall tell of our stories, our triumphs, our struggles and our despair, saying, "This is what God has done for us and this is what we do for God."

The Ten Plagues

The traditional haggadah speaks of Ten Plagues by which God accomplished our liberation from Egypt. Tonight, we enumerate plagues of psychiatric conditions, which hinder our sense of wholeness, health, and freedom. For each one, our cup of joy is diminished by one drop:

ANXIETY

DEPRESSION

EATING DISORDERS

FEAR OF DISAPPROVAL

IMPULSIVITY

LOSS

MEDICATIONS

MOOD SWINGS

STIGMA

YEARS OF THERAPY

And some say:

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

ISOLATION

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSION

MELANCHOLY

PARANOIA

HOPEFULNESS

GRANDIOSITY

PSYCHOSIS

DISASSOCIATION

SUICIDAL IDEATION

Dayenu
It would have been enough!
(sing song in Hebrew)

Some say about *Dayenu*..

Howard: I don't believe *Dayenu*. "If You had parted the Red Sea, it would have been enough for us; if you had given us manna it would have been enough for us." It wouldn't have been enough!

Then what would be enough?

- A cure for emotional problems
- A job
- Self-confidence and peace of mind
- Not having to take any more medication
- To be healthy, happy, and holy
- A home, family, and good medication
- Holy matrimony, Batman!
- The freedom to stay where you are or to go someplace else
- Freedom from case managers and/or the freedom to choose case managers
- Patients' rights
- Freedom from my symptoms
- Not being discriminated against because of mental illness
- Freedom from unpleasant, obsessive thoughts

If society provided compassionate caregivers and did not provide medication, *Dayenu*.

If society provided medication and did not provide comprehensive health coverage, *Dayenu*.

If society provided enough group homes and did not eliminate ignorance, *Dayenu*.

If society eliminated ignorance and did not allocate resources for research, *Dayenu*.

If society allocated resources for research and did not provide family and community support, *Dayenu*.

If society provided family and community support and did not love us for us for who we are, *Dayenu*.



*Then, how much are we grateful for being able to work together, To
advocate for ourselves, our needs, for what we know and feel is right,
When the broken shall be whole, our shattered hearts restored anew.*



This next model program is called **“Coping with The Empty Chair at the Seder”**, and was designed by Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein of the New York Jewish Healing Center for **bereaved Jews** facing Passover after the loss of a loved one. First, you will find a copy of the flyer advertising the program. Then, you will find a leader’s guide for the program, which describes one way in which such a program can be conducted.

Accompanying this guide is a prototype of the Haggadah that was used. It is designed to be put together in journal form where each box describing a part of the seder is placed at the top of a blank page. In this way, it can be used as a Haggadah for the program and then participants can take the journal home and use the descriptions and the questions on each page as a starting point for recording their own thoughts and feelings. We have presented the basic outline of the journal, but we suggest that when you put it together for your own program you feel free to add illustrations, words to songs and perhaps music, and other commentaries or writings that you think would enhance the beauty of the journal and further encourage its use. The journal/Haggadah itself can be given out on its own by rabbis, therapists and counselors, and could serve as a bridge to further conversation as the client or congregant engages with the material.

This program was originally conducted at the local JCC. In this way, it serves as an example of the collaborative potential of such a program, as well as presenting another way in which the seder ritual and its symbols can be used to speak directly to a particular constituency.



THE SHIRA RUSKAY CENTER
A JEWISH CONNECTIONS PROGRAM OF JBFCs

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER IN
MANHATTAN

INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR

COPING WITH THE EMPTY CHAIR
AT THE SEDER:
A workshop for bereaved Jews



“Coping with the Empty Chair at the Seder:”

A workshop for bereaved Jews

Designed and conducted by Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein, CSW, Pastoral Care Coordinator, Shira Ruskay Center; Assistant Rabbinic Director, New York Jewish Healing Center /JBFCS

✧ Leaders Guide ✧

Items required:

1. Chairs set around a number of tables.
2. Put a sign at one seat at each table saying “please leave this chair empty.” (very important)
3. A Seder Plates on each table including:
 - Charoset (with plastic spoon to serve)
 - Parsley Romain lettuce (to be used as the maror/bitter herb)
 - Roasted egg
 - A whole roasted beet (in place of the roasted shankbone)
4. Plate with 3 stacked egg matzas and on each table, covered with napkin or cloth. Put some extra napkins or cloth near matza plate for afikomen.
5. Small bowl or plate with some small matza-type crackers on each table (not kosher for Passover). *Note: This gives the sense of Pesach, but does not limit those who have the custom of not eating Matza in the days or weeks before Pesach.*
6. Small bowl of salt water on each table.
7. Small dessert plate napkin, cup, and plastic spoon or fork for each person.
8. Water and/ or soda on each table.
9. Some kind of dessert to serve at the conclusion of the program for the “meal.” Can have coffee/tea as well.
10. Copy of haggada/personal journal at each palce setting (except for empty chair)... (see included information on how to prepare haggada/journal)

Program:

General Tips:

- *This program should not take more than one hour, so make choices about which pieces to include (don't worry about leaving things out, there is always next year!) and don't over dwell on any one part. Watch the clock.*
- *If possible, have some one who can play guitar or other instrument to accompany singing. Comment on the healing power of music, both familiar and new.*

Start with a Welcome:

“Pesach is a holiday filled with memories of the past - yet at the same time, it does not always seem comfortable to bring in the sadness of loss to the seder its self- so this program is opportunity to remember loved ones, and to try out some ways in which you might feel comfortable bringing a little of your sadness and the presence of your loved one to the seder you go to this year.”

We will learn a little about the Seder in general, and thing about how the messages and rituals speak to us even at this time of sadness and grief.

If possible, have someone who can play guitar or other instrument to accompany- comment on the healing power of music, both familiar and new.

Explain the Haggadah/journal at each place:

While we will use a little of it during the program as our Haggadah, it is really intended for participants to take home and to use it as a journal. It offers one comment on each of the steps of the seder as a reflection.

- 1) Seder literally means “order.” Death and suffering upsets the natural order of the world, just as slavery and oppression upset natural order for Jewish people. Part of task of the seder, and grieving is to reestablish order in the world and in our lives. Sing the order of the Seder together (page at the beginning of the Haggadah.)
- 2) Empty Chair – Instruct participants to take some time to introduce themselves and their loved one who is represented by the empty chair, that person’s name, and how many seders it will be without that person. Many people have lost more than one loved one, but ask them to introduce only one person at this time. Right now, ask them to just give the basic information- there will be time later for stories.
- 3) Karpas/parsley page - Take advantage of the sensory experience of Seder. Speak about the salt water as tears, green as spring and renewal - but in life, experiences are seldom pure, with only one thing at a time happening in our lives and emotions, so taste the sadness and hope together. Dip parsley in salt water, say the bracha together.
- 4) Break the middle matza, and wrap it (have cloth or napkin handy.) Comment on matzah conveying a sense of brokenness- and/or on feeling of being hidden as a mourner, after the first weeks, and other feelings of being hidden, or God hiding, or that kind of thing.
- 5) Questions – a seder must have questions, in order to tell the story. Even if only rabbis are at a seder, they must ask questions. Ask group to look at the seder plate and say what is unfamiliar. For most it will be the beet, in place of the bone. Since all of the objects are symbolic, in reality anything can be used. The bone is only symbolic of the Passover offering, so the beet can also be a symbol of that as well. One talmudic rabbi used a beet at his seder, so there is a long tradition to this. However, the beet here is for the purpose of making someone ask a question.

Give a few moments for each table to talk with other participants at the table about the following: What are your questions, especially the unanswerable ones that you have asked since the death of your loved one.

- 6) Maggid – Telling the story. We begin this section by telling our national story of oppression and loss (can sing *avadim hayyinu*). Having told our national story, allow participants some time to share a personal story of a seder, or other holiday memory with their loved one – something funny, sad, or just an observation. (Group leader might need to model a quick story or image for group.)
- 7) Dayenu/it would be enough - Jews are ambivalent about saying dayenu- we don't really mean it would be enough if God took us out of Egypt, and left us at the edge of the sea. In the words of the Psalmist, when it comes to loved one, it would never be enough time - whether a person lives a single day, or a thousand years. Sing dayenu - just 3 or so verses, encourages people to think about their own "dayenu," going through the steps of the blessings which they did receive during loved ones life.
- 8) Korech- the sandwich. Comment on various elements of the sandwich, and how in themselves they represent so many different aspects. For example, matzah is both a bread of poverty and of freedom. Also, haroset and romaine lettuce, as the brick and clay of the sandwich, are at first sweet. But the longer you chew, the more bitter it gets - like the Jewish experience in Egypt. Sometimes we hold onto our own bitterness and keep chewing it long after it helps us. (Instruct participants in making the sandwich and eat - no blessing is said)
- 9) Elijah- theme of the second half of the seder is the theme of redemption. Elijah is prophet of healing, invite in healing for self and for world. Sing *Eliahu hanavi*.
- 10) Hallel, included for us to rejoice and appreciate our blessings. Sing *ki l'olam hasdo* from the hallel, possibly to the melody of *Adir hu* (or choose another song to sing from hallel). If you use *ki l'olam hasdo*, comment on *hasdo/hesed* (loving - kindness) and encourage participants to think about what kind of support has gotten them through hard times and what kind of *hesed* they have offered others.
- 11) Conclude with a few Passover songs - you can point out that the song, *Chad Gadya*, ends with God vanquishing the Angel of death.



A PERSONAL PASSOVER JOURNAL
FOR MEMORY AND CONTEMPLATION

PREPARED BY RABBI STEPHANIE DICKSTEIN, LCSW

The New York Jewish Healing Center, a program of the Jewish Health, Healing, and Recovery Network
of JBFCS

THE 15 STEPS OF THE SEDER

<i>Kadesh</i>	First cup and Kiddush
<i>UrChatz</i>	First handwashing (without a blessing)
<i>Karpas</i>	First dipping: vegetable and salt water
<i>Yachatz</i>	Breaking the middle matza
<i>Maggid</i>	Storytelling
<i>Rachtza</i>	Second hand-washing (with a blessing)
<i>Motzi</i>	First blessing over the matza
<i>Matza</i>	Second blessing over the matza
<i>Maror</i>	Second dipping: marror in charoset
<i>Korech</i>	Hillel sandwich
<i>Shulcan Orech</i>	Communal meal
<i>Tzafun</i>	Afikoman
<i>Barech</i>	Birkat hamazon (the blessing after eating)
<i>Hallel</i>	Psalms of praise
<i>Nirtza</i>	Concluding prayer and folk songs

Kaddesh: Sanctifying Time

Kiddush

Time is a healer, we are always told. Your grief will get less over time. Yet, as time cycles around, it also reminds us of our losses. This is the season when... this is how we used to do it when... sometimes we feel a cushion of comfort as we remember fondly how we spent holidays with our loved one. And sometimes the pain is just as sharp and devastating as the first day.

Urchatz: The First Hand-washing

The first hand-washing of the seder is unusual. The rabbis point out that even a child would wonder at least two things: why do we wash without a blessing and why do we bother to wash when we will not be eating our meal for some time. They suggest that we wash our hands here in order to raise questions. Questions, both of wonder and of despair, are crucial to our growth as human beings. As Jews we have permission to ask questions, even of God, when we see and experience suffering.

Karpas: The First dipping

Spring Greens and Salt water

The blessings:

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Ba-ruch ata Adonai,

Elo-hei-nu melech ha-olam,

Bo-rei pree ha-ada-ma.

Salt water represents our tears as slaves in Egypt. In my bereavement, as time goes by, what are still the sources of my tears? What still makes me cry? Is there anything that still enslaves me to my tears?

The *karpas*, the spring vegetable, represents renewal that comes in the spring-time. As I move from grief and mourning back into a full and renewed life what is yet growing in me and what comes alive in me again?

Yachatz: Breaking the Matza

The matza represents brokenness. As the matza is broken in half, the broken piece is set aside for the afikoman, which when found toward the end of the seder, symbolizes renewed wholeness and redemption. In my broken-heartedness, have there been paths of healing form e? in my brokenness, have I found places of greater strength within me? Am I moving back towards a new kind of wholeness?

Maggid: Telling the Story

One of the central *mitzvot* of Passover is telling the story of oppression and the journey to liberation. It is interesting to note that the Haggadah offers us at least four version of the Passover story. There is telling symbols, historical recounting, moral expositions, and facts with expanded interpretations. What are some of the different ways in which you tell the stories of your loved one and the journey you took together?

Rachtza: Washing Before Eating Matza

When we have been to a cemetery, it is customary to wash our hands before entering a building. It is a remnant of the Biblical idea that contact with the dead puts an individual into a different state. Purification by water is necessary prior to re-entering the community. What rituals have been helpful to you in making the transition from focusing completely on your loved one, and being able to be more fully a part of your own, albeit changed, life?

Motzi/Matza: Eating the Matza

The seder ritual seems to have it backward: One would think that we should eat the maror first, just as the bitter slavery preceded the liberation. But in truth, our chronology is not so simple. We need to have tasted freedom to really understand oppression. Maybe the lingering aftertaste of the matza can help see us through suffering and oppression. So it is, that the love we shared with our loved ones sustains us through the bitterness of their passing.

Maror: The Bitter Herb

A Meditation on Maror

By Ira Steingroot (from A Different Night:: The Family Participation Haggadah, by Noam Zion and David Dishon) Personally, I cannot imagine Passover without horseradish. Its combination of intense pleasure and pain makes a good analog for the bittersweet nature of our memories at Passover. We remember good times with family and friends, often with those who are no longer with us or are far away. We give our brief lives added dimension by linking them to the pain and triumph of Jewish history. As the Irish fiddler Seamus Connolly once said in the name of this mother, "We're never so happy as when we're crying." We never enjoy the horseradish so much as when it brings tears to our eyes.

Korech: Hillel's Sandwich

Prepare sandwich of matza, maror, and charoset.

While we may understand that maturity means accepting that life is the integration of the bitter and the sweet, the sandwich also reminds us that we live our lives "inbetween". We hang in the balance, alive, but not immortal, sandwiched between a fragile, limited, animal self and our eternal Divine image.

Shulchan Orech: The Meal

Food is associated with life. When the mourners return from the cemetery, they are served a meal with specific foods. By feeding the mourners and insisting that they make a commitment to life even in the face of loss, the community expresses its concern and caring for the mourners. Like the foods of the seder, the foods which make up the mourner's meal are deeply symbolic. For instance, the hard-boiled egg, common to both the seder and the meal of comfort is the symbol of new life, and of survival and strength, even in difficult circumstances.

Tzafon: The Afikoman

Finding and Eating the Afikoman

In hiding and seeking the afikoman, we reunite the two parts separated at the beginning of the seder. At this moment, we have the opportunity to discover lost parts of ourselves, to become reconciled with relatives who have become distant and to find wholeness in aspects of Judaism which may not have been part of our lives. Finding that which is hidden is a powerful message when we feel loss and lost. Within our loss, we find ways of healing the broken part of our lives.

Barech: Birkat Hamazon

The Blessing after the Meal

"They who sow in tears, shall reap with joy."

You have shed many tears since the death of your loved one. What are the blessings you received from your loved one which continue to nourish you? What are the blessings that have come into your life since your loss?

Cup of Elijah

Open door and sing:

Eliyahu ha-navee

Eliyahu ha-Tish-bee

Eliyahu, eliyahu, Eliyahu ha-Giladee

Beem-hei-ra b'ya-mei-nu

Yavo ei-leinu

Eem ma-shee-ach ben David

Eem ma-shee-ach ben David

Death and loss often lead to a sense of isolation. The doors to the heart and the doors to community and love seem to be closed. What are the beliefs and the hopes you have which can help you to open the door again?

Pour Out Your Wrath

Anger is very much a part of grieving. What are some of the things which have happened around the death of your loved one, and in the time since that have made you feel angry?

On Anger

By Rabbi Ira Stone

Anger results from our inability to admit the disparity between what we want and what is. It is a consequence of the impossibility of perfection in the created world in which the idea of perfection nevertheless exists...Following the example of the prophets, each of us has a mandate to assuage the destructive energy of anger in our selves, in other people and in God. We also have a mandate to accept the life-giving energy that emerges from the anger that is constructively channeled, whether it comes from God or from people.

Hallel: Praise, and the fourth cup of wine

Hesed is often translated as loving-kindness. There are times when we are aware of God's loving-kindness towards us. *Hesed* is also a gift we receive from other beings, and which we can give to them. Recall some of the acts of *hesed* that you experienced, and in which you have engaged, since the death of your loved one.

Counting the Omer (second night only)

On the second night of Passover we begin counting 50 days from the Exodus to Sinai. Biblically, this represents the time from the barley harvest (Pesach) to the wheat harvest (Shavuot). The rabbis interpret this counting of seven weeks as reflecting Israel's eager anticipation of the giving of the Torah at Sinai on Shavuot.

Teach us to number our Days

By Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, CSW

The number seven, which has so many associations in the Bible and Rabbinic tradition is primarily associated with the Creation of the world. It is a number of both generativity and of completion – the week being the basic unit of our lives, culminating in the “perfect rest” of Shabbat. Multiples of seven, similarly, are related to life, as the Psalmist says: “The span of our life is seventy years.” We may experience in the Omer's 7 x 7 a symbolic movement through life, from our launching at birth to our ultimate arrival at death. Counting our days is a lot like counting our blessings: to get from our Start to our Finish, we ought to try to make each day “count”, and to appreciate moments along the way.

Nirtza: Conclusion

One chapter in my life has concluded, but my life journey continues. What do I look forward to in the coming year...

...for myself?

...for family and friends?

...for my community?

...for my world?

La-shana ha-ba-a bee-yeru-sha-layeem!
NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM

SECTION THREE - REFLECTIONS

This section presents a sampler of four brief reflections on the themes of Passover. These narratives give us a taste of how each individual can bring their life history and communal history to Passover and the seder table. This section intentionally does not focus on the joy, warmth, and good smells, since much has been written about this, but rather on the ways in which holidays can be challenging spiritually, physically, emotionally, and even financially. Profound personal conflicts can live just below the surface of the Passover experience.

In two of the narratives some of the rituals and themes of the holidays were understood in an entirely new way, which resulted in a personal healing. These stories may be inspiring to others who are struggling, and giving them permission to creatively work with the spiritual resources embedded in the holidays to address personal challenges.

A third narrative names a taboo family trauma, breaking the crippling silence that surrounds family violence. It speaks to victims and survivors of family violence, many of whom are invisible and isolated, about the struggle and pain Passover can trigger. It also offers words of comfort, coping strategies, and helpful resources.

And in the final piece, each of us is called to remember our collective responsibility to make it a bit easier for those who face hard times, both financial and physically, at this "Season of our Freedom."

YIZKOR AND THE GUESTS AT MY SEDER

By Dr. Tamara M. Green, PhD., founding board member of the NCJH and
Chair of the Classics Department at Hunter University.

ALTHOUGH MOST JEWS ASSOCIATE THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WITH YOM KJPPUR, THE *YIZKOR* PRAYER IS RECITED AT THE THREE MAJOR FESTIVALS - SUKKOT, *SHAVUOT*, AND *PESACH* - AS WELL. UNDERSTANDING WHY WE RECITE THIS PRAYER ON THE MOST SOLEMN OF DAYS IS EASY, BUT ONLY LAST YEAR AT *PESACH* DID I REALLY SENSE WHY WE DO IT ON THE OTHER HOLIDAYS AS WELL. THIS IS WHAT I REMEMBER...

I have had a particularly bad fall and winter; a month in the hospital with a life-threatening infection has left me weak and filled with an exhaustion that constantly threatens to drown me. The fragility of my spirit seems to be only a painful reminder of the fragility of life. And yet, for reasons that are not very clear, I know that I need to make the seder and invite our collective families. After much cleaning, cooking, and washing of dishes, I manage to carry it off, but I come to shul on the first day of *Pesach* exhausted, barely able to participate in the service. What had I been trying to prove, and to whom, and why?

I shlep through the rest of the week, but now, finally, it is the seventh day of *Pesach*, and I am bank in shul again. My attention wanders: but then, as we get ready to recite the *Yizkor* service, recollections of my seder suddenly float into my head. We are all sitting around the table, and this is what I see: my nephew beaming at his first serious girlfriend as he reads from the Haggadah in flawless Hebrew, my oldest niece holding hands with her new husband, my brother-in-law who had been widowed a couple of years ago with his girlfriend and her mother. I am taking great pleasure in the fact that both our mothers are here with us, and feel delight that my youngest niece has

learned enough Hebrew to recite the four questions.

But as in my daydream I look around the room, I realize I had not noticed the presence of others who, unseen like Elijah, had joined us at the seder table: my father, who had died when I was very young, who never saw his youngest daughter, my sister, sitting at the seder table, and who never had the pleasure of hearing his grandchildren recite the four questions; my bubba and zeida, who had found nothing more wonderful than to have their family gathered around the seder table,

We are the product of countless generations of the Children of Israel, and every time we recite the kaddish, we recall all those who came before us.

even as my zeida denounced religion as nothing more than the superstition of the masses; my oldest brother, who had died when still a child and whose kiddush cup was on the table, waiting for Elijah; Marty's father, whose shul had been the center of his life in the years before he died. They, too, were all guests at my seder.

It is often said that the strength of the Jewish community comes from the fact that not only is it a horizontal one - that is, the Jewish world in which we live right now - but that it is vertical as well, stretching backward and forward in time. We are the product of nearly 4,000 years of tradition. We are the product of countless generations of

the Children of Israel, and every time we recite the *kaddish*, we recall all those who came before us.

And that, I realized: is the meaning of the *yizkor* service. We remember those whom we have loved who are no longer living. We are called upon not only to remember them with prayer and with a *yahrzeit* candle, but also to think about their lives: what their lives meant to us when they were alive, and what they mean to us now. *Yizkor*, then, is a way of keeping them alive, within us. It is a way of making sure that they live

with us in the sukkah, that they witness the miracle at Sinai with us at Shavuot, and that they sit with us each year at the seder table. I know that in one way or another, no matter what happens, I will always be there, too.

And as I recite the *yizkor* prayers, I remember the *shehecheyanu* that is recited at the beginning of the seder, but I change the words a little:

"Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling all of us to celebrate this day."

“A Personal Healing”

Susan J. Rosenthal, CSW

In our family, Passover and the seer were all about themes of social justice – concern for other people who were not free. It was a powerful metaphor for the American civil rights movement of the 60's, the focal point for political advocacy of many in our Jewish community.

So when my own struggles with illness and infertility challenged me in the 80's, I did not think about how to apply the themes of Passover, or any of the other Jewish Holidays, to my suffering spirit and body. Fortunately, the treasure chest of Jewish spiritual resources started opening for me in the 90's, when I was exposed to the work of the Jewish healing movement and the dynamic teaching and prayer that had sprung up in synagogue, community centers and the like in Manhattan.

This is one brief example of how I applied this new learning.

By the fall of 1995, I was completing several years of journeying with two very ill friends when a third became suddenly gravely ill. All three died within a month of each other. As spring and Passover approached, I was still in the grip of a profound depression. While I had been able to feel a connection to “The Source of Life” ever since my serious illness and near death experience a decade earlier, all my sense of connection to something larger than me was now gone. I knew this was the effect of the grief, but I felt helpless and unable to move from this place. I didn't have the tools or the answers.

At the same time, I was exposed to Passover teachings and writing that introduced me to the concept “slavery” as any narrow place one found oneself in – such as grief, depression, physical depletion, family upheaval, etc. The idea of applying this metaphor to my personal life was entirely new and made a lot of sense. And, accompanying this was the biblical Passover story image of *Calling Out to The Outstretched Arm of G-d*, in our prayers and while we cleaned in preparation for Passover, to life us out into a more wide open space. It seemed worth trying! Even though I felt numb, I just started cleaning for Passover and calling out to the Hand of G-d to life me. I just kept at it, mostly in silence and with a lot of focus. And I was blessed.

That year, we were holding the first seder at our house and I was finishing the preparations and getting ready to dash off to the evening service when the telephone rang. My step-daughter called to let us know that she was pregnant with our first grandchild. I started sobbing with joy and profound gratitude. For me, this was the answer to my Calling. The answer to these losses in my life at that time was new life.

May the hand of G-d respond so clearly to all who can call out, and may we have the wisdom to recognize the response.

Amen.

“Surviving Passover”

Na'ama Yehuda, MSC, SLP, APP and Vicki Polin, MA, ATR, LCPC © 2003

There are many issues surrounding holidays and childhood sexual abuse that have rarely if ever been addressed in our communities. One of those issues pertains to surviving Jewish holidays.

It's not too surprising that many adult survivors of childhood abuse have a difficult time during Passover, as this time of the year (as do the High Holidays) can bring up painful memories: Families get together, routines are changed, there is an added stress of cleaning, preparing, and “doing it right.” These issues alone can be extremely stress producing, let alone the probability that they had resulted in increased stress and many times abuse in the past. Parents who are already included to use their children as an outlet for emotions and urges, are even more likely to do so when under the pressure of increased anxiety. Many survivors of childhood abuse report that they were abused more around and over holidays, especially Pesach, which brings with it – on top of cooking and cleaning – an added financial burden.

This is written as a reminder to all survivors: you are not alone. It is not uncommon for symptoms of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) to emerge after times of relative remission and/or intensity in those already struggling. You may experience an increase in disturbing thoughts, nightmares and flashbacks. Thoughts of self-harm, even suicide, may be an issue. The important thing to remember is these feelings are about the past, that the abuse is over, and that it is of utmost importance for you to be kind to and gentle with yourself.

Over the years we have spoken to many adult survivors who find it very painful to even consider going to a seder. This is OK. Someday you may feel different, but if the pain is too intense, it is important that you do things that can be healing, that you set boundaries to do what feels safe for you. One survivor shared that she felt uncomfortable not doing anything for Pesach, so she'd rent the "Ten Commandments" each year on Seder night and watch it, forming her own ritual of remembering the events that lead to the Seder night. Another survivor would invite other Jewish Survivors over to her home and they would use "The Survivors Haggadah" for their services. Another person used the time before Pesach for "spring cleaning" her relationships – reconnecting with friends with whom she feels safe, airing out the achievements of the last year and making resolutions for added liberation from her past for the coming year. The survivors above found a way to celebrate a "modified" Pesach, but there are many others for who just try to survive this time of year by pretending that there is no such thing as Pesach.

Whatever works for you--know that you are not alone, not wrong, not bad for having second and third and forth thoughts about how to celebrate and if to celebrate the holiday. Look into yourself and see what you need, then do what you can to do it, and be kind to yourself for needing to make these adjustments And remember, when B'nei-Israel left Egypt to walk toward a new era - they were walking from a place they knew, but was of pain, to a place unknown, but free. The essence of the Seder night is to remember, and ask why, and be expected to understand and participate only to the extent one can.

Have a gentle, safe holiday.

Vicki Polin and Na'ama Yehuda are co-directors of The Awareness Center -The international organization dedicated to addressing childhood sexual abuse in the Jewish Community. For more information about The Awareness Center, visit our web page at: <http://www.TheAwarenessCenter.org>

"But I Can't Afford This Freedom ..."
Making Pesach a Healing Celebration for/with All

Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, CSW

Pesach, the Feast of Freedom, ironically and painfully brings to light the financial oppression experienced by people living with serious illness or disability in contemporary society.

For those who are not challenged by disease or life-altering conditions, Pesach demands an unusual outlay of both emotional and psychological as well as practical and economic resources. To fully clean the home, to change dishes, to order, purchase, and prepare special foods, to arrange *sedarim* and other shared meals. Pesach can be quite a taxing holiday, even for those with no health or mobility challenges. Imagine how daunting it can be for those undergoing or recuperating from treatments, or those whose life-situation limits their energy and ability to run around, drains their bank accounts, and so on. Some are fortunate enough to have friends, family, and community that take note of people's needs and reach out with sensitivity and efficiency. But all too many suffer alone, unable to join in the holiday's rich rituals and to fulfill its traditional requirements.

We may not see their isolation, we may not feel their pain, but many, many Jews feel excluded, alienated, diminished, and ashamed, because when all is said and done, they cannot fully join in our Feast of Freedom. Truth be told, this mirrors the dramatic, and sometimes catastrophic, depletion of resources that people who are ill and disabled suffer, year-round. But when a major moment of Jewish life, a highpoint of Jewish commemoration and communal observance, excludes a segment of people who are already struggling and pressed, something is very, very wrong.

This is a call to our communities to speak up, to plan, and to allocate resources so that all Jews can join in Pesach and have the experience of liberation from bondage. It entails financial stretching, but even more, it involves organizing and reaching out, enabling young and old to know the problem and personally become a part of its solution.

We know from the Exodus narratives - Biblical as well as Rabbinic - that those who were in some way and for whatever reason, infirm or vulnerable, were not left out or left behind. Indeed, the liberation of our people would not have been complete or possible without *everyone* following Moses, Aaron, and Miriam out of Egypt, standing at the Red Sea, proceeding across the miraculous dry path, each, at his or her own pace.

This, then, is a call to us - this is a healing that we can and must further, on Pesach and throughout the year.

SECTION FOUR - BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are hundreds of books on Jewish holidays in general and Passover in particular and there are thousands of printed editions of the Haggadah. We are including just a few books in each category and some websites that have been helpful preparing healing programs and articles related to Passover.

Bibliography of Passover related material.

General Holiday Books:

The Book of Jewish Sacred Practices: CLAL's Guide to Everyday and Holiday Rituals and Blessings, edited by Irwin Kula and Vanessa L. Ochs (Jewish Lights, 2003)

Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice, by Michael Strassfeld (Knopf Publishing, 2002)

The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary, by Michael Strassfeld (Harper& Row, 1985)

Mirrors in Time: A Psycho-Spiritual Journey through the Jewish Year, by Joel Ziff (Jason Aronson Inc. 1996)

Seasons of Our Joy: A Modern Guide to the Jewish Holidays, by Arthur I. Waskow (Beacon Press, 1982) *The Tapestry of Jewish Time: A Spiritual Guide to Holidays and Life-Cycle Events*, by Nina Beth Cardin (Behrman House, 2000)

Books about Passover and collections of source material:

In Every Generation: A Treasury of Inspiration for Passover and the Seder, by Sidney Greenberg and Pamela Roth (Jason Aronson, 1998)

The Passover Anthology, by Philip Goodman (Jewish Publication Society, 1987)

Passover: The Family Guide to Spiritual Celebration, Ron Wolfson with Joel Lurie Grishaver (Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001)

The Woman's Passover Companion: Women's Reflections on the Festival of Freedom, by Sharon Cohen Anisfel, Tara Mohr, and Catherine Spector (Jewish Lights, 2003)

The Women's Seder Sourcebook: Rituals and Readings for Use at the Passover Seder, Sharon Cohen, Tara Mohr, and Catherine Spector (Jewish Lights, 2003)

Haggadot

A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah, by Noam Zion and David Dishon (Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997)

The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah, edited by Tamara Cohen (Ma'yan Jewish Women's Project, 2000)

A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah, edited by Joy Levitt and Michael Strassfeld (Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, 2000)

Passover Haggadah: The Feast of Freedom, edited by Rachel Anne Rabbinowicz (United Synagogue Book Service, 1982)

Mesorah Publications has published numerous haggadot with various collections of traditional commentaries and approaches.

Books which include holiday oriented healing rituals and prayers;

Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise, by Debbie Perlman (Rad Publishers, 1998)

Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope: A Jewish Spiritual Companion for Infertility and Pregnancy Loss, by Nina Beth Cardin (Jewish Lights: 1999)

Websites

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com> has an extensive collection of material on Passover in the holiday section that crosses denomination and secular/religious lines.

<http://learn.jtsa.edu/topic/holidays/> presents a variety of approaches to the holiday. It also includes a link to the 60 page Pseach Guide by Rabbi Barry Dov Learner. The collection of readings and educational material is expanded each year.

<http://uahc.org/holidays> resources and material form the Reform Movement's Congregational Arm.

<http://www.ou.org/chagim/default.html> material from the Union of Orthodox Congregations, including the invaluable guide to food which is Kosher L'Pesach.

<http://www.ritualwell.org> The Passover section contains over 60 rituals and ideas.

Many local Jewish Healing Centers will post special *divre* Torah (Torah commentaries) and other healing materials on their websites during the Passover season.

--Compiled by Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein *

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