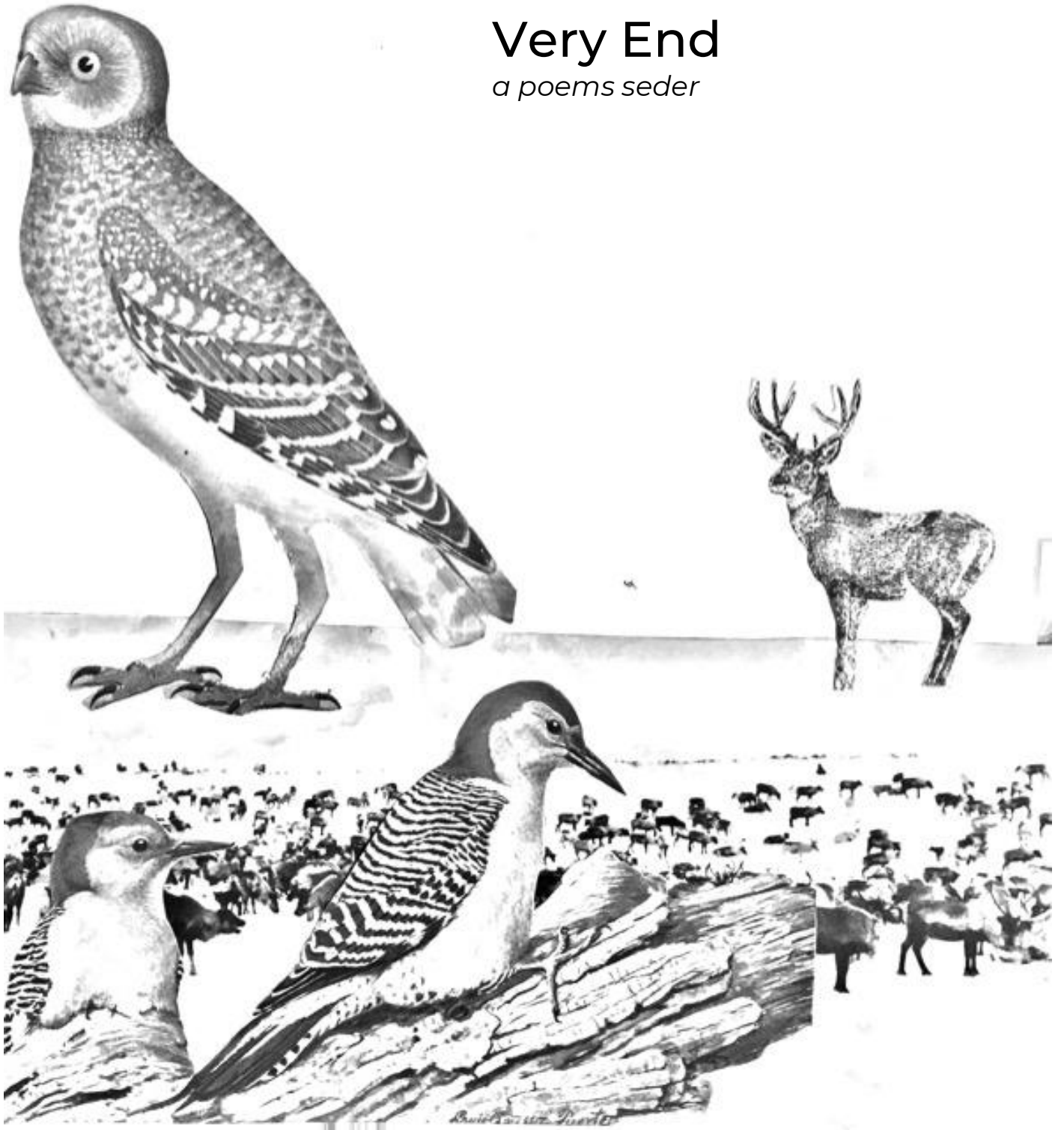


**Yes,
to the
Very End**
a poems seder



Yes, to the Very End

A poems Seder

2nd Edition

by rabbi max zev reynolds

First edition by Rabbi Max Zev Reynolds & Zachary Wager Scholl
Collage artwork by Max Zev Reynolds and Zachary Wager Scholl
Tarot Cards from the Slow Holler Tarot Deck

Second edition, 2024
First edition, 2019, created with Zachary Wager Scholl

“The Fear of Poetry,” from *The Life of Poetry* (1949), by Muriel Rukeyser

In this moment when we face horizons and conflicts wider than ever before, we want our resources, the ways of strength. We look again to the human wish, its faiths, the means by which the imagination leads us to surpass ourselves.

If there is a feeling that something has been lost, it may be because much has not yet been used, much is still to be found and began.

Everywhere we are told that our human resources are all to be used, that our civilization itself means the uses of everything it has—the inventions, the histories, every scrap of fact. But there is one kind of knowledge—infinitely precious, time-resistant more than monuments, here to be passed between the generations in any way it may be: never to be used. And that is poetry.

It seems to me that we cut ourselves off, that we impoverish ourselves, just here. I think that we are ruling out one source of power, one that is precisely what we need. Now, when it is hard to hold for a moment the giant clusters of event and meaning that every day appear, it is time to remember this other kind of knowledge and love, which has forever been a way of reaching complexes of emotion and relationship, the attitude that is like the attitude of science and the other arts today, but with significant and beautiful distinctness from these—the attitude that perhaps might equip our imaginations to deal with our lives—the attitude of poetry.

What help is there here?

Poetry is, above all, an approach to the truth of feeling, and what is the use of truth?

How do we use feeling?

How do we use truth?

However confused the scene of our life appears, however torn we may be who now do face that scene, it can be faced, and we can go on to be whole.

If we use the resources we now have, we and the world itself may move in one fullness. Moment to moment, we can grow, if we can bring ourselves to meet the moment with our lives.

סדר Seder

Kadesh קדש

Urkhatz ורחץ

Karpas כרפס

Yakhatz יחץ

Magid מגיד

Rakhatz רחץ

Motzi Matzah מוציא מצה

Maror מרור

Korekh כורך

Shulkhan שולחן

Orekh עורך

Tzafun צפון

Barekh ברך

Hallel הלל

Nirtzah נרצה

The Seder Plate

<i>Z'roa</i>	a shankbone or beet, which represents the mighty hand and outstretched arm that liberated us from Mitzrayim	זרוע
<i>Maror</i>	horseradish, which represents the bitterness of slavery	מרור
<i>Chazeret</i>	collard greens, which represent the bitterness of racial injustice, oppression, and state-sanctioned violence towards and criminalization of black and brown people	חזרת
<i>Charoset</i>	a mixture of dried fruits and nuts, which represents the mortar used to lay bricks, the work done while enslaved in Mitzrayim	חרוסת
<i>Matzah</i>	unleavened bread, which represents the food our ancestors subsisted on while fleeing from Mitzrayim	מצה
<i>Beitzah</i>	an egg, which represents life, wholeness, and liberation	ביצה
<i>Karpas</i>	parsley, which represents growth, change, and life	כרפס
<i>Mei Melakh</i>	salt water, which represents our tears while enslaved, and our tenacity and chutzpah in fighting for liberation	מי מלך
<i>Tapuz</i>	an orange, which represents gender and sexual equality and justice, especially for queer & trans people	תפוז
<i>Zayit</i>	an olive, which represents solidarity with Palestinians and Palestine in the ongoing fight against occupation and apartheid	זית
<i>Elijah's Cup</i>	an empty cup waiting for the Prophet Elijah to come, a placemark for our hopes for building the world to come	כוס של אליהו
<i>Miriam's Cup</i>	a cup full of the waters of rebirth and renewal	כוס של מרים

note: the eggs, olives, and oranges are for noshing during the seder.
Interlude: The song of Joshua, by Alicia Ostriker

the inhabitants of Jericho
faint with fear
only the harlot
hangs the red thread

from her window
and is saved
with all her family
everyone else dies by the edge of the sword

you who accomplish this with a mighty arm
our mouths declare your praise
you plant us in the land

promise of figs and olives grapes and men
we have slain innocence
let history begin



Candle Lighting

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov.

Blessed are you, God, Spirit of the universe, who has made us holy through the commandments,
and has commanded us to light the candles of this holiday.

Kadesh — Blessing the First Cup: Play

We dedicate each of our cups to ideas that poetry helps us to harness and live into in this wild world of ours. Our first cup is to play, to an abundance of openness, imagination, and curiosity.

סברי חברי!
ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם בורי פרי הגפן:

Savri khaverai!
Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Attention friends!
Blessed are You, God, Spirit of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.
ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם ששהחנו וקיימנו והגישנו לזמן הזה:

Barukh atah Adibau Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam, she'heh'khiyanu v'ki'y'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, God, Spirit of the universe, who has kept us alive,
sustained us, and brought us to this season.

There is a god of white shirts, by Samuel Ace

There is the god of white shirts and
mustaches the god of embraces the god
of relief there is the god of turtles the
god of webs and eggs there is the god of
orchestras there is the god of mustangs
there is the god of earth and under earth
the song of trees there is the god of
streams and the god of pails the god of
pine nuts and the smell of pine there is the
god of arching stone the god of the ethers
between you and you and the god of wolves

Urchatz — Preparation (First Handwashing)

*Handwashing offers a moment of individual centering before moving forward together into the seder.
The first handwashing is without saying a brakha, a blessing.*

*Ki ta'avor bamayim it'kha ani
u'va'neharot lo yishtafukha.*

כִּי תַעֲבֹר בַּמַּיִם אֶתְּךָ אֲנִי
וּבְנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁתַּפּוּךָ:

When you walk through the waters, I am with you, yes I am with you (x2)
I won't let the rivers overwhelm you, I will be with you (x2)

Karpas — Renewal (Parsley)

Even in the narrowest, craggiest, of stuck places, there can be new growth.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵי פְרִי הָאֲדָמָה:

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adamh.

Blessed are you God, Spirit of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the earth.

Looking at each other, by Muriel Rukeyser

Yes, we were looking at each other
Yes, we knew each other very well
Yes, we had made love with each other many times
Yes, we had heard music together
Yes, we had gone to the sea together
Yes, we had cooked and eaten together
Yes, we had laughed often day and night
Yes, we fought violence and knew violence
Yes, we hated the inner and outer oppression
Yes, that day we were looking at each other
Yes, we saw the sunlight pouring down
Yes, the corner of the table was between us
Yes, our eyes saw each other's eyes
Yes, our mouths saw each other's mouths
Yes, our breasts saw each other's breasts
Yes, our bodies entire saw each other
Yes, it was beginning in each
Yes, it threw waves across our lives
Yes, the pulses were becoming very strong
Yes, the beating became very delicate
Yes, the calling the arousal
Yes, the arriving the coming
Yes, there it was for both entire
Yes, we were looking at each other

Yakhatz — Break (Middle Matzah)

Take out the middle matzah and lift it, leaving the other matzah covered.

from Tablets IV, by Dunya Mikhail

When I was broken into fragments,
you puzzled me
back together
piece by piece.
I no longer fear
being broken
in any moment.

Break the middle matzah and set the larger piece aside as the Afikomen, to hide.

Magid — Telling the Story of the Exodus from Egypt

*Uncover the matzah and pour the second cup to contain the story of the Exodus.
Don't drink from it yet: the second cup gets even fuller through the stories we tell.*

Ha lakhma anya...The bread of poverty

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיָּא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Mitzrayim. Let all who are hungry come and eat! Let all who are needy come and partake of the Pesakh offering! Now, we are here: next year, may we be in freedom. Now, we are slaves: next year, may we be free.

Maggid, by Marge Piercy

The courage to let go of the door, the handle.
The courage to shed the familiar walls whose very
stains and leaks are comfortable as the little moles
of the upper arm; stains that recall a feast,
a child's naughtiness, a loud blattering storm
that slapped the roof hard, pouring through.

The courage to abandon the graves dug into the hill,
the small bones of children and the brittle bones
of the old whose marrow hunger had stolen;
the courage to desert the tree planted and only
begun to bear; the riverside where promises were
shaped; the street where their empty pots were broken.

The courage to leave the place whose language you learned
as early as your own, whose customs however dangerous or demeaning, bind you like a halter
you have learned to pull inside, to move your load;
the land fertile with the blood spilled on it;
the roads mapped and annotated for survival.

The courage to walk out of the pain that is known
into the pain that cannot be imagined,
mapless, walking into the wilderness, going
barefoot with a canteen into the desert;
stuffed in the stinking hold of a rotting ship
sailing off the map into dragons' mouths,

Cathay, India, Siberia, goldenh medina
leaving bodies by the way like abandoned treasure.
So they walked out of Egypt. So they bribed their way
out of Russia under loads of straw; so they steamed
out of the bloody smoking charnelhouse of Europe
on overloaded freighters forbidden all ports—

out of pain into death or freedom or a different
painful dignity, into squalor and politics.
We Jews are all born of wanderers, with shoes
under our pillows and a memory of blood that is ours
raining down. We honor only those Jews who changed
tonight, those who chose the desert over bondage,

who walked into the strange and became strangers
and gave birth to children who could look down
on them standing on their shoulders for having
been slaves. We honor those who let go of everything
but freedom, who ran, who revolted, who fought,
who became other by saving themselves.

Ma Nishtana

Ma nishtana ha lailah hazeh mikol haleilot?

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות.

*Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin hametz u'matzah.
Halailah hazeh kulo matzah.*

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה. הלילה הזה כולו מצה.

*Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin sh'ar y'rakot.
Halailah hazeh maror.*

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות. הלילה הזה מרור.

Sheb'khol haleilot ein anu mat'bilin afilu pa'am ekhat. Halailah hazeh sh'tei p'amim

שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת. הלילה הזה שתי פעמים.

Sheb'khol haleilot anu okhlin bein yoshvin u'vein m'subin. Halailah hazeh kulanu m'subin.

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין ובין מסבין. הלילה הזה כולנו מסבין.

How is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights, we eat both leavened bread and matzah. On this night, we eat only matzah.

On all other nights, we eat all kinds of herbs. On this night, we eat bitter herbs.

On all other nights, we do not dip our food even once. On this night, we dip twice.

On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining. On this night, we all recline.

The Mentionings

Rabban Gamliel would say: Anyone who doesn't mention these three things on Pesakh does not fulfill their obligation. These are the things:

- *What does the Pesakh offering represent?*
The strong hand and outstretched arm, which helps us move and stay together as we walk on towards freedom
- *What does the matza represent?*
The sustenance we can make happen, even when it seems like there is less than nothing to work with, when are moving from the narrowest of places into openness, hope, and freedom.
- *What do the bitter herbs represent?*
The bitterness of oppression, for us, and for everyone in the *erev rav*, the mixed multitude, who joined with us in our exodus from constraint to freedom.

Avadim Hayinu

עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים. ויוצינו יי אלהינו משם ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה.

Avadim hayinu l'Pharaoh b'Mitzrayim.

V'yotzi'einu Adonai Eloheinu mi'sham b'yad khazakha uviz'ro'a n'tu'yah.

Our ancestors were slaves to Pharaoh in Mitzrayim.

And our God brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.

Antizionist Abecedarian, by Sam Sax

after you've finished
building your missiles & after your borders
collapse under the weight of their own split
databases
every worm in this
fertile & cursed
ground will be its own country.
home never was a place in dirt or even
inside the skin but rather
just exists in language. let me explain. my people
kiss books as a form of prayer. if dropped we
lift them to our lips &
mouth an honest & uncomplicated apology—
nowhere on earth belongs to us.
once a man welcomed me home as i entered the old city so i
pulled out a book of poems to show him my papers—my
queer city of paper—my people's ink
running through my blood.
settlers believe land can be possessed—
they carve their names into firearms &
use this to impersonate the dead—we are
visitors here on earth.
who but men blame the angels for the wild
exceptionalism of men?
yesterday a bird flew through an airport & i watched that border
zone collapse under its basic wings.

Four Children

*These four archetypes represent ways of knowing, thinking, practicing, and moving through this world. What do we learn about liberation through these archetypes?*¹

¹ Tarot cards and the meanings associated with them come from the Slow Holler Tarot Deck, with thanks to A-B Moore (The Fledgling), Anson Cyr (The Guild), M. Chandelier (The Precipice), Steph Damiano (The Devil), and Alanis Mystif & Corina Dross (Book co-writers).



The Wise One

חֲכָם

What does The Wise One say? “What are the testimonies, the laws, and the statutes that Hashem our God commanded you.” And therefore you talk to them, according to the Halakha of Pesakh: After the Pesakh meal, there is no eating additional Afikomen (desert).

The Guild (aka The Hierophant) represents those larger systems that bind us to each other and to the past. These include traditions, institutions, schools, bureaucracies, political collectives, and even cultural identities. The Guild is where you learn what shape you take when you’re engaged with a larger system. It asks how we can become something together, situating each individual self in an arc of history and tradition. The Guild speaks of the supportive structures that buttress us from the winds of change and challenge the building up of fertile soil after generations of growth, the lineage of ancestors, political heroes, and visionaries we claim to help us create our own paths. It can also describe a closed system, where the past has too much strength, stifling new ideas and impulses.



The Evil One

רָשָׁע

What does The Evil One say? What is this service to you? To you, and not to them. And since they excluded themselves from the community, they denied a central point. And therefore, you “blunt their teeth”—you admonish them—and you say to them: For the sake of all this, Hashem did this for me, in taking me out of Mitzraim. For me, and not for them. If they were there, they would not have been saved.

The Devil is a card with several meanings, each shedding light on desire. The Devil can be interpreted as warning us about getting trapped by the forms our desires take. This can mean any harmful pattern that we need to unlearn, liberate, and heal ourselves from. This could be an addiction, an abusive relationship, or internalized oppressions that we can’t seem to shake. In each case, something we deeply want—release of tension, love, or social validation—becomes a trap. In this interpretation, The Devil suggests that you may be avoiding awareness about a problem and clinging to willful ignorance or delusions. You may be giving way to greed, materialism, hopelessness, and apathy. You struggle to get out of the dark. In another interpretation, The Devil can speak to the reclamation of desire. Here The Devil reminds you to let loose and reconnect with your wildness and physicality, especially if doing so would liberate you from an oppressive state of mind. Disruptive, ungovernable, and queer desires have always been a threat to established social orders—The Devil reminds us that following our desires can be insurgent and sublime.



The Fool

טיפש

What does The Fool say? What is this? And you say to them: With a strong hand, Hashem took us out from Egypt, from the house of slaves.

The Fledgling (aka The Fool) embodies the spirit of wild abandon, joyous curiosity, and enthusiasm for new experiences. They are innocent and carefree, undaunted by their own inexperience. The Fledgling strikes off for worlds unknown, heedless of danger. Their childlike trust and naiveté can be their best protection. This is not only a card of adventure, expanding horizons, and spontaneity—it also speaks to feeling supported and nourished enough to take a risk. The Fledgling doesn't care if a choice seems foolish, or if their schemes seem far-fetched. They're aware of abundance and protection. Refusing convention, the Fledgling exists outside social norms, re-imagines inheritances and traditions, and reveals uncomfortable truths through storytelling. When you work with the Fledgling, you're able to embrace the impulsive freedom of doing the unexpected and bucking social norms, while reconnecting with your innate innocence and ability to trust. You may get snagged as you travel—but take the chance anyway and see what happens. Your gift is a fresh start. Your resources are boundless. The Fledgling appreciates the newness of the journey more than the destination. Even when the path is dark, the Fledgling trusts that they have just enough light to guide their adventures. Whatever happens next will be part of a new story.



The One Who Doesn't Know What To Ask

אחד שאינו יודע לשאול

The one who doesn't know what to ask—You open the conversation for them. As it says: Tell your children on that day, saying: For the sake of all this, Hashem did this for me, in my going out from Egypt.

The Precipice (aka The Hanged Man) is a card of sacrifice and suspension. We find ourselves staring into a void where time stretches out like an infinity of nothingness—no change, no movement, no escape. Meaningful action feels inaccessible or delayed. This limbo state can overwhelm us or cause us bewilderment and terror as we face our fears. Yet this forced pause can signal a time of deep healing and receptiveness. We can only reach that other shore—where recovery, creativity and new agency wait for us—by sacrificing our egos and our sense of certainty about who we are and what we're here to do. In intolerable moments, we must expand to absorb that which torments us. Only then do we pass through to a new state of being. These transitions can be difficult, but they can also lead us to states of ecstasy, transcendence, and visionary compassion that are impossible when we are steering our own ships...The Precipice asks us to make the choice of sacrificing or surrendering the attachments that no longer serve us in

preparation for a larger death. There are forces at work that can't be reduced to the realm of logic, planning, and analysis. Keep in mind that even in this state of suspension, there is movement and growth available to you.

Plagues

People make sense out of these plagues in many ways. Escalating tactics, to force Pharaoh's hand. A magician's duel that proves the Israelite's God's strength. Disasters that accumulated, resulting in circumstances that made it easier for B'nei Israel and the Erev Rav to flee.

Each caused catastrophe. Each was part of the move towards freedom. We praise the escape into freedom, and we grieve the violence and the loss sustained on that path. We diminish the plenty and joy from our second cup by dipping our finger and placing a drop out onto our plates for each plague, representing our grief for the loss and harm caused with each plague.

There is a tradition to not lick our finger after dropping, to ensure we are not gaining any pleasure from all the tragedy and loss that transpired as our ancestors fled Mitzrayim.

<i>dam</i>	דם	blood
<i>tzfarde'a</i>	צפרדע	frogs
<i>kinim</i>	כנים	lice
<i>arov</i>	ערוֹב	wild beasts
<i>dever</i>	דָּבָר	livestock disease
<i>sh'khin</i>	שִׁחִין	boils
<i>barad</i>	בָּרָד	hail
<i>arbeh</i>	אַרְבֶּה	locusts
<i>khoshekh</i>	חֹשֶׁךְ	darkness
<i>makot b'khorot</i>	מִכּוֹת בְּכוֹרוֹת	death of firstborn

Praise the Rain, by Joy Harjo

Praise the rain; the seagull dive
The curl of plant, the raven talk—
Praise the hurt, the house slack
The stand of trees, the dignity—
Praise the dark, the moon cradle
The sky fall, the bear sleep—
Praise the mist, the warrior name
The earth eclipse, the fired leap—
Praise the backwards, upward sky
The baby cry, the spirit food—
Praise canoe, the fish rush
The hole for frog, the upside-down—
Praise the day, the cloud cup
The mind flat, forget it all—

Praise crazy. Praise sad.
Praise the path on which we're led.
Praise the roads on earth and water.
Praise the eater and the eaten.
Praise beginnings; praise the end.
Praise the song and praise the singer.

Praise the rain; it brings more rain.
Praise the rain; it brings more rain.

What I Will, by Suheir Hammad

I will not
dance to your war
drum. I will
not lend my soul nor
my bones to your war
drum. I will
not dance to your
beating. I know that beat.
It is lifeless. I know
intimately that skin
you are hitting. It
was alive once
hunted stolen
stretched. I will
not dance to your drummed
up war. I will not pop
spin break for you. I
will not hate for you or
even hate you. I will
not kill for you. Especially
I will not die
for you. I will not mourn
the dead with murder nor
suicide. I will not side
with you nor dance to bombs
because everyone else is
dancing. Everyone can be
wrong. Life is a right not

collateral or casual. I
will not forget where
I come from. I
will craft my own drum. Gather my beloved
near and our chanting
will be dancing. Our
humming will be drumming. I
will not be played. I
will not lend my name
nor my rhythm to your
beat. I will dance
and resist and dance and
persist and dance. This heartbeat is louder
than
death. Your war drum ain't
louder than this breath.

Dayeinu

Ilu hotzianu mimitzrayim dayeinu

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים דינו

Ilu natan lanu et hashabbat dayeinu

אלו נתן לנו את השבת דינו

Ilu natan lanu et hatorah dayeinu

אלו נתן לנו את התורה דינו

If God has brought us out of *Mitzrayim*, it would have been enough.

If God has given us Shabbat, it would have been enough.

If God had given us Torah, it would have been enough.

The Second Cup: Power

Our second cup is to power. It's been filled with wine and with story, spilled out in recognition of the harms of the plagues. It represents the power we hold alone and together, the ways we fight with & for each other in hopes of fashioning the world to come out of the scraps of this world we are in.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם בורי פרי הגפן:

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, God, Spirit of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

You, If No One Else, by Tino Villanueva, translated by James Hoggard

Listen, you
who transformed your anguish
into healthy awareness,
put your voice
where your memory is.
You who swallowed
the afternoon dust,
defend everything you understand
with words.
You, if no one else,
will condemn with your tongue
the erosion each disappointment brings.

You, who saw the images
of disgust growing,
will understand how time
devours the destitute;
you, who gave yourself
your own commandments,
know better than anyone
why you turned your back
on your town's toughest limits.

Don't hush,
don't throw away
the most persistent truth,
as our hard-headed brethren
sometimes do.
Remember well
what your life was like: cloudiness,
and slick mud
after a drizzle;
flimsy windows the wind
kept rattling
in winter, and that
unheated slab dwelling
where coldness crawled
up in your clothes.

Tell how you were able to come
to this point, to unbar
History's doors
to see your early years,
your people, the others.
Name the way
rebellion's calm spirit has served you,
and how you came
to unlearn the lessons
of that teacher,
your land's omnipotent defiler.

Remember how,
from the first emptiness,
you started saving yourself,
and ask yourself what,

after all,

these words are good for
in this round hour now
where your voice strikes time.

Rotzah — Preparation (2nd Hand Washing)

The second handwashing is with real water: we invite you to either repeat the motions of handwashing, or go to the sink and pour water over your hands, three pours for each hand.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצננו על־נטילת ידים.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat yada'im.

Blessed are you, God, Spirit of the universe, who sanctioned us with Your commandments and commanded us regarding hand-washing.

Motzi Matzah — Bring Forth Sustenance (The Middle Matzah)

Greens. Mustard greens, collards, turnip greens and poke—can't find them anywhere in the shops up North...Red beans and rice, chicken necks and dumplings...refried beans on warm tortillas, duck with scallions and pancakes, lamb cooked with olive oil and lemon slices...potato pancakes with applesauce, polenta with spaghetti sauce floating on top—food is more than sustenance; it is history.

— from “A Lesbian Appetite” in *Trash*, by Dorothy Allison

What has sustained you in this past year?

*Take the three matzot, holding the broken one between the two whole ones.
Hold them up while blessing:*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם המוציא לחם מן־הארץ.
ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצננו על־אכילת מצה.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu ruach ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu ruach ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat matzah.

Blessed are You God, Spirit of the universe, who brings bread from the earth.
Blessed are You God, Spirit of the universe, who sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us regarding the eating of matzah.

Maror — Bitterness

There are many bitter elements on this seder plate. The biting horseradish opens us up, sends a jolt through us, awakens. We know that bitterness is not only sad. There is sometimes, still, delight and joy found, in a sharp taste or smell, in the bite itself.

from the Book of Delights, by Ross Gay

Among the most beautiful things I've ever heard anyone say came from my student Bethany... She said, 'What if we joined our wildernesses together?' Sit with that for a minute. That the body, the life, might carry a wilderness, an unexplored territory, and that yours and mine might somewhere, somehow, meet. Might, even, join.

And what if the wilderness — perhaps the densest wild in there — thickets, bogs, swamps, uncrossable ravines and rivers (have I made the metaphor clear?) — is our sorrow? Or, to use Smith's term, the 'intolerable.' It astonishes me sometimes — no, often — how every person I get to know — everyone, regardless of everything, by which I mean everything — lives with some profound personal sorrow. Brother addicted. Mother murdered. Dad died in surgery. Rejected by their family. Cancer came back. Evicted. Fetus not okay. Everyone, regardless, always, of everything. Not to mention the existential sorrow we all might be afflicted with, which is that we, and what we love, will soon be annihilated. Which sounds more dramatic than it might. Let me just say dead. Is this, sorrow, of which our impending being no more might be the foundation, the great wilderness?

Is sorrow the true wild?

And if it is — and if we join them — your wild to mine — what's that?

For joining, too, is a kind of annihilation.

What if we joined our sorrows, I'm saying.

I'm saying: What if that is joy?"

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצננו על־אכילת מרור.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu ruach ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat maror.

Blessed are You God, Spirit of the universe, who sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us regarding the eating of maror.

Korekh — Combining (Matzah, Maror, Kharoset: The Hillel Sandwich)

Tradition holds that Hillel would wrap matzah, maror, and Pesakh sacrifice into a sandwich. Today we take a k'zayit (olive-size) of matza, and put on it charoset and maror to make our sandwiches. We do this in memory of our ancestors making their Pesakh seders in the past, in the Temple, or wherever they were.

Perhaps the World Ends Here, by Joy Harjo

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

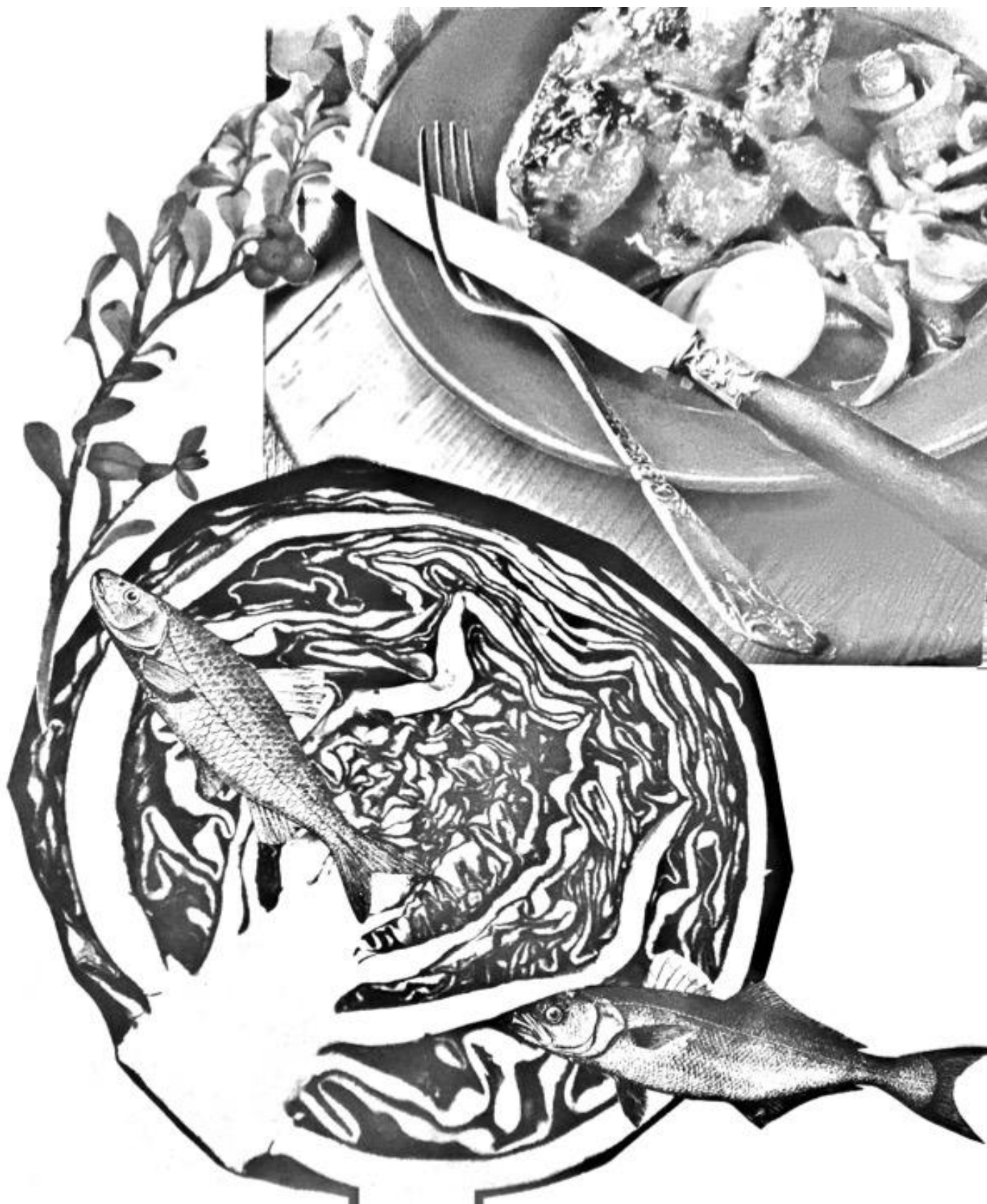
This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.



Tzafun — Find (Afikomen)

The Afikomen got hid, go find it!

Time Passes, by Joy Ladin

Time too is afraid of passing, is riddled with holes
through which time feels itself leaking.
Time sweats in the middle of the night
when all the other dimensions are sleeping.
Time has lost every picture of itself as a child.
Now time is old, leathery and slow.
Can't sneak up on anyone anymore,
Can't hide in the grass, can't run, can't catch.
Can't figure out how not to trample
what it means to bless.

Barekh — Bless (After the meal)

Don't Hesitate, by Mary Oliver

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy,
don't hesitate. Give into it. There are plenty
of lives and whole towns destroyed or about
to be. We are not wise, and not very often
kind. And much can never be redeemed.
Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this
is its way of fighting back, that sometimes
something happens better than all the riches
or power in the world. It could be anything,
but very likely you notice it in the instant
when love begins. Anyway, that's often the
case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid
of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

The Third Cup: Vision — Elijah and Miriam's Cups

Fill Elijah's cup with whatever is left in everyone's cups, then fill all cups before blessing.

Our third cup is to vision. To using all our senses to envision a world made new. To being open to the possibility that what we see isn't all there is.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם בורֵי פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן:

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, God, Spirit of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Open the door, for Elijah to come in

*Eliyahu haNavi, Eliyahu haTishbi
Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu haGiladi
Bimheira veyameinu yavo eleinu
Im mashiakh ben david*

אליהו הנביא אליהו התשבי
אליהו אליהו הגלעדי
במהרה בימינו יבוא אלינו
עם משיח בן דוד

Elijah the Prophet, Eliyahu the Tishbite, Eliyahu the Giladite
Soon, and in our time, come to us
With Moshiach, the son of David

*Miriam haNeviah oz v'zimrah b'yadah
Miriam tirkod itanu l'hagdil zimrat olam
Miriam tirkod itanu l'takein et ha'olam
Bimheirah veyameinu hi t'vi'einu
El mei haYeshuah*

מרים הנביאה עוז וזמרה בידה
מרים תרקוד אתנו להגדיל זמרת עולם
מרים תרקוד אתנו לתקן את העולם
במהרה בימינו היא תביאנו
אל ימי הישועה

Miriam, the prophet, strength and song are in her hands
Miriam, dance with us, to strengthen the song of the world.
Miriam, dance with us, to heal the world
Soon, and in our time, she will bring us
To the days of redemption

Hallel — Praise

*We weave together Psalms that lift up the struggles we've moved through, that ground us in praise
and gratitude, and point us towards the wilderness ahead.*

*Min hameitzar karati Yah
Anani bamerkhav Yah*

מִן־הַמִּצָּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בְמִרְחַב יְהוָה:

In distress I called on the LORD;
the Lord answered me and brought me relief.

won't you celebrate with me, by Lucille Clifton

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight

my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

The Fourth Cup: Excess

Our fourth cup is to excess. To being the fullest, wildest, and boldest that we can be. To being, always, more, more, and more.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו רוח העולם בור'י פרי הגפן:

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu ruakh ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, God, Spirit of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

When I or Else, by June Jordan

when I or else when you
and I or we
deliberate I lose I
cannot choose if you if
we then near or where
unless I stand as loser
of that losing possibility
that something that I have
or always want more than much
more at
least to have as less and
yes directed by desire

Nirtzah — Close

On and Up, by Amber Dawn

*Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend
- "Up-Hill," by Christina Rossetti*

Coffee, cat piss, wood rot, trash
or is it me? —that smell? Poverty
or dropout bouquet, either way
its scents wherever I can afford to be.
My clit was found in a railway yard.
Is that still how it's done these days?
My tongue loosened around the fire pit
Ashes! Ashes! is what I learned to say.
How many rhymes are made from scarcity?
Does the road wind up-hill all the way?

You can't compare plenty and not
if you have never known plenty.
Money is a poor man's myth.
Keep with grit, throw a ravishing fit
from time to time, yes, the world's unfair
but keep with grit, backbend
with nimble glory. Spare this path
and this poem the burden of have-not want.
Be tough-seasoned
Yes, to the very end.

I never thought that I'd see thirty and I have
trouble with the end—the very idea of arriving.
I've had to start over and start again.
Will I be drawn a saltwater bath?
I have scabs and cannot stop picking them.
Will I share a bed or sleep alone?
Will there be young flames to keep me warm?
I have more questions. I wrote them down.
Oh yes, will longing claim its own veracity?
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?

We're already a good ways up.
Just look at the wild tracks behind—deer
bear, little nymph, whatever forms you have taken
not one of your selves will be forsaken.
Go together, push on, push up, by dawn
we'll be sore-footed, but mad for love, rake-shaken
eye-to-eyed, yes the vistas to behold, yes
tired thighs to unfold, yes, these flashbacks are as good
as gold, but ask how far this landscape extends
From morn to night, my friend, my friend

Next year, in freedom!



Z'mirot/Songs

Qualo Es El Uno?

Quien supiese y entendiense, Alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo es el uno, qualo es el uno?
Uno es el Creador, uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los dos, qualo son los dos?
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los tres, qualo son los tres?
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los cuatro, qualo son los cuatro?
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los cinco, qualo son los cinco?
Cinco libros de la lei,
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los sesh, qualo son los sesh?
Sesh dias sin Shabat,
Cinco libros de la lei,
Cuatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los siete, qualo son los siete?
Siete dias de la semana,
Sesh dias sin Shabat,
Cinco libros de la lei,

Quatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los ocho, qualo son los ocho?
Ocho dias de brit mila,
Siete dias de la semana,
Sesh dias sin Shabat,
Cinco libros de la lei,
Quatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los nueve, qualo son los nueve?
Nueve mezes de la prenyada,
Ocho dias de brit mila,
Siete dias de la semana,
Sesh dias sin Shabat,
Cinco libros de la lei,
Quatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los diez, qualo son los diez?
Diez comandamientos de la lei,
Nueve mezes de la prenyada,
Ocho dias de brit mila,
Siete dias de la semana,
Sesh dias sin Shabat,
Cinco libros de la lei,
Quatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres nuestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Quien supiese y entendiense, alavar al Dyo criense,
Qualo son los once, qualo son los once?
Once estrellas de sueno de Yossef,
Diez comandamientos de la lei,
Nueve mezes de la prenyada,
Ocho dias de brit mila,
Siete dias de la semana,

Sesh dias sin Shabat,
Cinco livros de la lei,
Quatro madres de Yisrael, Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, Rachel,
Tres muestros padres son, Avraham, Isaac y Yacov,
Dos Moshe y Aaron,
Uno es el Creador, Uno es el Creador, baruch Hu uvaruch sh'mo.

Chad gadya.

Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

That father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came a cat and ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came a dog and bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came a stick and beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came fire and burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came water and quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came the ox and drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came the butcher and slaughtered the ox, that drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came the Angel of Death and killed the butcher, that slaughtered the ox, that drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

Then came the Holy One, Blessed be He and slew the the Angel of Death, that killed the butcher, that slaughtered the ox, that drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, that father bought for two zuzim, Chad gadya. Chad gadya.

