An American Haggadah
for Passover

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On Friday night begin here

Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, ruler of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.
Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, ruler of the universe
who has chosen us from among all nations, and exalted us among all tongues, and
sanctified us with His commandments.

With love hast Thou given us, O LORD our God, [Sabbaths for Rest] holidays for gladness, festivals and seasons for rejoicing, this [Sabbath day
and this] day of the Festival of Matzoth, the season of our redemption, [with
love], a holy convocation in remembrance of the departure from Egypt.

For Thou hast chosen us, and sanctified us, from among all nations. And
[Sabbath and] Your holy festivals [with love and favor], with gladness and
joy, You made our heritage. Blessed art Thou, LORD, who sanctifies [the
Sabbath.] Israel and the seasons.

(Sabbath is mentioned ahead of any holiday; as important as Passover is, Sabbath takes
precedence, it alone is mentioned in the ten commandments.)

וָרְחָץ

Wash hands without any blessing

воротס

Dip parsley, celery or other green vegetable into salt water,
then distribute to everybody and recite the blessing

ברְרוּ בָּאָתָהּ הָאָלָהָה מִלְּאָלָהָהּ בֵּיתָא פֶּרְיַ בֶּאֶסְמָה

Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, ruler of
the universe who creates the fruit of the earth.

יִחַז

The master of the house breaks the middle matzah in the plate, leaving half of it
there, and puts aside the other half to serve as “afikoman” after the dinner.
Uncover the matzah and lift the plate for all to see. Open the door. 
The recital of the Haggadah begins with the following words:

This is the bread of affliction

which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.

All who are hungry--come and eat.
All who are needy--come, share our Passover.
Now we are here--next year, in the Land of Israel.
Now we are slaves--next year, liberated

Close the door

(The “four questions” asked next in the Haggadah have evolved over the centuries. They used to be quite different. At first they only numbered three, and were asked later in the service, after the second cup--a more logical time, because only then would a child notice that “this night we dip two times,” in salt water and in charoseth, rather than once in salt water, as vegetables used to be eaten. Here is how the Mishnah prescribed it (Pesachim):

They then pour him the second cup. And here the son asks his father (and if the son is not understanding, his father instructs him): “Why is this night different from other nights? For on other nights we eat seasoned foods once, but on this night twice; on other nights we eat leavened and unleavened bread, but this night all is unleavened; on other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed or cooked, but this night all is roasted?” And according to the understanding of the son his father instructs him.

It is necessary to make a change on this night so that the sons will notice it and will ask, as follows: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” ..... If he has no son, his wife asks him; if he has no wife, the guests ask one another “Wherefore is this night different from all other nights?” ... if he is alone, he asks himself, “Wherefore is this night different from all other nights?”

This Haggadah provides two versions--traditional and new. Pick your choice.
Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights, we may eat bread and matzah, *this night*, only matzah.

On all other nights, we eat different vegetables, *this night*, bitter herbs.

On all other nights, do not dip *herbs* even once, *this night*, we dip twice.

On all other nights, we may sit straight or recline, *this night*, we are all reclining.
Why is this night different from all other nights?

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

On all other nights, we eat different vegetables, 
this night, bitter herbs.

On all other nights, we are far apart, 
this night, we are all together.

On all other nights, we sit down and eat, 
this night, we sing and celebrate.
We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the LORD our God brought us out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.

Now if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought our forefathers out of Egypt, there would be no people of Israel and no land of Israel, and perhaps the world would still be divided into slaves and masters.

Therefore, even if we are all wise, all learned, all old, and all familiar with the Torah, it is still our duty to recount the redemption from Egypt. And whoever tells more about the redemption from Egypt is to be praised.
A story is told about Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi El’azar son of Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon, who sat all night in B’nei Brak telling the story of the departure from Egypt, until their students arrived and told them: Our masters, the time has come for the morning “Shma” prayer.

Said Rabbi El’azar son of Azaryah: I am some seventy years old, and have never been privileged to tell about the departure from Egypt throughout the night. Until Ben Zoma explained the scripture: “That you may remember the day of your going out of Egypt all the days of your life. The days of your life, he explained, meant the days; all the days of your life, the nights as well. And the sages say: “The days of your life,” this world; “all the days of your life, including the days of the Messiah.”

Why is this book named “Haggadah”—”the telling”?

Because the Torah commanded us to tell our children on this day the story of the redemption from Egypt, as it is written: “And thou shalt tell thy son on that day, saying: because of that did the LORD do for me when I was redeemed from Egypt.

Blessed be God, blessed be He. Blessed be the One who gave Torah to his people Israel, blessed be He. Four times did the Torah command us to tell our children about the redemption from Egypt, each time in different words. Because the Torah spoke of four different children—one wise, one wicked, one simple and one who does not know how to ask.
(1) (Deuteronomy 6, 20) When thy son asks thee in times to come, saying: “What mean the testimonies, and the laws, and the customs, which the LORD our God has commanded you?” Then thou shalt say unto thy son: “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his house, before our eyes. And he brought us forth from there, to bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good, always, that he might preserve our lives as it is this very day.”

(2) (Deuteronomy 26, 26) And it shall come to pass, when your children will say unto you: “What mean ye by this service?” And you shall say: “It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and saved our houses.”

(3) (Exodus 13, 14) And it shall be when thy son asks thee I time to come, saying, “What is this?” That thou shalt say unto him: By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of slavery.

(4) (Exodus 13, 8) And thou shalt tell thy son on that day, saying: it is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.
What says the wise child? "What mean the testimonies, and the laws, and the customs, which the LORD our God has commanded you?" You too tell him the customs of Passover: One may not say "After the meal, let's have entertainment."

"Afikoman" comes from the Greek epikomios, meaning festival procession. Even the Talmud was not sure what the word meant, explaining it in different places as "dessert," "dinner music" and "a practice of going from one company to another." It probably refers to after-dinner revelry with which banquets in ancient times used to end.

What says the wicked child? "What is this service to you?"

To you, and not to him. Since he excludes himself from the group, he denies a basic principle. Thou too, blunt his teeth, and say to him: "It is because of that did the LORD do for me, when I was redeemed from Egypt." For me, not for him: had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.

The Jerusalem Talmud is said to have a version in which the wicked child says "What is all this trouble you make for us every year?"

What says the simple child? "What is this?" And thou shalt say to him: "By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of slavery"
And the one who cannot ask. You shall speak for him.

As it is written: “And thou shalt tell thy son on that day, saying: it is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.”

מִתַלְמוֹת לֹא מְרַמָּה: "בָּעֹבְרֵךְ זָא, בָּעֹבְרֵךְ זָא אֲלֵא אֲמִרְתִּי אֲלֵא בְּשַׁעַת שֶׁשָּׁתַּהֲנָה וְקָרָר;

You could have told him (your son) ahead of time, but the scripture says “on that day,” and it continues “because of that”—meaning, when the matzah and bitter herbs are on the table in front of you.

לְרִיאְמָר יִהְיוּשׁאֵל בְּכָל תָּעִיּוֹן: פֶּה אָמָר הֲלְא הָיָה יְשַׁעַל, בֵּשַׁעַת בְּנֵבָּר יְשַׁעַל בְּאָוֶיָתִכְם

And the one who cannot ask (your son) ahead of time, but the scripture says “on that day,” and it continues “because of that”—meaning, when the matzah and bitter herbs are on the table in front of you.

לְרִיאְמָר יִהְיוּשׁאֵל בְּכָל תָּעִיּוֹן: פֶּה אָמָר הֲלְא הָיָה יְשַׁעַל, בֵּשַׁעַת בְּנֵבָּר יְשַׁעַל בְּאָוֶיָתִכְם

Long, Long ago our forefather were worshippers of idols, but now God has brought us close to His service. As it was written:

“And Joshua said to all the people: Thus said the LORD, God of Israel. In days of old, your forefathers dwelled beyond the river, Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they worshipped other gods. And I took Abraham, your father, from beyond the river, and I led him through the land of Cana’an. Then I increased his family, and gave him Isaac, and gave to Isaac Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau Mount Se’ir as a possession, but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.”

(Esau is described as a “hairy” man (in Hebrew “sa’ir”), which is why Jacob could fool his father out of the firstborn’s blessing, covering his arm with an animal’s fur. Maybe the bible named Esau’s inheritance Mt. Se’ir after him.)

ברֵרוֹה שֵׁמוֹ הַמַּכַּּתָּה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, בֶּרּוֹב הָא. שִׁכְּזַדְוָה בֶּרוֹב הָא אָמַר לְאָבְרָהָם אָבִיו:

לָדָה מְאָסָרָה מְמֻטּוֹלָה וּמְפַמְפַּמְפַּמָּה אֶל הַאָבִים אֶל הַאָבִים אַשָּׁר אוֹרָה. אֶעֲשֶׂה לְךָ בֵּרֵרוֹה

בְּרֵרוֹה אָקַבֵּדֶה שָׁמَا וּזְהֵי בְרֵרוֹה, אָשֶׂר הָאָבִים אָבִים אָבִים, בְּרִכֹּם בַּכָּּל

מְפַשְּׁחָה הַקְּדָשָּׁה.
Blessed be He who kept his promise to Israel, blessed be He. For God said to Abraham: "Go forth from thy country and from thy birthplace and the house of thy father, to the land I shall show thee. And I will make thee into a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and be thou a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and him who curses thee I will curse. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Raise the cup of wine and say:

This promise made to our forefathers holds true for us, too.
For more than once have they risen against us to destroy us.
In every generation they rise against us and seek our destruction.
But the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hands.

Not only were our forefathers redeemed from slavery in Egypt, but they became a nation. As it is written: “A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down to Egypt and dwelled there, a handful, few in number. There he became a nation, great, mighty and numerous."

("Aramean" is a Syrian or Babylonian. The lines that follow--not translated--take apart the bold-faced phrases above and comment on each of their parts.)
And the Egyptians did evil unto us and tormented us.
They set upon us hard work.

And the Egyptians did evil unto us, as it is said: “Come, let us deal craftily with them, lest they multiply, and if war happened, they would be added to our enemies, would fight against us and go up out of the land.”

And tormented us, as it is said: So the Egyptians set taskmasters over them to torment them with their burdens; and they built Pithom and Ramses as store cities for Pharaoh.

And they set upon us hard work, as it is said: “And Egypt made the children of Israel labor rigorously.

So we cried to the LORD our God and the LORD heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our burden, and our oppression.
When Israel was in Egypt land
Let my people go!
Oppressed so hard they could not stand.
Let my people go!
Go down, Moses, way down, in Egypt land
Tell ol’ Pharaoh:
Let my people go!

“Thus saith the LORD” bold Moses said,
Let my people go!
“Or else I smite your firstborn dead”
Let my people go!
Go down, Moses, way down, in Egypt land
Tell ol’ Pharaoh:
Let my people go!

As Israel stood by the water side,
Let my people go!
By God’s command they did divide
Let my people go!
Go down, Moses, way down, in Egypt land
Tell ol’ Pharaoh:
Let my people go!

וִדָּחַצְיוּנָהּ הַיָּמִים בֶּן לֶבָנָה הַבְּרוּרָת בִּשְׁעַה
וּבַּמָּרָה גְּדֹלָה בְּאָדָהָהּ בְּמָסוּפָהּ

And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, signs and wonders.