



First Annual Vermont Pride Seder
Wednesday September 21, 2022, 7:30p.m.
Ohavi Zedek Synagogue

♪ OPENING SONG: *OLAM CHESED YIBANEH*

♪ *Olam chesed yibaneh. (4x)*

*I will build this world from love.
And you must build this world from love.
And if we build this world from love,
Then God will build this world from love.*

WELCOME

When you hear the words “Pride Seder” you might think “But a Seder is for Passover!” Well, in the seventeenth century the Kabbalists in Tsefat created a Seder to celebrate Tu B’Shevat, the New Year of the Trees, which spread to communities all over the world. And the Talmud says that at the New Year we should eat foods that grow abundantly, like pumpkins, beans, leeks, beets, and dates. For this reason, to this day some communities hold a Seder on the first night of Rosh Hashanah which includes those foods.

Even if there were no other Seders, it would be appropriate for LGBTQ Jews to create a ritual meal to celebrate our liberation from *Mitzrayim*. This is the Hebrew word for Egypt, but it literally means “the narrow place,” metaphorically the place of constriction, exclusion, oppression.

This Haggadah has its roots in projects of the Gay and Lesbian Mishpocha of Colorado and the Berkeley Queer Minyan. Early versions were used at B’nai Jeshurun in New York City, and then the ritual was extensively developed over many years at Congregation Sha’ar Zahav in San Francisco. We are grateful to Sha’ar Zahav for permission to adapt their versions for tonight’s gathering.

On this night we celebrate the ongoing process of our still-to-be-fully-realized liberation. We follow our community’s passage from oppression, shame, and denigration to liberation, pride, and celebration. Some elements of tonight’s Seder will be familiar. There is a Seder plate, although with different items on it than at Passover. We will drink several cups, and we will tell stories of our continuing

Exodus. But other elements will be different from – if reminiscent of – other Seders. We are forging our own place within our traditions.

Since every Hebrew phrase is grammatically feminine or masculine, we alternate in our Seder between differently gendered versions of the blessings, and we will replace the work *melech* – king – with *ru'ach* – spirit. If you know the traditional Hebrew *brachot*, prepare yourself to encounter unfamiliar language!

Whoever you are, and however you define yourself, we are overjoyed that you are with us here tonight. All the individual voices you will hear are those of LGBTQ individuals. This is because for so long our voices could not be heard openly in sacred spaces. For those of you are not LGBTQ Jews, your role as allies is important during this Pride Seder. Sing with us, be with us, celebrate us, and when we share readings, witness our moment with closed lips and open hearts. By stepping back, you allow us to step forward.

Now sit and join us for this Seder of Freedom. *Chag Sameach!*

THE RAINBOW CANDLES

We begin our Seder by lighting these six rainbow candles. They are a symbol of who we are in our different LGBTQ clans, and also represent the full spectrum of the Jewish community, from Orthodox to Humanistic, from Ethiopian to Burmese Jews, along with everyone who is working for inclusion, here and around the world.

As we sing the blessing over the candles, note that the final word of the blessing has been changed.

♪ *Baruch ata Adonai, Elohenu ru'ach ha'olam,
asher kideshanu bemitzvotav,
vetzivanu lehadlik ner shel yom ga'ava.*

*Blessed are You, God, spirit of the universe,
who makes us holy by your commandments
and commands us to kindle the lights of our day of pride.*

Who can look directly into the light? We can only behold a small portion, a fragment of the light. And when that One Light is fragmented, the colors of the rainbow result.

The rainbow candles evoke the red and pink ribbons we wear in the hopes of finding cures for AIDS and breast cancer, and the colors of the Names Project quilts, the *tzitzit* we wear, and the covenant God made with Noah. They are all the colors of our inner lives, the common threads that bind us together. And they are a celebration of the gay love of flash and color.

So let us give thanks for all the colors that are ours. For those colors we love, and those with which we are not so comfortable, within ourselves and others. All of them are a part of the One Light that bathes us all, the One Light that is the fountain of our life. Let us recite together the traditional blessing said upon seeing a rainbow.

*Brucha at Shechina, Elotenu ru'ach ha'olam,
zocheret habrit vene'emenet bivritah, vekayemet bema'amarah.*

Blessed are You, Shechina, spirit of the universe, who remembers the covenant, is faithful to Your covenant, and keeps Your promise.

When I see a rainbow,
The flag flying from the lamppost,
Fluttering in the Pacific breeze,
I know that God made a Covenant between us.
If we lived our lives in black and white,
We would never see that promise God made.
To see all those colors together
Reminds me that God is there for you and me.

– Kevin Johnson

♪ SONG: SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

*♪ Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high,
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby.*

*Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.*

*Someday I'll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me,
Where troubles melt like lemon drops,
Away above the chimney tops, that's where you'll find me.*

*Somewhere over the rainbow, bluebirds fly.
Birds fly over the rainbow, why, then, oh why can't I?
If happy little bluebirds fly
Beyond the rainbow, why, oh why can't I?*

As we bathe in the light of these candles, we remember all the candles we have lit as Jews and LGBTQ people. Shabbat candles, yahrzeit candles, candles at AIDS vigils and Take Back the Night marches. We rededicate the flame each of us carries within, that small reflection of the Creator's light that is ours to use, as a beacon in our work of *tikkun olam*, the repairing of the world, and as a match to spark the hopes and dreams of all people.

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flames.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret fastness of the heart.
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flames.
– Hannah Senesh

To close our candle-lighting, we sing the *Shehechianu*, our traditional words of celebration:

*♪Baruch ata Adonai, Elohenu ru'ach ha'olam,
shehechianu, vekiyimanu, vehigianu, lazman hazeh.*

*Blessed are you, God, spirit of the universe, who has kept us in life,
and preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.*

KADESH – BLESSING OVER THE WATER

Tonight, we will drink five glasses, not four, and we will fill them with water, not wine, because water is the source of life. Unlike Shabbat, when the custom is to cover the challah during the blessing over the wine, tonight we leave the challah uncovered, because we reveal ourselves without shame or embarrassment, without comparison or criticism. Our uncovered challah reminds us not to hide any part of our light, any part of who we are.

THE EMPTY CUP

Before we fill our water cups, we read together:

Blessed is the empty cup, full of potential, of possibilities.

Blessed is the cup waiting to be filled.

Blessed is the cup of unfolding.

And blessed is the Source of Life, who creates us all in its image, full of love, strength, wisdom, and dreams.

We now fill our cups with water for the first blessing.

THE FIRST CUP

The first cup is for the past. The water in this cup is clear, to remind us of our long historical invisibility. We drink tonight to those who were left out of the stories of our people. We drink to those who labored to restore their memories. And we drink to those who did not live to see this moment. We reflect that our liberation is still incomplete, and we know that we are part of a chain of generations who – while we will not complete the work – are still obligated to continue it, and thus help fill the cup for the generations to come. We sing the blessing together.

*♪Brucha at Shechina, Elotenu ru'ach ha'olam,
boreit mayim chayim.*

*Blessed are you, Shechina, spirit of the universe,
who creates living waters.*

(URCHATZ – HANDWASHING)

At traditional Seders we wash our hands. Because LGBTQ Jews have been told for so long that we are unclean, tonight there will be no ritual hand washing, to affirm that we come to this table already whole and pure.

PEIROT - FRUIT

At the Passover Seder, we begin the central ritual by reciting together the blessing over a vegetable. At this Seder, we begin with exotic fruit. Some of us have been called “fruits,” and while this was meant as an insult, tonight we take it as a blessing in disguise, a recognition of the breadth of God’s creation, and an opportunity to be open to the sweetness and tartness in all of us. We recognize that there is more than one way to be fruitful and multiply. We recite together the blessing over fruit:

Baruch ata Adonai, Elohenu ru'ach ha'olam, borei pri ha'etz.

*Blessed are You, God, spirit of the universe,
who creates the fruit of the tree.*

Before we taste, we hesitate and remember the fear and hostility many feel when faced with something they think is strange, different, forbidden. But then we open ourselves to the possibility of miracle, and taste sweet fruits born from the seeds of liberation planed by our LGBTQ forebears.

MOTZI – BLESSING OVER THE BREAD

These two uncovered loaves of challah remind us of the sensuous sacredness of our own bodies, and that the physical world, which includes our bodies, is holy too. We are all, every one of us, every part of us, holy, and there is no shame in this. As we acknowledge the deep spiritual nourishment of physical connection, we sing the blessing over the bread.

♪ *Brucha at Shechina, Elotenu ru'ach ha'olam,
hamotzi'a lechem min ha'aretz.*

*Blessed are You, Shechina, spirit of the universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.*

YACHATZ – BREAKING THE BREAD

At Passover a piece of matzah – the *afikomen* – is broken in two and half is hidden to be found later. At this Seder there will be no *afikomen*. We, our lives, and our stories, were hidden for too long. Tonight, we sit together in community, whole, out, free, and proud.

However, we do set aside some of this bread as a symbol of hope for those who are in despair because their communities, those in power, or they themselves cannot accept who they are, how they express themselves, who they love, or how they love. We pray that their pain will end soon, and that they will find safety and healing and the ability to celebrate as we do here today. And we dedicate ourselves to relieve their suffering.

MAROR – BITTER HERBS

As at the Passover Seder, we taste a bitter herb to remind us how bitter our lives and those of our forebears were, and of the bitter lives many of our siblings still live in communities that do not accept them. We recite the blessing together.

*Baruch ata Adonai, Elohenu ru'ach ha'olam,
asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al achilat maror.*

*Blessed are you, God, spirit of the universe, who makes us holy by
your commandments and commands us to eat bitter herbs.*

SHULCHAN ORECH – THE MEAL

One other way in which this Seder is unlike other Seders is that you don't have to wait too long to eat other foods. Now that we have said

blessings over the water, the fruit, the bread, and the herbs, please eat the snacks provided while we read and sing!

♪ **SONG: *HINEI MA TOV***

♪ *Hinei ma tov uma na'im shevet achayot gam yachad.*
Hinei ma tov uma na'im shevet achim gam yachad.

(How good and how pleasant it is to sit together in unity.)

RABBINIC TEACHING – Rabbi David Edleson

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

The four questions we ask at Passover begin with: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” Tonight, we ask four different questions. And because we come from a tradition that has shamed us by singling us out, we will all ask the questions together, and our readers will supply answers.

1. *Why are we different from all other people?*

We are different from all other people because we come from and are found among all the peoples of the world. If another Hitler rose up tomorrow who sought to kill all the LGBTQ people in the world, even if he seemed to succeed, he would fail, for we are born into every family, nation, and faith, at every time and on every part of the planet. This is a clue left by the Creator of what all people share.

2. *What is our sacred role?*

Because we come from all peoples, we are bridge-builders and connectors, ambassadors and weavers between worlds. Because we live our lives in many different ways, between genders and sexes and varied ways of loving, we stand at the doorway of Possibility, and it is from this variety that we derive our sacred role in the world, as a people dedicated to truth and integrity, even in the face of death.

3. How are we the same as all other people?

We bleed as all people bleed, and we love and laugh and cry and sing as do all human beings. We want what everyone wants: peace and prosperity, freedom and equality, families and communities, and to be part of the healing of this world. Before we are transgender, bisexual, intersex, lesbian, gay, or queer, we are human, and we share our humanity with everyone in the world.

4. What is our story?

We are gathered here tonight around this festive table to tell parts of the story of our people. It is an ancient story, a long one. We cannot tell it all, cannot name all the people who led us out of oppression and into freedom. For each tale we tell, others shimmer half-forgotten behind it. And for each name that we remember, others call out from the past.

Once we were slaves of our own people, left out of our peoples' stories. We were unseen, hated, called an abomination worthy of death. But with mighty hands and outstretched arms, we have taken control of our destinies. Had our ancestors at Stonewall and other protests not begun our liberation, we and those who follow us might still be enslaved to the pharaohs of the present.

Therefore, even if all of us were endowed with wisdom and understanding, and all of us were thoroughly versed in the Torah and in our people's history, it would still be our duty to tell of our collective movement toward rights, inclusion, and freedom from oppression in the Narrow Place.

May all who are hungry for this story come and listen. For to dwell on the story of our liberation is indeed praiseworthy and part of the journey toward freedom for all of us.

MAGGID – TELLING THE STORY

Judy Garland was buried on Friday, June 27th, 1969. That night, the energy on the street in Greenwich Village was electric. And on that

night, the New York City Police set out to close a gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, on the pretext that they were enforcing the state law prohibiting serving alcohol to known homosexuals. The raid did not go as planned. The clientele of the Stonewall included transvestites, effeminate men, butch women, runaways, hustlers, and outsiders: those who no longer cared what anyone thought of them.

These were people whom the police felt they could beat with impunity. But as patrons of the bar were led to the waiting police wagons, a crowd gathered and began to boo the cops. How the fight started depends on who you talk to, but the crucial part is this: bottles, beer cans, and rocks sailed out of the crowd, aimed at the police. The onslaught was so ferocious that the cops took shelter in the bar and called for help. For three nights street battles raged.

Few knew it then, but it was the start of a new chapter in the modern movement for human rights. The very word Stonewall became a part of the LGBTQ vocabulary and means, quite simply, uprising. Stonewall was a message to the world that LGBTQ folk fight back. To quote a poster plastered on the boarded-up bar later that week, “Think faggots are revolting? You bet we are!” Stonewall cannot compare to the Warsaw Ghetto, but the impact was enormous and the movement it sparked is alive and well today.

Does Gay Pride Include Me? (Ali Michael Cannon)

That trans woman whose name you do not know who got beat up at Stonewall, gendered different, those lesbians who picked up bricks, are they included in Gay Freedom? Between the lines of Gay are L, B, T – too often unseen. As a Jewish feminist transman, who lived a lesbian life for twenty years, I’m moving my seat to the head of the table. Who will join me? And who will move their seat a little closer to the back because they’ve perhaps articulated freedom a bit longer?

THE MANY HEROES

At the Passover Seder, we speak of four kinds of children who respond differently to our exodus from Egypt. At this Seder, we will go around the table, and each of us will name a hero of our liberation. A public hero, a private hero, a personal hero, a global hero: just say the hero's name – nothing else. If someone names a hero unfamiliar to you – and they will – ask that person *after* the Seder to tell you about them.

♪ SONG: *KOL HA'OLAM KULO*

♪ *Kol ha'olam kulo, gesher tzar meod, veba'ikar lo lefached klal.*

(All the world is a narrow bridge, and the main thing is to not be afraid.)

THE SECOND CUP

The second cup is for those who fought back. The water in this cup is strong: strong enough to carve great canyons from solid rock. The water of this cup gave our people the courage to rise up at Stonewall and other places. We drink this cup to remember them and be inspired by them. As we drink this cup we take in its power.

♪ *Brucha at Shechina, Elotenu ru'ach ha'olam,
boreit mayim chayim.*

*Blessed are you, Shechina, spirit of the universe,
who creates living waters.*

THE SIX COLORS

On this night of joy, we celebrate a rainbow's worth of blessings. We dip a finger into water for each blessing and lick it, to remind us that the blessings of life are always present, waiting to be tasted, again and again. We read each color together, and our readers will supply the blessings.

- ***Red – Adom***

For the blessing of our bodies, all of them made in the image of God, and for rootedness and our connection to the sacred Earth in all its beauty and abundance.

- ***Orange – Katom***

For the joint blessing of our sexuality and creativity, for all the ways in which we can be fruitful and multiply, in joy and in pleasure, crying out in bliss.

- ***Yellow – Tzahov***

For the blessing of our strength, our will, our capacity to survive and endure and move forward in a sacred way, with centredness and clarity, alone or in community, and for all the world.

- ***Green – Yarok***

For the blessing of heart-connection, and for the holy blessing of the trees of life, their rich green leaves offering shelter to lovers, their branches a tabernacle of joy.

- ***Blue – Kachol***

For the blessing of speech, words pouring forth like waters, psalms, prayers, songs of celebration, which echo back to the One who spoke all things into existence.

- ***Purple – Sagol***

For the blessing of spirit, of soul, the holy blessing of our connection to the Source of Life, the Creator of all that is. We read together:

*Blessing upon blessing, to speak, to share,
to celebrate, to taste, again and again, and we say “Amen.”*

OUR PRIDE SEDER PLATE

The foods and objects on the Seder plate represent both the hardships and the joys of LGBTQ life. We will now explore the symbolic meaning of these items.

- **The Pink Triangle**

Under the Nazis, homosexuals wore pink triangles in the work camps, as Jews wore yellow stars. Today, some LGBTQ people have turned what was a badge of shame and a mark of death into a badge of honor, resistance, and identity. We recite together:

*Blessed are those who have been marked, in all times and all places.
May they always be remembered, through us and through our lives.*

- **The Bundle of Sticks – the Faggot**

To remind us of the men, bound together and murdered for their love of one another, or beaten and tied to a fence to die; and of the burning of women called witches, because they chose to live their lives outside the realm of the patriarchy; and by extension, everyone who is now oppressed, anywhere and everywhere. We recite together:

Cursed is the flame that destroys, that kills. May it be extinguished forever. And blessed are all our siblings who were martyred in years past. May their memories be a blessing, even if we do not know their names. Holy One, remember their sacrifices, and help us bring an end to hate and oppression of every kind.

- **The Bricks and Stones**

In Egypt we made bricks as slaves. At Stonewall we used bricks to free ourselves. The stones of resistance thrown at Stonewall remind us of these words from Psalm 118: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” We also remember that great Stone Wall, the Western Wall of the Temple, which has stood throughout centuries of triumph and tears.

You will find some stones on your table. Take a few and shake them in your hand as we ask ourselves: What stones have we ourselves rejected? What walls must we build anew? And what walls must we tear down? We recite together:

Blessed is the spirit of freedom and blessed is the One who moves us to free ourselves. Blessed are the bricks and stones, of Earth and from Earth, given voice by our actions.

♪ SONG: *GO DOWN MOSES*

The Passover story has inspired countless movements for liberation. Let us sing together a great African American spiritual that has found its way to seders and gatherings throughout the world.

♪ *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 to let my people go.

When Israel stood by the waterside, (Let my people go!)
By God's command it did divide. (Let my people go!)

THE THIRD CUP

The third cup is for those who fell, for those who tended them, and for those of us who continue to be oppressed and killed. Life began in water, and this cup contains the gift of life. We take this water into our own bodies to preserve and perpetuate their lives, their names, and their journeys.

♪ *Baruch ata Adonai, Elohenu ru'ach ha'olam,*
borei mayim chayim.

Blessed are you, God, spirit of the universe,
who creates living waters.

(TZAFUN – FINDING WHAT WAS HIDDEN)

We have no *afikomen* since we hide nothing at this seder. But that doesn't mean we can't have a bit of fun at dessert time, so we finish our eating with ... *kosher fruitcake*, of course! While you partake, introduce yourself to someone whom you have never met, or whom you want to know better, or ask someone about their hero.

♪ BARECH – GRACE AFTER THE MEAL

Having completed our ritual meal, we continue our Seder with the *Birkat HaMazon*, the Grace After Meals.

♪ *Chaverai nevareich!*

Yehi shem Adonai mevorach mei'atah vead olam.

Yehi shem Adonai mevorach mei'atah vead olam.

Birshut hachevrah, nevareich Eloheinu she'achalnu mishelo.

Baruch Eloheinu she'achalnu mishelo uvtuvo chayinu.

Baruch Eloheinu she'achalnu mishelo uvtuvo chayinu.

Baruch hu uvaruch shemo.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, hazan et ha'olam kulo betuvo, bechein bechesed uvrachamim. Hu notein lechem lechol basar ki le'olam chasdo. Uvtuvo hagadol tamid lo chasar lanu, ve'al yechar lanu, mazon le'olam va'ed, ba'avur shemo hagadol. Ki hu El zan umfarnes lakol umetiv lakol, umechin mazon lechol beriyotav asher bara. Baruch atah Adonai, hazan et hakol.

Kakativ: ve'achalta vesavata, uverachta et Adonai Elohecha al ha'aretz hatovah asher natan lach. Baruch atah Adonai, al ha'aretz veal hamazon.

Uveneh Yerushalayim ir hakodesh bimherah veyamenu. Baruch atah Adonai, boneh verachamav Yerushalayim. Amen.

HaRachaman, hu yimloch alenu le'olam va'ed. HaRachaman, hu yitbarach bashamayim uva'aretz. HaRachaman, hu yishlach berachah merubah babayit hazeh, ve'al shulchan zeh she'achalnu

*alav. HaRachaman, hu yishlach lanu et Eliyahu HaNavi, zachur
latov, vivaser lanu besorot tovot, yeshuot venechamot.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav, hu ya'aseh shalom,
alenu ve'al kol Yisra'el, ve'imeru amen.*

Adonai oz le'amo yiten, Adonai yevarech et amo vashalom.

(Let us praise God! Praised be the name of God, now and forever. Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten, and by whose goodness we live. Praised be the Eternal God. Sovereign God of the universe, we praise You: Your goodness sustains the world. You are the God of grace, love, and compassion, the Source of bread for all who live; for Your love is everlasting. In Your great goodness we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for all. We praise You, God, Source of food for all who live. As it is written: When you have eaten and are satisfied, give praise to your God who has given you this good earth. We praise You, O God, for the earth and for its sustenance. Let Jerusalem, the holy city, be renewed in our time. We praise You, *Adonai*, in compassion You rebuild Jerusalem. Amen. Merciful One, be our God forever. Merciful One, heaven and earth alike are blessed by Your presence. Merciful One, bless this house, this table at which we have eaten. Merciful One, send us tidings of Elijah, glimpses of good to come, redemption and consolation. May the Source of peace grant peace to us, to all Israel, and to all the world. Amen. May the Eternal grant strength to our people. May the Eternal bless our people with peace.)

In this ancient Grace, we sang: “You are the God of grace, love, and compassion, the Source of bread for all who live; for Your love is everlasting. In Your great goodness we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for all.”

We say these ancient words knowing that many people, including our people, Jewish and LGBTQ, have often lacked food, comfort, safety, and spiritual sustenance. Thus, when we say these words, we must rise with a renewed commitment to do our part to make them true. As we have been given food and drink, may all who are hungry and thirsty be nourished, in body and in spirit, through Your bounty and through our actions. And let us say: *Amen*.

THE FOURTH CUP

Like rain, like streams, like rivers flowing toward the sea, the water of the fourth cup is about change, about movement, about transformation. This is the cup we drink to honor those who refused and still refuse to stand still, to honor what we ourselves are doing in our lives right now. We take this water into ourselves and merge with its fluid creativity, for life began in water and we are mostly water ourselves.

♪ *Brucha at Shechinah, Elotenu ru'ach ha'olam,
boreit mayim chayim.*

*Blessed are you, Shechinah, spirit of the universe,
who creates living waters.*

THE CUP OF COFFEE

Before Stonewall there were earlier protests, led by trans people, at Cooper's Donuts in LA in 1959, and in San Francisco at Compton's Cafeteria in 1966. In response to violence, we threw coffee cups. At Passover we have cups for Elijah and Miriam. Tonight, we pour a cup of coffee to honor our heroes, past, present, and future.

WE OPEN THE DOOR FOR ALL

At Passover we open our doors for Elijah the Prophet. Tonight, we open our doors to everyone, as we are gathered here together, out and proud. We are the teachers and prophets the world has been waiting for. We are the ones who stand tall and announce to the world a new way of living. Let us open the door and breathe together for a moment in silence, to feel the blessings of who we are flow through us, and then out into the world.

♪ *HALLEL – PRAISE*

♪ *Haleluyah haleluyah betziltzelei shama,
Haleluyah haleluyah betziltzelei tru'ah,
Kol hanshamah te halel ya, haleluyah, haleluyah,
Kol hanshamah te halel ya, haleluyah, haleluyah.*

(Praise God with the loud-sounding cymbals; praise God with the clanging cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise God. Hallelujah!)

KADDISH – REMEMBERING OUR FORBEARS

In May 1897, the world's first known homosexual rights organization was formed in Berlin with the goal of repealing the laws that criminalized homosexuality in Germany. By 1912, more than 3,000 doctors had joined in urging the repeal of these laws. One co-founder was Magnus Hirschfeld, a prominent Jewish doctor. In 1919, Hirschfeld opened the Institute of Sexual Science, which housed both clinical and research facilities visited by scientists from around the world, and offered marriage counseling, STD testing and treatment, family planning, and sex education. The Institute library housed an unparalleled collection of biological, sociological, and ethnological material.

In October 1920, Hirschfeld was brutally assaulted by antisemites in Munich. As the Nazis gained influence, their position on Hirschfeld's organization was expressed in no uncertain terms: "Anyone who even thinks of homosexual love is our enemy."

On May 7th, 1933, trucks filled with storm troopers drove up to the Institute. A brass band played while the building was looted. You may have seen a famous photograph of Nazis burning books – in gruesome parody of things to come. That photo was taken outside Hirschfeld's Institute. Over 12,000 books were destroyed in a public ceremony. At the time, Hirschfeld was lecturing in France. He never returned to Germany, and died in 1938, a broken man.

It is not customary at a Seder to say *Kaddish*, the prayer recited by mourners. But this isn't a traditional Seder, and now, when in this nation

and around the world we are in mourning for those who have died from hatred, from violence, and from disease, let us pause for a moment to remember Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld and all the people down through time who devoted their lives to this struggle.

Yitgadal veyitkadash shemei raba be'alma divera chirutei, veyamlich malchutei bechayeichon uvyomeichon uvchayei dechol beit yisra'el, ba'agala uvizman kariv, ve'imru: Amen.

Yehei shemei raba mevarach le'alam ule'almei almaya.

Yitbarach veyishtabach, veyitpa'ar veyitromam veyitnaseh, veyithadar veyitaleh veyithalal shemei dekudasha, berich hu.

Le'eila min-kol-birchata veshirata, tushbechata venechemata da'amiran be'alma, ve'imeru: Amen.

Yehei shelama raba min-shemaya vechayim aleinu ve'al-kol-Yisra'el, ve'imeru: Amen.

Oseh shalom bimromav, hu ya'aseh shalom alenu ve'al kol Yisra'el, ve'imru: Amen.

(Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen. May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity. Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen. May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.)

THE FIFTH CUP

The fifth cup is for those yet to come. The water in this cup is clear, but this isn't the cup of invisibility. It is a cup that holds clarity of sight, clear hearts, clear minds, clear action. This cup flows out from the deepest springs of our hearts' yearnings. It flows out from what we are doing here tonight, and it celebrates those who will follow us in this journey: our children, and their children, physical and spiritual. We drink this cup with certainty, knowing that our journey is right, our path is given, our purpose is strong, and our fulfilment is inevitable, since it springs from the power of love. Let all who are thirsty come and drink.

♪ *Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu ru'ach ha'olam,
borei mayim chayim.*

*Blessed are you, God, spirit of the universe,
who creates living waters.*

♪ SONG: IF I HAD A HAMMER

♪ *If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning,
I'd hammer in the evening, all over this land.
I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out warning,
I'd hammer out the love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.*

*If I had a bell, I ring it in the morning,
I'd ring it in the evening, all over this land. I'd ring out danger ...*

*If I had a song, I'd sing it in the morning,
I'd sing it in the evening, all over this land. I'd sing out danger ...*

*Now I've got a hammer, and I've got a bell,
And I've got a song to sing all over this land.
It's the hammer of justice, it's the bell of freedom,
And it's the song about love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.*

NIRTZAH - CONCLUSION

A few years ago on *Kol Nidre*, I delivered a sermon in Toronto on the power of diversity. Afterwards, in the swirling crowd, I felt someone tug at my jacket. I turned around to find a nine-year-old boy in lavender shiny “Powerpuffs” sneakers. “I really liked your sermon,” he whispered, before disappearing into the crowd. ... I don’t really think it was my words that impacted him, but the visual power of a transgender, flamingly queer, gender ambiguous rabbi on the *bimah*. ... I [can’t] stop dreaming of a world where every size, shape, ability, age, and gender is celebrated as yet another manifestation of holiness. What if from the moment a child was born, instead of asking “Is it a boy or a girl?”, we said “It’s a baby image of God!” What if we all supported each other in being our shiniest, sexiest, fiercest, most authentically quirky selves, instead of collaborating to suppress one another? This is the future I imagine for all of us, and I can tell you right now, it’s fabulous! – Rabbi Elliot Kulka.

Let us read together the Seal of Completion:

*Though neither the work nor the remembering
will ever be finished in our lifespan,
we have completed this Seder.
May our words here tonight have meaning
throughout the coming year.
May we recognize that liberation is not a destination,
but an ongoing labor of love,
and that no one is free until all bonds are loosed.
May it be so, speedily and soon,
And let us say:
Next year in...
No. Not next year. Now and always.
And not anywhere else, but here and everywhere.
Amen. Amen. Selah.*

♪ SONG: *WE SHALL OVERCOME*

♪ *We shall overcome, we shall overcome.
We shall overcome some day.
Deep in my heart, I do believe.
We shall overcome some day.*

*We are not afraid... (this day)
We are not alone... (this day)
We'll walk hand in hand...
We shall all be free...
We shall live in love...*

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