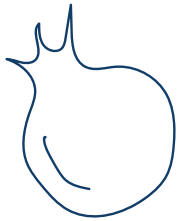


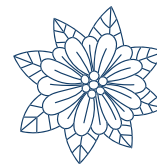
THE FIVE WOMEN OF THE EXODUS:

A FEMINIST SUPPLEMENT TO THE HAGGADAH



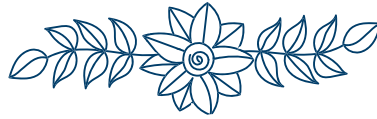
AN ADDITIONAL RITUAL BY

National Council of Jewish Women Communications Specialist Steph Black
and Scholar-in-Residence Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg



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DESPITE THE FACT that five women are integral to the story of the Book of Exodus, not one of them is named in the traditional Passover Haggadah. National Council of Jewish Women is proud to offer a new way to honor these five heroines: Shifra, Puah, Yocheved, Batya, and Miriam, and to bring the lessons of their bravery into your celebration of Passover. As you pour each of the four cups of wine, may your recitation and remembrance of each of these women strengthen your commitment to fighting injustice today.

Recitation at the Beginning of the Seder

Five Jewish heroines each took significant risks to save lives during the Exodus story, and each of them played a critical role in the work for liberation. May their courage inspire us today to speak out against all forms of misogyny, tyranny, and oppression, and to work for a more just world.

THE FIRST CUP OF WINE Shifra and Puah *Reader recites aloud while all pour the first cup.*

Shifra and Puah were the midwives who refused Pharaoh's orders to kill any boys born to an Israelite family. When confronted by Pharaoh, they lied and claimed that they simply couldn't get there before the babies were born. These midwives risked their own lives to help save the Israelites from destruction and genocide. They practiced civil disobedience from their unique position of influence and refused to "just follow orders" when those orders were unjust. We honor their resistance.

Let us all say their names together: Shifra and Puah.



THE SECOND CUP OF WINE Yocheved

Reader recites aloud while all pour the second cup.

Yocheved was the mother of Moses, Miriam, and Aaron. When Moses was born, she hid him from the Egyptians and their genocidal orders for as long as she could. When she could hide his cries no longer, she placed him in a basket to send him down the Nile, putting his fate in God's hands. Yocheved made the impossible choice to do whatever might be necessary to give her child a chance at life. She shows us what resistance to oppression can demand, and what it can cost. We honor her agency and her pain.

Let us all say her name together: Yocheved.



THE THIRD CUP OF WINE Batya

Reader recites aloud while all pour the third cup.

Pharaoh's daughter, known in our tradition as Batya, was bathing in the river when she noticed the basket holding the infant Moses. She understood that he was an Israelite baby whose life was in danger. She resolved to adopt him, despite the risk it might carry if her father learned of Moses' origins. Batya used her privilege and position to have the impact that she could; she teaches us to look beyond our own comfort, to take risks with the privilege we do have, and to allow our empathy and compassion to drive us towards righteous action. We honor her commitment.

Let us say all her name together: Batya.



THE FOURTH CUP OF WINE Miriam

Reader recites aloud while all pour the fourth cup.




Miriam, daughter of Yocheved and sister of Moses and Aaron, played many parts in the story of Exodus. One midrash (traditional legend) credits her for convincing her parents—exhausted and traumatized by slavery—to conceive Moses, a hero of the Jewish people. She was also brave enough to risk asking the daughter of Pharaoh himself if Yocheved, Moses' (and her) mother, could serve as a wet-nurse for the baby. Her bravery and charm thus enabled the family to stay together and earn wages. Miriam later led the women and children—the backbone of Jewish life—safely to shore across the Red Sea, dancing and singing. The Torah teaches that she was a prophet; she reminds us caring for women, children and families is a critical part of our connection to the holy. We honor her tenacity.

Let us say her name together: Miriam.

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Recitation After Drinking the Fourth Cup of Wine:

The five women of the Exodus story teach us that we all have the ability to act and to stand up to injustice. Women who work together accomplish more, and we must rely on and stand in solidarity with our sisters in working towards a better world. We must use our privileges to fight for justice and honor the painful choices we must sometimes make. These women's stories teach us that we all have the power to resist oppression wherever it may be.

The Talmud (Sotah 11b) teaches that "the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt because of the merit of the righteous women of that generation." May we merit to learn from them in our own work towards liberation for everyone.

IN ADDITION TO these readings, some people place a Miriam's Cup (also called a Kos Miriam) on the table alongside Elijah's Cup. This additional cup, filled with water, honors Miriam The Prophet, and all the ways she is associated with this essential element: Her presence at the Nile saving her brother; her role leading women and children across the Red Sea to safety; and the well of water that, midrash (traditional legend) teaches, followed her in the desert throughout the Israelites' forty years of wandering.

This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt. These are the living waters, God's gift to Miriam, which gave new life to Israel as we struggled with ourselves in the wilderness. Blessed are You God, Who brings us from the narrows into the wilderness, sustains us with endless possibilities, and enables us to reach a new place."

Kos Miriam prayer by Kol Ishah, Wayland MA

