THE MUSIC OF WOMEN'S SEDERS IN THE UNITED STATES: 1970-PRESENT

BY

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CONTENTS

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Feminist History of the Women's Seder

There is very little published that analyzes the content of women's haggadot. In fact, there are only two major articles that focus on this subject. In terms of primary literature, the subject warrants brief mention in a few anthologies which chronicle the process of creating Jewish rituals.[1] Other mention of women's haggadot appears in limited quantity in works on liturgical and biblical theory. In one of these collections, *Lifecycles Volume 2: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life,* the women's seder warrants brief but powerful mention. According to Orenstein,

> Feminist Bible scholarship reflects and promotes liberation theology, particularly as it applies to women. Feminist and egalitarian *Haggadot* view the exodus story as a paradigm for women's liberation. Feminists as a group, like Jews as a group, value choice and freedom The choice to control one's own body and one's own calendar; the freedom to be responsible ultimately for oneself and to God alone – not to a Pharaoh, husband, or father.[2]

However, this is the extent to which the haggadot are covered in this work, and is similar to the amounts in other works as well.[3] Materials readily available for study, however, are the haggadot themselves, as well as self-reflective works on several of the more prominent women's haggadot. These include in most cases some or all of the music of these seders. Thus, the choice of the three haggadot contained within this thesis reflects one well-known women's haggadah from each of the past three decades, spanning the

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[1] See Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton, eds., *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982); Susannah Heschel, *On Being A Jewish Feminist: A Reader,* 2d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), *xxiii*; and Esther M. Broner, Ph.D. *Bringing Home the Light: A Jewish Woman's Handbook of Rituals* (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 1999), 75-110.

[2] Rabbi Deborah Orenstein, *"Themes of Exodus/*Shemot Rabbah" in *Lifecycles Volume 2: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life,* Rabbi Debra Orenstein and Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman, eds.. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997), 83.

[3] See Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 28-29, 58.

period from the early feminist movement to the present. Furthermore, because of a lack of scholarly treatment of the subject in general, and music specifically, this thesis will attempt to show what purpose these seders served for the women involved; and more specifically, what function the music played in each haggadah.

An early article (1976)[4] chronicled the creation of such a haggadah. It was written with a more critical eye than many seder introductions written for seders that post-date the article.[5] Aviva Cantor Zuckoff began the article by discussing the predecessor to a haggadah which she includes in the article. Known as the Jewish Liberation Haggadah (1970),[6] the left-wing, mixed gender group who created this haggadah "...came to define ourselves as Socialist-Zionists."[7] She noted that several years later,

> ...as more women were also trying to synthesize their new Jewish consciousness and their feminist consciousness, one woman sent out a circular to all her friends and acquaintances, calling them to a meeting to discuss how we feel and think as Jewish women....A core group...became my Jewish women's consciousness-raising group....we tried to understand how our Jewish background made us what we are, and explored what it meant to be a Jewish woman. The first year, having become close and loving friends, we decided that we wanted to hold a Jewish Women's Seder. We felt that we were a family and that we could use this most Jewish of ceremonies to bring us and other Jewish women closer to each other and to our history and values.[8]

This Haggadah (1976) was an adaptation of the earlier Jewish Liberation Haggadah, with additions of feminist works. She noted her surprise that even in that earlier work, the proliferation of male-gendered terminology and the absence of women's stories was glaring as she went to work on the women's haggadah.

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[4] Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, "Jewish Women's Haggadah," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).
[5] It is important to note that the article ends with the haggadah the author wrote, so in a sense this is an introduction like the others which follow.
[6] Zuckoff, 94.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 95.

As she chronicled these changes, such as gendering the text to the feminine, she noted that her major change was "...to utilize the four-cups ritual and to dedicate each cup of wine to the struggle of Jewish women in a particular period."[9] It was interesting to note that this particular choice, as will be seen in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, was a common occurrence among women's haggadot. Zuckoff was quick to point out her dissatisfaction with this first creative attempt. Her first, and self-proclaimed less important, concern was that she rewrote another haggadah, rather than creating an entirely new one.

Her larger concern, however, was "...the tension between the very nature of the Seder and the needs of the participants," which she claimed could not be resolved.[10] She noted that the seder had always been a happy occasion, but if the seder reflected women's exclusion and oppression, which had limited her happiness, the purpose of the seder, that of celebration, was diminished. So, she stated, "...the women's Seder is in danger of becoming irrelevant to the needs of its participants."[11] She thus chose to use Jewish women's history to show women's struggles paralleled the traditional ones in the haggadah. But, she continued, this created not only an appearance of trying to fit in, but a false impression that those inequalities mentioned above did not exist. She did not give a solution; rather she called for one from other Jewish women.[12] She ended with her final concern, not wanting to take away from the traditional family seder celebration, and her hope for "...a seder that focuses on the oppression of Jews and on Jewish

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[9] Ibid., 96.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] A contemporary to this haggadah, *The Women's Haggadah*, by Esther Broner and Naomi Nimrod, includes a section called "Lo Dayeinu" which emphasizes what has not been enough for women, what women are lacking from society.

liberation *from a Jewish feminist viewpoint.* Such a Haggadah would deal honestly with the oppression of women while keeping the main focus on Jewish liberation."[13]

Although many works on Jewish women's ritual began to appear over the next decades, little scholarly material was written specifically about the women's seder. Interestingly, the introductions to women's haggadot themselves seemed to acknowledge this through the wealth of information they provided. In 1998 a groundbreaking article was published which chronicled the history of the women's haggadah. Maida Solomon's article, entitled "Claiming Our Questions: Feminism and Judaism in Women's Haggadot,"[14] appeared to be one of the only such articles in existence.[15] Although several of the women's haggadot included informative introductions and notes, little had been researched in a scholarly fashion until this article.

Although this article was written in a scholarly manner, it seemed that its audience was most likely not scholars, but feminists and perhaps students of religion. Although her intended audience within those categories was probably Jews, this article would be useful as well to those studying women and religion in general. In her introduction, Antler summarized Solomon's article by pointing out how Solomon "charts the development"[16] of the women's seders, noting how the size and location of the communities in which they were written changed over time. Antler also noted the mix of tradition and innovation, as well as the use of new midrashim to which Solomon points. Thus, Solomon's analysis was detailed and thorough, as she noted how, through women's

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[13] Ibid., 97.
[14] Maida Solomon, "Claiming Our Questions: Feminism and Judaism in Women's Haggadot," in Joyce Antler, ed., *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1998), 220-241.
[15] After consultation with a doctoral student in Canada, Sonia Zylberberg, who has compiled a comprehensive bibliography on this subject, her findings concur.
[16] Joyce Antler, (introduction), in Antler, 11.

seders, Jewish women were picking up long-standing traditions and innovating them. While there was mention of Passover in the Torah, and the haggadah and seder rituals came from the Mishnah, this was a completely new step. Along with documentation, these women were asking, what does our ritual look like, and even more important, what will women understand and appreciate.

Reflecting the short history of women's haggadot, Solomon stated that "For less than thirty years women have been reshaping haggadot to create a Judaism of inclusion rather than exclusion."[17] Without mentioning it specifically, Solomon seemed to have found the inclusivity Zuckoff hoped for in the overall existence of women's haggadot. She mentioned the awareness of exclusivity that was pervasive in traditional haggadot, as the impetus for this movement, but shows how over time the message of the women's haggadot had changed. She showed how they "...reflect the cultural values, the changing roles of women in America, that Jewish women have been integrating into the daily rhythm of their lives."[18] However, after examining several women's haggadot, it seems that this conclusion, that women's haggadot represented a "Judaism of inclusion" was too simplistic a conclusion. In fact, the sense of inclusion had increased over time. Earlier women's haggadot reflected the feelings of exclusion of women by men, the anger about this exclusion, as well as longings for equality that women began to express publicly during the feminist movement. In some cases it was quite clear that the patriarchy was blamed, and men were not included in some of those early haggadot. Later ones, however, seemed to work towards more of a balance between tradition and progress.

[17] Solomon, 221.
[18] Ibid.

Solomon noted that "...the ritual components of Pesach are outlined in the Mishnah."[19] She continues by pointing out the ritual in which participants read "'In every generation let each man look on himself as if He came forth out of Egypt.' This most fundamental absolute is extremely adaptive to whatever hardships Jews have faced in varied circumstances." However, she continued, "For Jewish feminists in America, this urgency no longer sufficiently rationalizes the contradiction of reliving an experience in which women do not see, hear nor feel themselves."[20] She noted the token mention of women even in Reform haggadot, where candle lighting had recently been added as a women's ritual. And she noted that "Perhaps ... the new haggadot are returning to the spirit of the Mishnah goal of adaptation and survival. The new circumstance facing Judaism, in this instance, is feminism."[21] Her analysis revealed that "women's haggadot utilize the Mishnah guidelines...the essentials-with 'blessing' defined broadly-are for the most part present in almost all feminist haggadot. These documents give the blessings, ask the questions, retell the Exodus from Egypt, link redemption with freedom –within their own definitions."[22] While some were more explicitly radical than others, she claimed that "Feminists have revived the radicalism of the Mishnah's approach to Pesach and have revitalized the Jewish tradition of dialogue and debate by approaching the haggadah as a responsive and adaptive document."[23] The result had been to make them more normative.

She noted how the second wave of American feminism, "...with its women's buildings and women's centers, spawned the very first women's seders conducted by

[19] Ibid., 222.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 223.
[22] Ibid., 227.
[23] Ibid., 228.

Jewish women." This was in the 1970's. Then, through the '80's, as the women's haggadot proliferated, the key change was that they were no longer run in secular spaces, but in the homes of Jewish women. The major change in the 1990's was that many women's seders moved out of homes and into the public domain, held as community seders.

Solomon identified three haggadot as central to the women's seder movement, *The Women's Haggadah* (1976), *The San Diego Women's* Haggadah (1980), and the *Women's Passover Seder – 1997* (Los Angeles). She also discussed *The Journey Continues,* the Ma'yan seder (greatly influenced by the 1997 haggadah from Los Angeles). The first two, and the last, will be explored in detail in the following chapters. Solomon noted that "Early haggadot like these were more grounded in feminism and American women's history than in any extensive knowledge of Judaism. They combined feminist culture and history with a largely traditional haggadic exodus tale and traditional Hebrew prayers."[24] Interestingly, although these last two were eventually published, she noted that in the 1980's, a great deal of feminist writing took place and was presented at these seders, although mostly it was unpublished.[25] Additionally, Solomon mentioned how "Rather than choosing between one haggadah and another, numerous women have pieced and patched together their own unique texts. These may be called the 'compiled' haggadot."[26] This is in contrast to haggadot in which the entire content was created anew, as in *The Women's Haggadah* (1976).

In terms of content, Solomon mentioned that the haggadot reveal the everyday ways in which women were struggling to create their space within Judaism.

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 227.
[26] Ibid., 229.

Additionally, she said, they showed how they had struggled more specifically with God-language, such as the use of the term Shekhina to "represent a feminine side of God...."[27] As she concluded, Solomon mentioned how seders in the 1990's, such as the Ma'yan seder, focused on the community aspect of these gatherings. Other 1990's innovations were the availability of computers (sleeker look to publications) and greater reliance on groups of women of all levels of experience. In closing, she stated that "Passover and feminism together give women the opportunity to redefine, to challenge and to make changes within Judaism and beyond."[28]

Although at present there is no official compilation of the myriad of women's haggadot which have been created since the 1970's, organizations such as Ma'yan and the Jewish Women's Resource Center have large collections of these haggadot. Many of the characteristics of these haggadot which do not lend themselves to a catalogue include the issue of dating (several of these typed, or handwritten, mimeographed haggadot are not dated); citation (often original sources are not cited, although by reading through them one sees that much material has been "shared,") and authorship (most have an organization name, but not all – and not always an editor or author).

Solomon noted how the "liberation" seders of the 1960's were a precursor to the women' seder. It seems that according to her research, the first known women's seder was around 1971, in Portland, Oregon, and was known as the "*Rice Paper Haggadah*".[29] She noted how a few years later the haggadah was mentioned in an article in New York, indicating how the sharing of such material had already begun. Currently, the JWRC, for example, has a handwritten list of the haggadot it has collected. From this list, it seems

[27] Ibid., 235.
[28] Ibid., 239.
[29] Ibid., 226.

the earliest dated Women's Haggadah they have in their collection is from 1973. Called the Pesach Haggadah, it was created in Berkeley, CA. Six of the haggadot are not dated, but nineteen are dated. The haggadot range from being called "a women's seder" to "a feminist seder." Two of the haggadot are listed as published. Most importantly, this is just one listing and one incomplete collection. Because there is no complete repository of all women's haggadot, due to the nature of grassroots creation of these works, the emphasis on certain haggadot chosen by women such as Maida Solomon and indeed, the author of this thesis, is not externally consistent. The process of gathering haggadot at present is difficult, as most were never published; and it is not clear if such collections exist beyond the organizations mentioned above, both of which are in New York City. However, because a few have been published, their impact has been wider spread, and thus those are the focus of the current thesis.

Chapter 2

The Modern Feminist Movement in the United States

It is impossible to consider studying women's seders, an offspring of the Jewish Feminist movement, without first examining carefully the American feminist movement. Much original feminist ideology had come into existence in the nineteenth century, particularly focusing on issues of equal access to education and equality in marriage.[30] In 1923 the National Women's Party (NWP) first submitted the Equal Rights Amendment. It was understood that "(t)he ERA would have given women equality in every arena of public life, but was opposed by labor and working women who feared it would destroy the protective legislation women enjoyed."[31] The first wave, also called the Suffrage Movement, culminated in the 1920 passage of the Susan B. Anthony amendment, the 19th amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

Although women continued fighting for rights such as worker's rights and civil rights, "...domestically, these activists had ceased to exist as a single mass-based social movement."[32] Perhaps this was because "...feminist ideology had evolved to its most complete stage in all three elements of ideology – evaluations of society, prescriptions, and programs for change – by the mid-nineteenth century."[33] During World War II women entered the work force in unprecedented numbers. However, the men's return to the workplace was paralleled by the women's return to the home. It was not until after

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[30] Judith A. Sabrosky, *From Rationality to Liberation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979) 101, 104-105.
[31] Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Group, 2000) 27.
[32] Ibid., 27-28.
[33] Sabrosky, 104.

World War II, then, that the conditions of the fifties proved to be the impetus for the second wave of feminism, namely that of the 1960's and 1970's.

The Cold War period's idyllic surface masked a conflicted reality for women. As America's white middle class moved to the suburbs, the rest of society remained in the cities. Interestingly, the loans and subsidies that allowed much of this movement were "...all paid for by the federal government in the name of containing Communism"[34] Ironically, "(b)y politicizing women's lives in the battle to contain Communism, the 1950s deepened American women's awareness of how their identity as females had become the basis for their exclusion."[35] Although the McCarthy era ended in 1954, the era of conformity continued. Motherhood and the housewife were highly prized. In those post-war years, the number of double income families increased 222 percent,[36] even though the jobs of these women were not of equal pay to those of the women who worked in place of the men who went to war. And, the working women of the fifties tried to maintain the family over their jobs. There was inadequate child care, lack of unionized work forces in their areas (clerical to a large extent) and, of course, much of the energy of educated women in those days went to volunteer work. "Even without an organized women's movement, a virulent strain of antifeminism saturated the culture."[37]

Much has been written and taught about the links among three movements: the civil rights movement, the student movement, and the women's movement. Women activists began their work as part of these co-ed movements earlier on, later to become disillusioned with the patriarchy, which just as easily permeated these leftist movements

[34] Rosen, 9.
[35] Ibid., 36.
[36] Ibid., 20.
[37] Ibid., 27.

as it did society at large. But women's groups learned from their experiences with these movements. Women contributed critical work to the civil rights movement, working behind the scenes in offices as well as adding their voices to protest. This proved to be a training ground for feminist activists as well. Women realized that their efforts to be heard equally within the leftist movements were futile. Their response was two-fold. First, the women decided to meet alone at gatherings of larger leftist groups. Then, they created groups of their own, establishing a women's movement.

The civil rights movement gave many budding feminists training as activists, and members of the Congress of American Women, founded in 1940, produced seminal literature on the status of women. However, "(e)ven before the sixties, a sexual revolution simmered, but it had not yet boiled over. Women received confusing messages from a culture in transition."[38] While young men were bringing these liberal ideals to their careers or activities, young women who became activists had to struggle with the images from their own families and experiences of their mothers as oppressed housewives. Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking book, *The Second Sex*, was published in 1948 and had longterm impact on feminist activity:

> In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir analyzed woman's inequality and subjection in society and her lack of internal freedom by utilizing the Sartrian states of being as criteria for evaluating woman's relationship to man. Through the concepts of being, Beauvoir was able to identify the societal forces that controlled woman and the causes and reasons for these forces. This analysis, emanating from her existentialist perspective, was her contribution to feminist ideology.[39]

Women knew how marriage had limited many of their mothers' lives, women who were dissatisfied by the limits placed on them by traditions of society.

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[38] Ibid., 18.
[39] Sabrosky, 113.

Activists of the 60's, both men and women, were rebelling against their adult role models. Betty Friedan, one of the first to address women's issues in the 60's, wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, and with this, introduced her concerns for the women of this country.[40] While focusing exclusively on the systemic problem of women who are tied exclusively to the home and thus limited, she nonetheless "...had broken the silence and had begun unmasking the reality of women's lives."[41] Her data, based on 200 questionnaires sent to classmates from her Smith College class of 1942, helped create a collective understanding of problems struggled with individually by suburban women.[42]

There was no assurance for women that legislation or education would guarantee forward movement.

> Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act could not rescue women trapped in suburban homes by the feminine mystique, but it did hold out the promise of an escape route out of the pink-collar ghetto. Traditional cultural assumptions about womanhood probably contributed to men's refusal to hire women in "nontraditional" jobs in the 1950's and 1960's, but institutionalized job discrimination prevented women from applying for these positions.[43]

Sadly, although girls of the 50's were expected to go to college, the percentage of women in college dropped by 13% from the 1920's, and their representative percentages of advanced degrees fell also.[44] However, not only middle class women became feminist activists. "Many young feminists grew up in...working-class homes. In fact, a disproportionate number of leaders and activists came from secular, working-class Jewish

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[40] Rosen points out however, that Friedan was criticized for focusing on "... a safer strategy..." than one that might be considered communist, such as working women, "...that of addressing middle-class white housewives as a sister suburbanite." (Rosen, 5) Rosen points out that activists such as Gerda Lerner disagreed with Friedan's exclusion of black, poor and working women. (Rosen, 5-6)
[41] Ibid., 8.
[42] Kathleen C. Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 27.
[43] Ibid., 28.
[44] Rosen, 41-42.

activist families."[45] Among them were Gloria Steinem, Marge Piercy, Phyllis Chesler, and Alix Kates Shulman, all women who started out in working class homes.

The significance of the beginning of government involvement in the women's movement cannot be underestimated. The President's Commission on the Status of Women, under President Kennedy, was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, although her position was "largely ceremonial" and "Esther Peterson, the highest ranking woman in the Kennedy Administration...did the bulk of the work in guiding the commission."[46] The Commission presented 432 pieces of legislation to Congress during this period. Along with many other religious and civic groups that were part of the Commision were the National Association of Jewish Women, B'nai B'rith, the League of Women Voters, and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). During this time, "(a) disproportionate number of these women came from the Midwest, rather than from either coast or Washington, D.C. The heartland, with its progressive political traditions and strong unions, had apparently provided women with greater opportunities to become effective organizers."[47] One result of this commission which no one predicted, but which was inevitable, was that these women began to share their concerns about sex discrimination.[48]

In 1964, two very important events occurred. First, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed, including Title VII prohibiting sex discrimination. Second, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created. Soon after, in 1966, the creation of the National Organization for Women by Betty Friedan and a dedicated group

[45] Ibid., 46.
[46] Ibid., 21.
[47] Ibid., 69.
[48] Ibid., 70.

of women, was groundbreaking - an organization independent of the government, dedicated to women's rights. They worked for abortion rights, equal pay, health care, child care, and many other rights. The organization formed chapters across the nation, and its first success was to end sex-segregated help wanted ads. Issues that divided the organization included abortion rights and lesbianism. Clearly not all women were united on all issues.

1960 was the year the birth control pill was approved for use by the government. Its availability affected the culture of sexual freedom in the 1960's; and some of the earliest feminist activism of this second wave focused on safe and legal abortion and birth control. Doctors and clergy risked their careers to help women during this time. As the sexual revolution hit America, there was disagreement within the feminist movement as to the importance the feminists should place on sexual freedom. Although there was never a consensus, there was certainly confusion among women who were not certain that this latest revolution was not just more exploitation. Their concern was that the "sexual revolution" ultimately benefited men much more than women. And, most interestingly, "One reason that the sexual revolution proved to be so short was that without access to legal abortion, this revolution had caused more, not fewer, illegal abortions."[49]

In 1970, Betty Friedan organized the "Women's Strike for Equality" to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the suffrage amendment of 1920. It was very successful, and doubled NOW's membership. In her keynote, Betty Friedan said:

> In the religion of my ancestors, there was a prayer that Jewish men said every morning. They prayed, 'Thank thee, Lord, that I was not born a woman.' Today I feel, feel for the first time, feel absolutely sure that all women are going to be

[49] Ibid., 157.

> able to say, as I say tonight: 'Thank thee, Lord, that I was born a woman, for this day.[50]

This was an early indication that she was trying to reconcile her feminism with her religion. Friedan felt free to alter the liturgy to express who she was but to retain the existing form. In 1972, several unprecedented events occurred. Congress passed the ERA (although 10 years later it was dismissed completely). Title IX passed, giving girls equal access to sports in school, and *Ms.* Magazine was started by Gloria Steinem. The next year, *Roe v. Wade* made abortion safe and legal. Not surprisingly there was backlash by conservative elements of society. Regardless, in 1973,

> A dramatic celebration of our herstory closed with the song "I Am Woman"; suddenly women got out of their seats and started dancing around the hotel ballroom, joining hands in a circle that got larger and larger until maybe a thousand of us were dancing and singing...[51]

There certainly was much to celebrate at that time.

One of the other areas in which women dealt with changing times was with the increasing visibility of lesbians and bisexual women. There was certainly homophobia within the women's movement; there were radical lesbians who wanted to live in man-free zones; and there were heterosexual feminists who turned their backs on the progress of lesbians. But in between there were more women who first felt comfortable trying to be with other women within the context of the women's movement, and heterosexual women who supported lesbian rights of equality. And there were lesbians who preferred not to politicize their sexuality. Over time, lesbian rights became important to the movement as a whole.

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[50] Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement* (New York: Random House, 1976) 154, in Ibid., 93.
[51] Rosen, 88, citing Bety Friedan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement* (New York: Random House, 1976), 258.

Another important outcome of this era was the women's health movement. Women scientists questioned drugs such as DES for pregnancy, promoted research for diseases affecting women, and educated women about reproduction. Activism in the healthcare arena led to the publishing in 1973, of the groundbreaking book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves,* written in Boston, which gave women practical medical advice that they might have found difficult to obtain in a doctor's office. The 1960's and 1970's also introduced books such as Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*(1975), which brought into the forefront the issue of rape which had for many years been a silent epidemic.

> Rape theory was conceived of and developed by the American movement. The international campaign against battery, or domestic violence, originated in England. In my opinion these issues were radical feminism's most successful contribution to world thought.[52]

The "Take Back the Night" rally became a popular way to protest unsafe streets by women marching and shouting through dimly lit streets. Additionally, battered women's shelters were created. Among the most divisive issues of the feminist movement were the linked issues of pornography and prostitution. The main divide was between women who felt that women were exploited by these businesses and therefore these businesses should be outlawed and those women, including some sex workers themselves, who wanted health care and more protections for what they saw as a legitimate career.

The slogan, "The personal is political," was coined by a civil rights activist, Carol Hanisch, in 1968. This became the theory behind consciousness-raising, which is defined as

> ...looking at your life through your own eyes, reflecting on the choices you had made, realizing who had encouraged and discouraged your decisions, and

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[52] Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: The Dial Press, 1999), 194.

> recognizing the many obstacles and constraints that had little to do with individual temperament or talent.[53]

When *Ms. Magazine* began in 1972, Gloria Steinem had no idea how powerful and popular her magazine would become. An unexpected function of the magazine was to serve as "...an early electronic bulletin board, the letters section of *Ms.* functioned as a national consciousness-raising group."[54] *Ms.* dealt with all the major issues of the women's movement such as employment, sexual harassment, and divorce. In the late 1960's, some colleges started offering women's studies programs. Cornell University was the first to offer a women's studies course for credit.[55] These spaces also emphasized consciousness-raising. They also provided a sense of community.

Ultimately, this approach helped define the Jewish women's movement as well, as Jewish women observed the centuries of tradition which had influenced them from the day they were born, and realized that there were elements they were willing to question or even reject.

> Journalism was only one means of expression for the growing movement. Art, music and literature reflecting the changes and hopes of feminists are some of the greatest treasures to come from this time. Poetry reading was very much a public pastime, and "...music also drew feminists together. At first, some women simply wrote new lyrics to old movement and folk melodies....But soon women were dancing, marching, relaxing to music, bands, lyrics that were purely from women."[56] So what did all of this mean for feminism? "By the end of the 1980s, you couldn't go into a college, to a health clinic, or to a federal building without seeing posters that educated, cajoled, and challenged women's unexamined assumptions about what they deserved."[57]

In this arena, Jewish women would find expression for their spirituality through creativity.

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[53] Rosen, 197.
[54] Ibid., 211.
[55] Berkeley, 75.
[56] Rosen, 223.
[57] Ibid.

Despite struggles over control and direction of the movement, there was positive change in the area of religion:

> ...women scholars in theological schools and seminaries challenged orthodoxy, reexamined translations, and reinterpreted religious texts. Some women in established religions began designing their own services, writing their own prayers, and inventing rituals that honored women and their experiences. The first time one feminist heard a woman cantor's voice soar through a Jewish synagogue, she wept. 'Why haven't women been singing Hebrew for the last five thousand years?' she asked.[58]

In the 1970's and 1980's religious feminists found their voices publishing new interpretations of old stories and teachings, creating new rituals, writing songs, and assuming positions of leadership. The first woman rabbi, Rabbi Sally Priesand, was ordained in 1972. The first woman cantor, Cantor Barbara Ostfeld, was invested in 1975.

[58] Ibid., 264.

Chapter 3

Jewish Feminism in the United States

As women discovered that religion was an area that could be examined and understood through the tenets of feminism, more and more Jewish feminists began writing scholarly works on Judaism. Reflecting on an article she wrote in 1973 entitled "The Jewish Feminist: Conflict in Identities," Judith Plaskow explained: "(I) explored both the sexism of the Jewish tradition and the tensions I felt between Judaism and feminism as alternative communities."[59] Interestingly, she noted that as she explored traditional, or Orthodox, Judaism, she became more and more aware of the inequalities that existed, such as the inability of women to choose divorce, to count in a minyan or to be called to read the Torah.[60] Susannah Heschel, in the introduction to her compilation *On Being a Jewish Feminist* (1983), noted that

> A woman may not read from the Torah because of the honor of the congregation' *(isha lo tikra batorah mipnei k'vod hatzibur) (Talmud bavli megillah 23a)* That proclamation from the Talmud became one of the hotly contested dicta of Judaism during the 1970s, as the Jewish feminist movement took shape.[61]

The concept of women's dishonoring men's space (congregation) simply by being present motivated Jewish women to question, in a formal manner, what had been accepted for years – the ritual exclusion of women in Judaism.

Heschel acknowledged Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, as the impetus for much of Jewish feminist theory in the 1980's.

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[59] Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again At Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), *viii.*
[60] Ibid., *xi.*
[61] Susannah Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, 2[d] ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), *xi.*

> ...the feminist approach to Jewish texts taken by contributors to this volume was based on Simone de Beauvoir's classic 1940's analysis of Western patriarchy, in which man is the Subject, woman is the Other. Applied to Judaism, de Beauvoir's definition highlighted the role of men as the subjects as well as the authors of Jewish texts, and demonstrated the marginalization of women's concerns, and the near-total absence of women's voices.[62]

She conceded that at the time she wrote, feminist scholars were taking a more complicated approach to their work. She wrote, "We examine what the text reveals, but also explore what the text conceals....we might deduce the prohibition as evidence that women, in fact, were reading from the Torah, at least in some congregations."[63]

Plaskow pointed to a concern for many of the early Jewish feminists that radicalism might violate too many boundaries of the Jewish religion, perhaps alienating women altogether from their heritage. She countered these concerns, however, by noting that Judaism had arrived at its current state through centuries of major change, and that "(f)ocusing on boundaries...serves to prevent further change, preserving the status quo in the name of some disaster that experimentation might bring."[64]

Aviva Cantor illuminated one of those changes to Judaism. She wrote (1995) that the assimilationist period of Judaism eliminated two of three "pillars that had upheld traditional Jewish public life" – Halacha/laws and independent community – and what remained was the "value system."[65] Apparently men felt that the qualities they normally assigned to women, such as compassion and cooperation, would infiltrate the workings of the Jewish community as Jewish feminists made their demands. Cantor stated that the basis of this fear was a much larger fear, that feminism and its "female values" would

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[62] Ibid., *xii*, in 2 (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953, 1972; first published in 1949 as *Le Deuxiéme sexe*).
[63] Ibid., *xii*.
[64] Plaskow, *xviii*.
[65] Aviva Cantor, *Jewish Women/Jewish Men: the Legacy of Patriarchy in Jewish Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 411.

lead to the destruction of assimilation, which she understood as the misguided attempt to ward off anti-Jewish oppression. She summarized the fears in the following way:

> (u)nlike the young Jewish leftists of the sixties, Jewish feminists were adults; they could not be dismissed with the 'kids will be kids' put-down. Nor, being highly Jewish identified, could they be denigrated as 'self-hating Jews.' Finally, they were seen as being allied with the entire women's movement, which was reaching all women and thus preparing them to be receptive to the application of feminist views to Jewish life. They were thus a real threat.[66]

The women continued to work within the community rather than challenge its patriarchal nature, which continued to loom as the largest hindrance. Heschel noted the conflicts involved in such an approach. She stated about the approach in the 70's and 80's that "...the assumption that equality means that women should follow the roles of men is also an erasure of Jewish women's lives."[67] and that

> (i)f women simply mimic the roles that have been limited to men until now, we will in fact undergird the patriarchal structures and ideas of Judaism. We would also abandon our own history as women, which has been a history of marginality, but also of vitality and unique perspective.[68]

One early Jewish feminist group, *Ezrat Nashim*, stated as its main goal "equality of access: full participation in all areas of Jewish life."[69] This organization was formed by women who identified with the Conservative movement. In 1971 these women proposed a separate meeting for women at a conference on culture attended by Radical Zionist and Radical Jewish groups. Their request was met with anger and violent outbursts from the men. Their experience paralleled that of women, in general, who brought feminist concerns to leftist gatherings in that era. This fueled the First National Jewish Women's Conference, held in New York in 1973. As Cantor noted, "The prime

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[66] Ibid., 413.
[67] Heschel, *xvi.*
[68] Ibid., *xxiv.*
[69] Cantor, 414.

focus of activity of Jewish feminists was equal access to religious life, and it absorbed most of their energies for over a decade."[70] The Jewish Feminist Organization (1975-1976), Ellen Umansky noted, although short-lived, called for "nothing else than the full, direct, and equal participation of women at all levels of Jewish life."[71] However, she stated, although the goals of the JFO were never completed, many strides have been made.

Cantor stated that one of the biggest issues facing Jewish feminists was the ordination of women, aimed both at the Conservative and Reform movements. They also looked at issues of the minyan and aliyot. While the outcome for ordination was that eventually women were allowed into the Reform rabbinate in 1972, and approximately a decade later, in 1983 into the Conservative rabbinate, this did not mean that the struggle for acceptance was anywhere near complete. The backlash against Jewish feminism is exemplified by the concerns expressed by sociologist Daniel Elazar in 1973, who stated that if women were given equal rights, they would "...further *reduce* the presence of men in synagogue activities...and enhance the image of Judaism as 'women's work,' i.e. *less important*," and as Cantor summarized Mortimer Ostow of JTS' position, "*If women are full and complete Jews, men cannot be full and complete men.*"[72]

A major divergence of the Jewish feminist movement from the feminist movement at large was its lack of specifically political organization. For instance, when Plaskow reflected back on her early Jewish feminist roots, she noted that she too was a

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[70] Ibid., 415.
[71] Ellen M. Umansky, foreword to *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism*, by Lynn Gottlieb (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), *xi.*
[72] Ibid., 420.

proponent of equal access. But in her 1990 article, she noted also that equal access was an early approach to deeper issues, and that it led to her more recent belief that

> when a woman stands at the pulpit and reads from the Torah that daughters can be sold as slaves (Ex. 21:7-11), she participates in a profound contradiction between the message of her presence and the content of what she learns and teaches. It is this contradiction feminists must address, not simply "adding" women to a tradition that remains basically unaltered, but transforming Judaism into a religion that women as well as men have a role in shaping.[73]

But from what path of Jewish feminism did such a belief take form? As Cantor noted, "The approach of most Jewish feminists was to influence (male) 'leaders' to schlep the rest of the community up the path of righteousness...rather than to struggle politically themselves for self-defined goals." She continued that "Jewish feminists have never insisted that the secular Jewish organizations or the women's organizations support any of their demands or concerns or those they share with the general women's movement, such as reproductive choice."[74] Instead, she wrote, Jewish women have resorted to writing and speaking, the traditional Jewish male model of intellectualism. Because writing has always been a traditional method for Jewish male intellectuals to communicate, they have had no trouble in producing a "backlash in writing" to Jewish feminist scholars.

Cantor attributed this to a fear of separation from the Jewish community at large, to Jewish feminists' not wanting to appear to be abandoning or betraying their people, or to be abandoned themselves. This does not mean, however, that earlier writers did not see their work as political, if one considers exposing "countertraditions" in the bible as political. For instance, in the 1980's, Heschel wrote that "Initial feminist studies which exposed the sexism of Judaism have given way to feminist analyses which expose

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[73] Plaskow, *xvi.*
[74] Cantor, 421-422.

countertraditions of resistance to patriarchy in biblical and rabbinic literature. These countertraditions demonstrate that patriarchy was never absolute and controlling, but only one element in a multitude of conflicting voices."[75]

Cantor noted that

> Jewish feminism was born at the tail end of the sixties ambiance and on the cusp of the narcissism of the seventies. On the one hand, that narcissism worked to the advantage of Jewish feminists on religious equal-access issues. The demand for equal access was perceived as one of 'self-actualization,' an argument advanced by feminists in the mid-1970's that was powerful precisely because it was in tune with the general culture, noted (Paula) Hyman."[76]

She continued, though, to note that this was seen as selfishness by the American Jewish community at large, who were involved in a sort of self-protective "group narcissism"[77] of their own and thus considered these demands as selfish. She concluded that "...it would not have mattered very much that Jewish feminists were perceived as being nonaltruistically assertive. The very fact that they were rejecting the role of enabler was enough to flip them over immediately to the shadow role of *dis*abler."[78]

In addition to their own issues, and the issues of the general women's movement, Jewish feminists had to deal with the problem of anti-Semitism within the general women's movement. Not only were they not recognized as coming from an oppressed group in and of itself, but they were often considered to be traitors because of the connection to organized religion, especially one that accused Jews of killing the Goddess, which is a direct reflection, a sort of curious extension, of age-old "Christ-killer" myths. Additionally, because many feminists saw Judaism as a patriarchal religion, they called

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[75] Heschel, *xxiii.*
[76] "The Jewry is Still Out," interview in *Lilith*, no. 11 (Fall-Winter 1983), interview with Paula Hyman, in Cantor, 425.
[77] Cantor, 425.
[78] Ibid., 426.

on true feminists to renounce it. Judith Plaskow in the early 1980's stated that she hoped that Christian feminists would help her and other Jewish women if there were ever a large anti-Semetic problem in the US; yet the next year, at the 1980 Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen, the anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist rhetoric turned verbally violent against Jewish women.[79] This caused more Jewish feminists to act out politically against this horrific reality, but it was not heard in the general women's movement. Jewish lesbians, also dealing with their own discrimination, began to act out against anti-Semitism by learning more about Judaism and incorporating it into their lives. The book, *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*, published in 1982, told the stories of Jewish lesbians who wished to be "out" not primarily to themselves, but to their community of Jewish women who loved women, and to the Jewish community as a whole.[80]

Interestingly, where these issues finally led was to what Cantor called "The Jewish Female Culture Project" which she designated as starting in 1983, but which has many precursors. The goal was to create the means for creating a new identity as full-fledged Jewish individuals, and an important part of this was to do something to distinguish Jewish women's rituals from the majority of traditional Jewish ritual. In order to acknowledge this "new *and adult*"[81] identity, some older women chose to have a Bat Mitzvah as a rite of passage. Cantor stated that there were two reasons for this choice of a "religious/spiritual female culture, rather than a secular one." One was the need to link ethics with justice, which could only be found in Jewish writings. Second, she stated,

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[79] Ibid., 428.
[80] Rebecca T. Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 4.
[81] Cantor, 434.

> ...the secular Yiddish and radical cultures had long faded from the American Jewish scene. The untranslated works of the hundreds of women who wrote poetry and prose in Yiddish, both in Czarist Russia and North America, much of it permeated with feminist consciousness, were inaccessible. But even had these works been retrieved, there was no sector of American Jewish society that would have welcomed women whose self-definition was based on Yiddish culture or on the radical consciousness and actions of the women of revolutionary movements in Czarist Russia or in the unions of the immigrant generations.[82]

She concluded by saying that it was mostly Jewish lesbian-feminists who looked at the above as a means of defining themselves with a more radical past.

So, it seems that the creative spirit of these women was about to help create a new identity for Jewish women, building on the mainstream feminist idea that poetry and song could identify a group. Rituals around the New Moon (Rosh Chodesh) and other lifecycle events proliferated, such as the celebration of the birth of a daughter, pregnancy, menopause, aging, and commitment ceremonies. Women formed prayer groups, and addressed the sexist language of prayer books. One book often noted is Naomi Janowitz's and Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig's *Siddur Nashim: A Sabbath Prayerbook for Women.*(1976)[83] Sylvia Barack Fishman noted that

> Contemporary Jewish feminism has turned a systematic spotlight on the religious souls of Jewish women. Jewish feminism has gone back to the biblical, rabbinic, and historical wellsprings of Judaism to rediscover, reemphasize, and reinterpret women's roles in the development of Judaism as a religion, an ethical system, and a culture. It has opened the doors of classical Jewish learning to women of all ages. It has worked toward reinvesting major female life-cycle events with formal, Jewishly significant spiritual import. It has rediscovered old prayers and created new ones both to transcend patriarchal attitudes and to give expressions to female Jewish spirituality, and it has moved women into more public positions in prayer services themselves.[84]

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[82] Ibid., 435.
[83] Ibid., 437.
[84] Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1993), 143-144.

Looking at an historical group of Jewish women who created their own words of prayer, Chava Weissler has done work on the *thkines,* petitionary prayers of Eastern European Jewish women. About the tkhines, Plaskow wrote, "In giving vivid expression to the concrete realities of women's lives, they also reflect the confines of those lives. Thus they make clear the extent to which patriarchal boundaries affect women's religious expression even when those forms of expression are woman-made."[85] According to Fishman,

> Several articulate observers of contemporary American Jewish life believe that powerful vehicles for and expressions of Jewish women's spirituality were lost in the transition from Old World to American forms of Judaism. Women as different as Reform Professor Ellen Umansky, radical Orthodox feminist Rifka Haut, and Miriam Klein Shapiro, president of the right-wing Conservative Union for Traditional Judaism, emphasize the rich spiritual lives of women in many pre-American traditional Jewish communities.[86]

The latter, Shapiro, considered that "...the *techinot* utilized by our grandmothers can provide us with at least the beginnings of liturgical responses to our own bodies."[87] Today, by setting some of these private prayers to music, composers have given these women a voice that can be heard by all.

Finally, as Plaskow also wrote,

> Together and individually then, orally and in writing, women are creating poetry, exploring and telling stories that connect our history with present religious experience. Perhaps the favorite subject for feminist midrash is Miriam....The feminist Miriam is the woman we glimpse through the gaps in the biblical story, the one who refuses to be "a forgotten flute, a broken harp."[88]

For the past three decades, new Jewish women's rituals developed and evolved, including the Women's Haggadah and Seder. As Cantor concluded, "The community must be

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[85] Plaskow, 49.
[86] Fishman, 128.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Plaskow, 54.

transformed into one that is able to respond to the physical, political, spiritual, and cultural needs of all Jews....And, unlike these communities of the past, the Jewish community of the future must enfranchise women. In short, the community must be feminized."[89]

[89] Cantor, 440-441.

Chapter 4

The Music of the Women's Seders: An Introduction

In the late 1990's Maida Solomon wrote a groundbreaking article about women's seders. Since then, there have been publications that mention women's seders, a book focusing on Lesbian Jews highlights a subset of this genre – the lesbian seder,[90] other books which mention the seder in the context of Jewish women's rituals[91] or mention feminist interpretation of the Passover story[92], but no other book or article focusing solely on the women's seder. To date, it also seems that no analysis of the music of the women's haggadah has been approached in a scholarly fashion. Thus, the following three sections of this thesis will analyze three of the major haggadot created since the 1970's, focusing not only on the history and content of each seder, but on its musical content. Each segment includes a history of the haggadah, reflecting written as well as oral accounts of the process of creation, as well as a detailed analysis of the haggadot themselves. Within the haggadot are analyses of each song as it appears in the order of the seder. Before embarking on these detailed analyses, it is important to consider the trends which have appeared in the music of the women's seder by looking at a few specific examples.

Generally speaking, the women who created these haggadot felt that the inherited text of the music lacked the voice of women. Their response to this reality took on

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[90] There is mention of the ritual of the orange on the seder plate in Rebecca T. Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1-3.

[91] See Esther Broner, Ph.D., *Bringing Home the Light: A Jewish Woman's Handbook of Rituals* (San Francisco: Council Oaks Books, 1999), 75-110.

[92] See Drorah O'Donnell Setel, "Fragments of an Old/New *Haggadah:* The Song of Miriam", in *Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Biblical Themes in Contemporary Life, Volume 2*, ed. Rabbi Debra Orenstein and Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman, , (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997), 89-93.

several forms and was reflected in the choices they made for the seders they created, not only in the readings they included but in the music. Often where a traditional song appears in the haggadah which includes references to male role models, the women creating the haggadot decided to change only the text, inserting a variety of women-centric words. For example, the most well-known may be "*Miriam Ha'n'viah*" created to be sung in place of "*Eliyahu Hanavi.*" Instead of honoring the prophet Elijah, the women honor the prophetess Miriam. The authors of these haggadot did not choose, however, to change the music for this song, or for many others, as will be discussed later. Also important to note is the sharing of music among haggadot – many borrowed from each other. Although this thesis is limited to three major women's haggadot, even within these, there is overlap (for instance, both *The San Diego Women's Haggadah* and *The Journey Continues* include Debbie Friedman's "Hodu," published in 1981 in Los Angeles. The involvement of Friedman with the organizations which published both haggadot was significant here.[93])

In the oldest of the three haggadot examined within, *The Women's Haggadah*[94], "*Miriam HaN'viah*" is not presented as a song. In fact, there is no music presented within the haggadah, nor are there directives to sing certain texts. Esther Broner stated that the seder does not have a distinguished musical history, although at times cantors and rabbis have lent beautiful voices in song to the seder. The author's sense is that Broner has some regrets that its musical tradition has not been stronger.[95] Regardless, the text of

[93] See chapter on *The San Diego Women's Haggadah.*
[94] Esther Broner, with Naomi Nimrod, *The Women's Haggadah* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, 1994)
[95] Esther Broner, interview by author, telephone, 9 December 2002.

"Welcoming the Prophet" in Hebrew seems like it could lend itself to the same music as "*Eliyahu Hanavi*," although not in English.[96]

Ha'Neviah'a Miriam
Miriam me'beit Levi
Bim'heira tavo eleinu
Be'tupim u'be'simra
Miriam, ne'vi'atenu
Teraked[97] *imanu.*

Miriam ha Neviah
Miriam from the House of Levy
Soon will come to us
with timbrel and song
Miriam, our prophet,
will dance with us.[98]

The second haggadah in this thesis, *The San Diego Women's Haggadah,* includes both sheet music (handwritten) and the changed text. The pieces do not include any indications for accompaniment, keyboard, guitar or otherwise. It is titled "*L'Miriam Ha N'viah*", or, "To Miriam the Prophetess." The music is to the tune of "*Eliyahu Hanavi*," but has a very different text than the previous haggadah. This new text calls Miriam a prophetess, but says nothing about the coming of a prophetess; rather it is offered as a blessing to strong women of the Bible.

L'Mir'yam Ha N'viah,
L'Mir'yam Ha N'viah,
Ul'achoteinu
Sara v'Rivka
Anu notnot b'racha.
(alternate verse)
Rachel v'Leia...
Ester v'Dina...
Shifra v'Pua...
Rut u'Dvora...

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[96] All translations, italics, bold type, are reproduced here as they are published in each haggadah.
[97] Based on the English translation and common Hebrew verb forms, "teraked" should read "tirkod" to be grammatically correct.
[98] Broner, 69.

To Miriam the Prophetess
And to our sisters:
Sarah and Rebekah,
Rachel and Leah,
Esther and Dinah,
Shifrah and Puah,
Ruth and Deborah,
We offer a blessing.[99]

Finally, the version of this song in *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*, as will be elaborated upon in an upcoming chapter, offers both the traditional "*Eliyahu Hanavi*" as well as "*Mir'yam Han'vi'a*". As in all pieces of music in the Ma'yan seder, the song book includes guitar chords for each song as well as the melody line. Both are sung to the same tune, as above. Yet, once again, the text is quite different. More like the version in *The Women's Haggadah*, this version speaks of Miriam as a prophet (not prophetess), coming with music to save.

Mir'yam han'vi'a oz v'zimra b'yada.
Mir'yam, tirkod itanu, l'hagdil zimrat olam.
Mir'yam, tirkod itanu, l'takein et ha'olam.
Bimheira v'yameinu, hi t'vi'einu.
El mei ha'y'shua. El mei ha'y'shua.

Miriam the Prophet, strength and song are in her hand. Miriam will dance with us to strengthen the world's song. Miriam will dance with us to heal the world. Soon, and in our time, she will lead us to the waters of salvation.[100]

It is interesting to note that, like the *San Diego Women's Haggadah*, this haggadah also provides sheet music, in the form of a published volume, not within the haggadah itself.

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[99] Randee Friedman and Rabbi Lenore Baum, in Jane Sprague Zones, editor. *San Diego Women's Haggadah.* San Diego: Woman's Institute For Continuing Jewish Education, 1986, 36.
[100] Lyrics by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner, in Tamara Cohen, Editor, The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah (New York: Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project, a program of the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, 2nd ed 2002, 1st ed. 2000.) The Journey Continues: Ma'yan Passover Haggadah in Song (San Diego, CA: Sounds Write Productions, Inc., 2000.), 102/44.

Another perceived problem within the traditional structure was the absence of women, because of the impact of male-gendered language contained in the songs.[101] A good example of this is "*Avadim Hayinu,*" popularly edited for use in women's haggadot as "*Avadot Hayinu.*" This particular song title is significant in that it rejects the idea that the male gendered statement, "We Were Slaves" (in Egypt) includes both men and women. Instead, by changing the text to the feminine, a bold statement is made that women want to be seen as part of the Exodus story, as they indeed were. Although only one of the three haggadot changes the text for this song, other variations are present. The text is absent in *The Women's Haggadah*; rather the story is told in English and emphasizes sons and daughters. In *The San Diego Haggadah,* the song is as follows:

Avadot hayinu hayinu
Ata b'not chorine, b'not chorin.
Avadot hayinu, ata ata b'not chorin
Avadot hayinu ata ata b'not chorin, b'not chorin.
We were slaves.
Now we (women) are free.[102]

The most recent haggadah, *The Journey Continues* includes an interesting balance of traditional text and gender changes in "*Avadim Hayinu.*" However, the text in the haggadah and the text in the songbook are not always identical. Those with a haggadah in front of them will sing of "*b'not chorin;*" those with the songbook will only sing of "*b'nei chorin.*"

Avadim Hayinu, hayinu.
Ata b'nei chorin u'vnot chorin.
Avadim hayinu
Ata, ata b'nei chorin.
Avadim hayinu
Ata, Ata b'not chorin, b'not chorin. (2x)[103]

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[101] This is an issue created by the fact that Hebrew itself is a gendered language.
[102] Friedman and Baum, 26.
[103] Cohen, 58.

Also interesting is the introduction of the song by interweaving the original text with the story of Shifra and Puah, the midwives who saved Israelite baby boys from Pharaoh.

It is not only important to consider what has changed within the women's seder regarding music. It is also crucial to note when the changes occur within the seder. As was mentioned earlier, most women's haggadot follow the general Mishnaic prescription.[104] However, varying levels of liberty are taken in the haggadot, and seem to be least traditional earlier on. In a traditional haggadah[105], "*Eliyahu Hanavi*" is usually sung when the door is opened for the prophet Elijah, after the third cup of wine is blessed and drunk, and after the fourth cup is filled. In *The Women's Haggadah*, which, as will be seen, departs the most from the traditional Haggadah in terms of content but still maintains its basic structure and some elements of content, "Welcoming the Prophet" is the very last item included in the haggadah and it is preceded by welcoming Miriam. In *The San Diego Women's Haggadah, "L'Miriam Ha N'viah"*, or, "To Miriam the Prophetess," is located within the Maggid, or telling of the story of the Exodus, while the door is opened for Miriam in the traditional spot where it is opened for Elijah with no song. Finally, in *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*, the traditional "*Eliyahu Hanavi*" as well as "*Mir'yam Han'vi'a*" are found in their traditional location, after the third and before the fourth cup, and are sung with the door open.

Often, however, as one studies the myriad haggadot, one sees that rewriting the traditional tunes of the seder was rarely deemed satisfactory. New music was often

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[104] Maida Solomon, "Claiming Our Questions: Feminism and Judaism in Women's Haggadot," in Joyce Antler, ed., *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1998, 227.

[105] Whenever a reference is made to a "traditional haggadah" the reference is made to Rabbi Nathan Goldberg, *Passover Haggadah/Haggadah Shel Pesach: A New English Translation and Instructions for the Seder*, 4th ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1966).

created to fill a void, a need to tell a new story – or more accurately, another element of the existing story. There is certainly a corollary to this in Jewish feminist scholarship, as Susannah Heschel notes, "We examine what the text reveals, but also explore what the text conceals...."[106] Often the new music served as midrash, although in many instances the music has not yet reached the same level of midrashic sophistication as some of the new poetry in the haggadot does.

As is noted in the next chapter, Esther Broner has stated that she would love to have some of her poetry written expressly for *The Women's Haggadah,* set to music.[107] A haggadah which has done just this is *The Journey Continues*. It contains a great deal of contemporary music by Debbie Friedman and collaborators. While this haggadah also includes rewrites as mentioned above, the proliferation of new songs, although not all written expressly for the haggadah, has a profound impact. But was there radical content change in the music? Looking at the haggadot in this thesis, it seems that the most radical content change was from utilizing a majority of traditional Jewish seder tunes to incorporating music that had become part of either the genre of 20th century popular Jewish music, or the new feminist music.

As was mentioned before, *The Women's Haggadah* is less concerned with music than the other women's haggadot. However, it mentions that the Order of the Seder, which has been rewritten, is to be sung. Curiously, although some poems are noted as "sung," Broner, when interviewed, indicated that they are songs in the sense of poems; they were never actually sung at the seder.[108] In 1985, Mikhal Shiff Mattar sang an

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[106] Susannah Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985. First printing 1983), *xii.*
[107] Broner, 69.
[108] Interview with Broner.

altered text of "*B'chol dor va'dor.*"[109] This change, however, is not a part of the published seder. In *The San Diego Women's Haggadah,* the musical innovation is the addition of songs that are not traditionally found in the haggadah. Each non-traditional song was selected for a particular reason. "*Kumi Lach*" by Debbie Friedman, from Song of Songs, was chosen as a symbol of the coming of spring. "Womanside" and "For Women Everywhere" are both secular feminist songs (the second from the 1985 Zimbabwe YWCA for the International Women's Conference, Nairobi). "*Lo Yisa Goi*" was included because of its anti-war stance, "*Im Tir'tsu*" by Debbie Friedman, for its message of freedom, and "*Hinei Ma Tov,*" for its message of harmony. All were new additions to the concept of music at a seder.

One of the reasons that the Ma'yan seder is so well attended is due to the popularity of Jewish singer/songwriter Debbie Friedman who has served as songleader and composer for the Ma'yan seder for eight of its nine years. The publication of its music in songbook and CD form, as well as the haggadah itself, has also helped mainstream this women's seder and its music. Much of this seder involves original songs by Debbie Friedman. These include "The Journey Song," "Light These Lights (Oh Hear My Prayer)," "*B'chol Dor Vador,*" "The Time Is Now," and "*Birkat Hamazon.*" All of these are published in the song book accompanying the haggadah. Another song, "The Water In the Well," was written recently, published in a new CD, and has been inserted during the seder after "*Mir'yam Han'viah.*" Sometimes Friedman includes a song called

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[109] E.M. Broner, *The Telling: The Story of a Group of Jewish Women Who Journey to Spirituality Through Community and Ceremony* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 76. Instead of the traditional "In every generation,/ each man/ is obliged to see himself/ as though/ he went out of Egypt" she sang "*B'chol Dor V'Dor/ Hayava Isha Lirot/Lirot et Atzma Ki Ilu Hi/Ki Ilu Hi yataz-a mi'mitzrayim.* In every generation,/every woman/is obliged to see herself/as though she went out from Egypt. Change in text attributed to Shiff Mattar. In *The Telling,* Shiff Mattar is referred to as Shiff.

"The Angel's Blessing." For instance, she included it one year to honor the Ma'yan seder's founder, Barbara Dobkin. At other seders she has included other songs that seem appropriate. She also includes arrangements of traditional seder music as well as music by other women composers. Additionally, she has included songs of her own, not written specifically for this haggadah, which she feels are appropriate, such as "Miriam's Song."

As was mentioned earlier, the authors of these haggadot did not choose to make similar gender changes for all of the music, as they had done with "*Mir'yam Han'viah*" or "*Avadot Hayinu.*" They felt it sufficient to use the same music and text as is heard at traditional seders. An example of this is the use of "*Ma Nish'tana*" in *The San Diego Haggadah*[110] and "*B'tzeit Yisrael*" in *The Journey Continues.*[111] Continuity with traditional music may make the incorporation of women's haggadah material into one's home seder smoother. However, one might ask if the music itself imparts a "masculine" identity to the songs. Experts in the field of feminist musical study, such as Susan McClary and Sophie Drinker, have approached music theory and musicology in a way that acknowledges issues of gender in music history, performance and composition. By going beyond the text, McClary has discovered ways in which music theory should be rethought to include possible gender biases. Her focus is on Western art music, so it is unclear whether such theory can be applied to the traditional music of the seder. However, an interesting project could be such an analysis, although the current thesis will not do so.[112]

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[110] Zones, 22.
[111] *The Journey Continues: Ma'yan Passover Haggadah in Song,* 29.
[112] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.)

Along with textual changes and musical changes, there is one other crucial element to the story of the women's seder and its music, the context of the seder. This is the "by women for women" aspect of the women's seder; and how feminism is expressed in such surroundings, both physically and metaphorically. There are elements of these songs, whether it be the text, the music, or a combination of both, which create a "space" in and of themselves. By providing messages that are positive about women, they help create a sense of safety and support, as well as optimism, for the women who sing them. There is also the physical context of the seder – held in a hall, a dining room, a women's center – in a circle of women on the floor, at long tables of mostly women (and a few men) – which supports the music and has an effect on the music, along with the musicians and the participants. Finally, for instance, in the case of the Ma'yan seder, there are the dancing women who take up tambourines and spin joyfully around the room – combining elements of music, text and space to create the special woman-centered context for the women's seder.

At this juncture, it is still crucial to ask, why did the text of the haggadot change more than the music? It seems that in the majority of cases, musical experts were brought in to the process of creating women's seders fairly late in the process. The preliminary work on haggadot focused on the text, which makes sense, as it constitutes the majority of any haggadah. Next, most would agree that it is easier to edit the text of an existing song than to write entirely new songs. As can be seen above, many times poetry has been written that may be in want of a tune to accompany it. As much new music as there is, it does not compare in volume with the number of textual changes that have appeared in the haggadot of the women's seder movement. Granted, the Ma'yan

seder, for instance, has reincorporated (compared to earlier haggadot) more traditional text. But the traditional texts are supplemented by progressive, feminist texts which increases size of the haggadah as well. Perhaps it will be left to another generation to completely change the music of the women's seder. But it seems more likely that the desire of Jewish women to maintain a seder that can be incorporated into their home life as well as communal life will maintain a balance always of old and new.

By telling the story not only by including women of the Exodus in a more prominent light (Miriam, Jocheved, Shifra and Puah), but also by highlighting important Jewish women throughout history, women begin to feel that their voices are being heard. And one of the modes of transmission of the importance of these women's lives and voices is the seder song. As women's seder songs are taken into homes, they will have even more of an impact. For instance, as the editor of *The San Diego Women's Haggadah*, Jane Zones, notes, she has for years included elements of her group's haggadah in her home seder, with her husband and two sons plus others.[113]

[113] Jane Zones, interview by author, telephone, 16 December 2002.

Chapter 5

The 1970's: An Analysis of *The Women's Haggadah*

The History

In *The Women's Haggadah*, by E.M. Broner and Naomi Nimrod, revised 1992, by E.M. Broner (first seder 1976), we find a notably modified seder that maintains elements of the traditional service. The 1993 publication had a left to right opening, and gives an historical introduction. Broner stated that in 1975, she and two other women, in Haifa, Israel, "...announced somewhat hubristically that we were holding a 'Seder of the North.' But this would be different. The invited men would prepare the meal, serve, and clean. The women would contemplate the traditional Haggadah and write new and relevant prayers."[114] Thus began a women's seder that is one of the most famous of the feminist era. Each seder to this day has had a "theme."[115] The concept of a seder "theme" is highly unusual, since the usual theme of the traditional seder, is the story of the Exodus itself. In 1976, the accompanying haggadah, which Nomi Nimrod and Broner penned, was reviewed in America by such women as Letty Cottin Pogrebin and Gloria Steinem. Pogrebin published this haggadah in *Ms.* magazine in 1977; it was a huge hit. According to Broner, "*Ms.* magazine received hundreds of requests for photocopies of *The Women's Haggadah* over the years."[116]

The list of names of participants in the seders reads like a *Who's Who* of famous Jewish feminists. As Broner noted, "Among us, we were forming a community: Letty,

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[114] Esther Broner, with Naomi Nimrod, *The Women's Haggadah* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, 1994) 1. Original haggadah written in 1976.
[115] For a list of seder themes, see Appendix A.
[116] Ibid., 7.

Gloria, Phyllis Chesler, and I from the first seder; Bea Kreloff and Lilly Rivlin, as well as our daughters, from the second seder; and, soon, surrogate daughters. Eventually, Bella Abzug, Edith Isaac-Rose, Grace Paley, and Michele Landsberg were to join us. And there were many guests as well."[117] Another leading Jewish feminist, Andrea Dworkin, attended the first seder as well. Although this seder remains to this day a private affair, by sharing its publication with Jewish women everywhere, the feminist principles which shaped this haggadah have influenced myriad communities. Interestingly, Broner had a great deal of trouble publishing both *The Women's Haggadah* and *The Telling*, which tells the story of its creation. She found many Jewish publishers unwilling to publish it, even as recently as the 1990's. Even today, she is told at book readings that she is ruining the family, and she is sometimes booed. Luckily, it was finally produced, and it is quite often cited and reproduced in *haggadot* of communities around the world.[118] Likewise, NPR has recorded and broadcast one of these seders, and Amy Goodman of WBAI in New York has played half an hour of the seder on the air.[119]

As Nimrod and Broner studied traditional text in Israel, and realized how scarce were women's names and voices in these sources, "..(a)ll we could do was turn our hurt and anger into our work. *The Women's Haggadah* became a product of that feeling of both excitement and betrayal."[120] That excitement was felt throughout the early feminist years, and especially, "The year 1976 *was* historic, a year of literary outpouring in the women's movement, fiction, essay, psychology, and art history."[121] And with their first seder, the women could turn their anger into a beautiful, fulfilling product. One way of

[117] Ibid., 6.
[118] Esther Broner, interview by author, telephone, 9 December 2002.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Esther Broner, *The Telling* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993) 11.
[121] Ibid., 14.

reaching this goal was to state their own personal plagues during the seder.[122] They also read Broner's "*V'He ShLo Amda*", " The Promises Not Kept", a response to, more than a rewrite of, the traditional "*V'He Sh'Amda.*"

> And what is the promise to women? That we have effect on our own lives and the generations that follow us.
>
> In every generation we lost our names and our legacy.
> Our role became fertilization of the generations of men.
> Our foremothers died and were buried after fulfilling this promise.
> In every generation there have arisen against us those who would destroy us and we have not yet been delivered from their hand.[123]

Towards the end of this historic first seder, "...we opened the door and welcomed Mother Miriam. It was the first time we had done such a thing. It was also the first time that we spoke in ritual of our mothers, of our stolen legacy, and of our spiritual longings."[124] A ritual that became a part of the seder after 1983 was the "Sacred Schmata", a large scarf which was wrapped around all participants to link them one to another. The scarf has even visited the Sinai, and is still a part of the seder, even in its less-than-perfect state.[125]

Thus began a ritual and spiritual journey that lasts to this day.[126] Interestingly, however, "(a)fter the Second Feminist Seder in 1977, the seders became more sophisticated, perhaps less spontaneous and intimate, with specific themes, parts given out to the participants, discussion over the guest list, and the assignment of what to bring to the table."[127] Lilly Rivlin filmed a documentary of the seder, produced during the Ninth Seder in 1984, called *Miriam's Daughters Now,* which has been widely shown. "It was in Lilly's film...when the gathered are asked, 'Who are the Miriams in your life?

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[122] Ibid., 21. These included Interruptiveness, Lack of Honor, Lack of Quiet, Lack of Self.
[123] Broner, with Nimrod, 37-38.
[124] Broner, 22.
[125] Interview with Broner, 12/9/02.
[126] Ibid. The group is celebrating its 28th seder this year.
[127] Broner, *The Telling*, 28.

Who led you to the shore and across the sea?' that Liz Abzug turned to her mother and said, 'Bella is my Miriam.' Her mother blushed with pleasure."[128] Likewise, the women told of the hardships they saw their mothers experience, especially those who tried to be independent.

Broner recounted how, in a discussion of the seder with her son, he remarked, "'The miracle is...that the Contrary is never kept out of the seder, not in the traditional Haggadah and not with the Seder Sisters.[129] Nor is the Simple. Nor even the One Who Does Not Know How to Participate. They are all accepted and expected to return.'" She noted that "...we each, in our idiosyncracy, were tolerated. As in a kibbutz we learned that in order to make our basic product – Holiday – we had to negotiate, have our *pegishot*, meetings, and our *sichot*, conversations. At other spiritual or feminist events, I have seen this contention and negotiation duplicated."[130] In 1992, in fact, after a panel discussion in Toronto, including Steinem, Landsberg and Broner, to raise funds for a movie of one of Broner's books, there was a First Feminist Seder, and the implication was that the feminist ideals discussed brought it to life. At that discussion, the women heard this: "'I'll quote Letty Cottin Pogrebin,' (Broner) answered the questioner [who questioned arguing in feminist venues], "'who said, "There are not enough chairs of honor for women.'"[131]

Around the time that *The Women's Haggadah* was published in 1993, Broner and her friends were taking inventory of their approach. The seders following that year (as described in her next history of the seder, the ones from 1994-1999) were less planned,

[128] Ibid., 33.
[129] This is a common way the group refers to itself.
[130] Ibid., 48.
[131] Ibid., 49.

freer – "no group planning, no consensus." But the themes continued to be produced. They knew that "...everywhere now there were Feminist Seders with rereading of the original text and rewriting of *The Haggadah*. Likewise, Broner said, "co-author Naomi Nimrod and I saw how there was an emerging industry of 'Miriam' songs. She had entered our art, our hearts and the text of our lives." And she continued, "I described the Seder Sisters in *The Telling* as a cast of characters. We are still characters, albeit a slightly altered cast. And we are also still searching, refining, defining tradition, to see what we can learn from it, where we can stretch it and what Judaism can learn from us.[132]

Today, Broner is happy that the seder has continued.[133] She is proud of the women's seder movement overall, but feels that too many women do not give credit, in their haggadot or historical displays, to women like herself when they use, sometimes word-for-word, her texts or the texts of others. In the spirit of the haggadah, she stated that "The daughters have to credit the mother with birthing." When asked why it is not now a tradition of the daughters, she said that the original women's daughters have created their own tradition. She is disappointed, but understands that the daughters see it as the mothers' creation and don't feel the same sense of ownership. She noted that the 2002 seder was unique because it was the first time they "broke the circle": a debate arose over Israel and they left the order of the seder for a while to debate. Broner's most prized ritual is when the women name themselves. They state, "I am (name), daughter of (mother) and (grandmother)." She said that this ritual is always moving, especially to newcomers, and Broner recalled a recent visitor, a French journalist, who was especially touched by it.

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[132] Esther M. Broner, Ph.D. *Bringing Home the Light: A Jewish Woman's Handbook of Rituals* (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 1999) 77.
[133] Interview with Broner, 12/9/02. The entire following paragraph is from this interview.

The Seder

Each seder begins with a ritual that is not necessarily part of a traditional order. First, the women who gather for the seder begin with the singing of The Order, a new version in English, written by Esther Broner. Broner offered some insights about the Order in *The Telling*. "The recitation of Siman L'Seder Shel Pesach, the Order of the Passover Seder, makes it seem as if every item on the list were of equal importance and equal length. Eating a green vegetable or washing the hands is not as lengthy or thoughtful a task as reciting the Passover story,"[134] a precedent-setting statement, as she assigned importance to some parts of the seder over others. This was followed by the Kiddush, the prayer for wine, and candle lighting.

In 1985, (Cantor) Mikhal Shiff(-Mattar) sang "*B'chol dor va'dor*" (it is unclear where in the seder) with a change in text attributed to Shiff[135]. As Broner stated, "Our knowledgeable guests alter familiar phraseology. Mikhal Shiff, a cantorial student then at Hebrew Union College, came to us in 1985 to strengthen our voices....It is still so radical to change the familiar that one's senses are startled."[136] Broner said that they have never had good music though as a constant element in the seder, although on occasion "wonderful young rabbis come and sing."[137]The women were seated in a circle, which is unusual as a seder is usually at a table. They did the hand washing ritual before the seder, and then there was a ritual of lighting a candle – one per woman. At the 5th

[134] Broner, *Bringing Home the Light*, 67.
[135] Ibid., 76. Instead of the traditional "In every generation,/ each man/ is obliged to see himself/ as though/ he went out of Egypt" she sang *"B'chol Dor V'Dor/ Hayava Isha Lirot/Lirot et Atzma Ki Ilu Hi/Ki Ilu Hi yataz-a mi'mitzrayim.* In every generation,/every woman/is obliged to see herself/as though she went out from Egypt.
[136] Ibid., 76-77.
[137] Interview with Broner, 12/9/02.

seder, which fell on *motsei Shabbat*, the seder included three Havdalah poems composed by Broner, which involved the passing of a spice box.[138] Two of the poems focused on singing to the *Shekhinah* in memory of Miriam, and blessing the *Shekhinah* while acknowledging the positive and negative aspects of every day for women. There was also a short song, "*Havdallah*":

> To mark the difference
> to separate, to divide, to set apart.
> I will trust and not be afraid
> with this congregation of women
> and this new beginning together.[139]

According to Broner, Havdalah was included that year to note the change to *motsei Shabbat*, post-Shabbat, resulting from a recent decision to avoid having the seder Friday evening, to respect their "more Orthodox friends." It is also important to point out that after Bella Abzug's death in 1998, the group has had not only a Miriam's Cup, but a Bella's Cup each subsequent year as well.[140]

When the Seder began it was organized by cups of wine. (The previously mentioned beginning rituals are not listed as part of the seder proper.) The first cup of wine included a blessing in the name of Shekhina; "*Anu hozrot l'mitzrayim* – we return to Egypt."[141] Following this were "The Four Questions of Women."[142] Two of the questions were traditional and offered in English, two were not traditional. The first two, the non-traditional, were "Why is this Haggadah different from traditional Haggadot? and Why have our Mothers on this night been bitter?"[143] The answers to all the

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[138] Broner, *Bringing Home the Light*, 77.
[139] Broner, with Nimrod, 14-15.
[140] Interview with Broner 12/9/02
[141] Broner, with Nimrod, 23.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.,23-24.

questions, traditional or not, were different. All questions also appeared in Hebrew. It seems this was done to respect the different backgrounds of the participants. For instance, one of the questions was, "*Madu'a be'layla ha'ze anu meseyvot*", "Why on this night do we recline?" In response to this question, the women answered, "We recline on this night for the unhurried telling of the legacy of Miriam"[144] – a huge departure from the traditional story of the Exodus.

The Four Questions were especially different the year that the Daughter's Seder happened. Broner said they were "(o)ur most eloquently expressed Four Questions – asked by Daughter, answered by Mother...."[145] Part of the answer to the first question was, "While some men still seek to silence our voices, Miriam's daughters must sing sweeter, bolder, louder." [146] Next, the haggadah explained why it is the duty of women to tell the story of the Exodus, followed by the story of why women recline – instead of speaking of why the men of Bnai Berak reclined. When "The Four Daughters" (not sons) was introduced, it was followed by "The Song of Searching,"[147] a further elaboration of the four questions. The four daughters had the same characteristics as the sons, but received quite different answers. For instance:

> The wicked one, what does she say? "Why are you sitting here all the night, only you women? Women have nothing to say to one another. Women have nothing to learn from one another." By her saying this, she removes herself from the community of women and isolates herself. The elderly women tell her, "Because you have broken the chain that links you to our heritage and to the legacy of Miriam, you have no history. You are still in the house of bondage."[148]

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[144] Ibid., 25.
[145] Broner, *The Telling*, 73.
[146] Ibid., 79.
[147] Broner, with Nimrod, 26. See Appendix A for full text.
[148] Ibid., 27.

Next came the pinnacle of the haggadah, the telling of the story. This is a very creative telling of the story. The story of Miriam is told very creatively, in succession, by the legendary women Rachel (wife of Akiva), Beruriah ("...known for her *midrashim,* commentaries on the law..."[149]), Ima Shalom (daughter of Hillel), and the daughter of Rabbi Gamliel.[150] Interspersed within the story were "The Song of the Wilderness," "The Song of Questions," "The Lament of the Prophet Miriam," and "Song of Our Sources."[151] "The Song of the Wilderness" proclaimed the strength of women to finish the journey. "The Song of Questions" which Broner stated was the most-reproduced of her seder poems[152], illuminated the questions of the four daughters in relation to Miriam's legacy. "The Lament of the Prophet Miriam" told of all the important events of the Exodus in which Miriam took part, contrasted with the lack of recognition and glory for her good deeds received in comparison to those of Moses and Aaron. For example:

> 'You shall be a Kingdom of Priests.'
> She was not appointed.
> 'And a land of prophets.'
> She was not heeded.
> 'Come up unto the Lord,'
> Moses, Aaron, and Seventy Elders.[153]

Finally, "The Song of Our Sources" bemoaned how, although man and woman were created equal, the chorus admonished, "But the rabbis (and she mentions priests and ministers, a comment on general religion) all agree that woman was created last, that woman was created least."[154] All of these songs were included as poetic readings; Broner

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[149] Broner, with Nimrod, 39.
[150] Marcia Freedman, *Exile in the Promised Land* (Ithica, NY: Firebrand Press, 1990), 130, in Ibid., 13. This tradition comes from the original seder in Haifa. These are the few women mentioned in the Talmud.
[151] Interview with Broner, 12/9/02. See Appendix A for texts of these poems.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Broner, with Nimrod, 32.
[154] Ibid., 34.

wished that they could someday be set to music.[155] Finally, this section ended with "The Promise" and "The Promise Not Kept." First is "*Ve'he sh'amda*" (praising God for saving us in every generation) and then a variation on it, "*Ve'he sh'lo amda*", which illuminated losses women have felt keenly over all generations, ending "In every generation there have arisen against us those who would destroy us and we have not yet been delivered from their hand."[156] Referring back to Cantor's hope for inclusivity in women's seders, and Solomon's general statement that women's seders are inclusive, this seems to support the opposite conclusion, that women's haggadot as a whole are not necessarily inclusive but that stance developed over time. This early example of an awareness of the exclusivity, the "otherness" created by those who oppress women, showed that inclusivity as a theme was not yet a primary goal.

The seder continued with the second cup of wine and "*Anu shavot el hamidbar* – we return to the desert."[157] This was very unusual, as in a traditional seder, the haggadah told of how we left the desert. It also paralleled the start of the seder, where it was stated, "We return to Egypt."[158] Perhaps this was explained by the answer to the Simple Daughter's following question, "Who would rise against our mothers?" The answer was "The family and the state." This type of social commentary seems to have its roots in the Yiddish/Bundist haggadot, which focused on the labor movement and liberation. An interesting innovation was "The Stolen Legacy."[159] Although Broner did not include sources, she told of how Beruriah often argued with her husband, Rabbi Meir, over correct text interpretation, and how his anger at this led to her eventual demise. Likewise

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[155] Interview with Broner.
[156] Broner, with Nimrod, 37-38.
[157] Ibid., 39.
[158] Ibid., 23.
[159] Ibid.

in this section, Ima Shalom stated how her father often asked for her advice but stated publicly, "It is better to burn the words of the Torah than to give them to women." Rachel gave up wealth to marry a poor shepherd and spent her life providing for him so he could study Torah. When he became great, and she was spent, he admonished students who shunned her and welcomed her to him. Finally, the simple daughter asked if the opposite ever happened, if a husband lived in poverty many years to support a wife studying, and the mothers said no. The end of the story described the daughter of Rabbi Gamliel, who could not get a blessing from him after she left his house to marry, even though he had respected her wisdom. The final poem of this section, "The Song of the Mothers,"[160] told of Shiphrah and Puah, the midwives who defied Pharaoh bravely, of Miriam, of the four aforementioned women, and how they were never rewarded.

The third cup of wine began with "*Ani shota mekos ha'yeda ad tom* – I drink to the dregs the cup of knowledge."[161] After the third cup (not the normal place in a seder), there was a variation on the Ten Plagues: The Plagues of Women. The plagues took on an additional meaning along with the traditional title. In addition to the Hebrew word, the entire explanatory text was given in Hebrew. They were[162]: Blood, speaking of the unfair stigma of menstruation; The Frog: False Self-Image, which bemoans the often-demeaning role of woman in the house, Lice: Dissatisfied, "She scratches her life like a lice-filled head."; The Gnat: Unknown, "...though she is a pestilence, unnameable."; Noxious Beasts, mistreatment of women; Boils: Jealousy, man's need to have authority

[160] Ibid., 43-44.
[161] Ibid., 45.
[162] Quotations are direct descriptions from the text; otherwise descriptions are summaries of the original text.

over woman; Murrain (which is the leftover rock and sand from a glacier[163]): Woman as Sinful, the perception that "Her heart is a trap to catch you."; Locusts: Legal Discrimination, the traditional lack of women's rights; Darkness, traditional prohibition against women studying; and Slaying of the Spirit, silencing women's voices.[164] The section ends with a significant line in capital letters, "AND THE TRIBAL COUNCIL NEVER LET THE HEBREW WOMEN GO OUT OF BONDAGE," that sends a strong message about the relationship of women to the leadership of the Jewish people today as well as historically.

Next the wise daughter asked what is "Dayenu"; and the response was a "Dayenu"[165] as well as a variation Broner names "Lo Dayenu."[166] However, none of the "Dayenu" sections were at all reflective of the traditional "Dayenu." Instead, the text outlined what could have been granted to women throughout history that would have been sufficient, both in English (first) and Hebrew. For example, "*If our fathers had not pitted our mothers against each other,/ like Abraham with Sarah and Hagar/* or *Jacob with Leah and Rachel/* or *Elkanah with Hannah and Pnina,/* Dayenu." "Lo Dayenu," however, was quite different, a true innovation for this haggadah. More in the style of a traditional Dayenu, where each stanza builds on the last, it began, for example with "*If the Shekhinah had brought us forth from bondage/ and had not educated us,/ it would not have sufficed us.*" This was followed by, "*If She had educated us/ and not given us opportunity to work,/ it would not have sufficed us.*" and so on. A poem called "She

[163] Interview with Broner. Broner's husband, an artist, has portrayed this in a painting.
[164] Broner, with Nimrod, 45-56.
[165] Ibid., 57-63.
[166] Ibid., 63-65.

Could Not Sleep That Night"[167] was a wonderful outline of what could have kept biblical women from sleeping at night, for example, when Leah had to share Jacob with Rachel, or when Deborah went to war. After the Wicked Daughter said she was tired of Miriam, and the One Who Does Not Know How to Question looked up, the Mothers end the section with the hopeful poem "Following Miriam", which stated, "What is the way? we ask./Her footsteps disappear in the sand./We find the map as we go along."[168]

The fourth cup of wine began with the phrase, "*Garti be'Mitzrayim. Shachanti ba'midbar. Lamadeti et a'varenu. Ve'ani adayin bedarcki* – I have been in Egypt. I have been in the desert. I have learned our history. And I am still on my journey."[169] As will be seen, this notion of the incomplete journey is in fact the focus and organizing theme of the Ma'yan seder, *The Journey Continues.* As the end of the seder approached, symbolically the Mothers and the Daughters opened the door to welcome the Prophet Miriam (note the choice not to change the gender of "prophet"). This was followed by a last question spoken by the "Simple Daughter", who asked if the seder had ended. The haggadah continued, "'Soon, say the Mothers. "Someone is waiting for us.'"[170] The seder ended with "Welcoming the Prophet," a poem about Miriam ha Neviah (not set to music although the Hebrew seems singable to the tune of "Eliyahu HaNavi.") "*Miriam ha Neviah/Miriam from the House of Levy/Soon will come to us/with timbrel and song/Miriam, our prophet,/will dance with us.*"[171] The final directive was that "**Miriam enters for the Festival Meal.**" This is a divergence from normative seder practices as well, as the seder ends at the meal and does not continue afterwards. Thus, by being

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[167] Ibid., 65-67.
[168] Ibid., 67.
[169] Ibid., 68.
[170] Ibid., 69.
[171] See Appendix A for full text.

willing to adapt to the changing group of "Seder Sisters" each year, and by adopting a different theme each year, *The Women's Haggadah* seder continues to this day.

Chapter 6

The 1980's: An Analysis of *The San Diego Women's Haggadah*

The History

The San Diego Women's Haggadah 1986 edition, edited by Jane Sprague Zones, was an update of the first edition from 1980, and includes 11 authors.[172] According to the haggadah's introduction, the history of this haggadah began with a decision by the newly-formed, free-standing Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education to have a women's Seder. They chose the seventh night because it was separate from the busiest first and second nights. They were unable to find a printed women's haggadah, so they chose to create their own. One interesting note is that they wanted to "...bring to the reader's eyes and ears glorious tales never before told at a Passover meal."[173] So innovation was very much part of the goal of this seder at the beginning.

The first seder occurred in 1979, with the first publication of the haggadah in 1980. By 1986 they had grown from 25 women to 75 women. They noted that catering their meal had released them from one of their burdens, seder preparation. One tradition introduced by this group was an embroidered seder pillow for the leader. Each year, the name of the seder leader is embroidered on the leader's seder pillow, as a record. Leading the seder was clearly a significant honor. In this historical introduction, for which no content credits were given, they noted that "Notes to the Leader of the Seder" were included so any woman can lead a seder, as "We have been told that for many, this

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[172] Betsy Arnold, Miriam Bauer, Irene Fine, Randee Friedman, Helen Gotkowitz, Sylvia Karzen, Debby Kremsdorf, Barbara Rosen, Arlene Saidman, Jeannie Steiger, Jacquelyn Tolley, and Jane Sprague Zones, editor. *San Diego Women's Haggadah.* San Diego: Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education, Second Edition, 1986.

[173] Zones, *vii-viii.*

activity of leadership is truly a liberating experience."[174] The authors also hoped that those who used the haggadah would add their own personal choices of songs or readings. They clearly did not see their practice and their text as definitive or fixed. All generations of women attended this seder in San Diego, telling stories of their Passover experiences. After the seder, winners of a writing contest sponsored by the Institute were read, and the finder of the Afikoman won a free class at the Institute. The contest was advertised city-wide, and was open to all women, even those not attending classes at the Institute, "...to enter and join the process of recording history."[175]

According to recent interviews, Irene Fine[176] began the Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education in 1977. As a doctor's wife, she saw sexism in her synagogue, which aggravated her. Jane Zones[177] noted that this was during the second wave of feminism. Her intention was to create an Institute to look at the role of women in Judaism, and Zones applauded Fine's work. Zones stated that she was a more radical feminist than Fine, a sociologist and anti-war activist. The first class at WICJE was called "The World of Our Mothers," about women of the Bible. The Institute also had a Shabbat series, where once a month feminist Jewish speakers were invited. The subscription series had 6 speakers per year and was very well attended. The first year they had 100 subscribers. This was the way that people got involved in the Institute and eventually the seder. Irene Fine stated that this women's haggadah was "...a history keeper of its own,"[178] and was the first printed and sold nationally. The haggadah, with

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[174] Ibid., *viii.*
[175] Irene Fine, *Educating the New Jewish Woman: A Dynamic Approach* (Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education, 1985)
[176] Irene Fine, interview by author, telephone, 17 December 2002.
[177] Jane Zones, interview by author, telephone, 16 December 2002.
[178] Interview with Fine.

its directives, showed other women how to run a women's seder. It was one of eight books that the Woman's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education published.

According to Zones, they may not have used the word feminist, but it was certainly a women's seder. Fine asked Zones to be editor, and Zones led a group of women in putting it together. Zones was not fond of the Ms. (Broner) seder because she felt it had an anti-male tone. In her opinion, men were not the agents of sexism. Self-identified as a radical feminist but not anti-male, she felt that sexism was related to the economic oppression of women and people in general, not patriarchy. She wanted a pro-women haggdah, not an anti-male one. Irene Fine agreed with her. Zones moved to San Francisco just after its completion, but flew back to attend the first seder. After that, she was often invited as a celebrity to seders in San Francisco which used the San Diego haggadah. The importance of the process of creating the haggadah was without equal for many women. "The women's spirits seemed to lift the more involved they became, and their level of confidence increased with each new offering to the book."[179]

The other women who worked on the haggadah were mostly wives and mothers in the community. Zones was one of the younger women in the group. The women ranged from late 20's to early 50's. Zones said they were "really good people, and smart." They did want all the traditional features of the seder which the Ms. haggadah did not include. Most of the women were Reform; Zones was Conservative but "lacking in knowledge"[180] of the detail behind Jewish ritual. One long-term goal was to give women the ability to take the haggadah to their families. In fact, today Zones still

[179] Fine, 54.
[180] Interview with Zones.

includes parts of the San Diego Women's Haggadah in her family seder. Today, there are still people using the haggadah.

According to Fine, the last edition was the second one, noting she still has copies to be purchased. Some organizations still order the haggadah, usually Jewish Federation groups. Fine said she might turn over the original printing materials for the haggadah to another Jewish feminist organization when she runs out of copies. She said that although the WICJE closed last year, the haggadah still has an influence all over the country. The WICJE held its seder for nine years (1979-1987); toward the end, there were about 50 attendees at the seder, down from a high of 70 to 80. In the WICJE book, *Educating the New Jewish Woman*, Fine told the story of how they wrote the haggadah[181]. Newspapers sometimes mention the haggadah, if they are doing a piece about women's seders; and they are mentioned on the internet as well.

In San Diego, the WICJE seder and its haggadah passed to another synagogue for 3 years after the institute stopped hosting it in 1988, and another 4-5 years at another synagogue. The Jewish Federation in San Diego is still doing this women-only, multi-generational seder. Some groups, such as one in Santa Cruz, still use the haggadah in its entirety. Others take whole passages from the haggadah while still others cut and paste excerpts from it. In Zones' opinion, it is traditionally Jewish to make one's own haggadah, and "crib" from others[182]. She stated that many seders are collected, not published. Sometimes people call Zones asking permission to take out parts; the most requested excerpt is the poem "A Woman's Seder."[183]

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[181] There have been articles about the haggadah as well, but Fine does not remember specifically what they are.
[182] Interview with Zones.
[183] See Appendix B for text.

Fine, however, disagreed with the idea of taking parts of the haggadah, or any published work, without acknowledging the source. She was concerned about plagiarism. In fact, she said, it is a major concern.[184] She noted that she would gladly give permission to use parts of the San Diego Haggadah, if the part was written by the original group as a whole. If, for example, there were a request for someone's original poem, she would ask the requester to please write to the person and ask permission. Thus, she had no qualms about others using it as long as they gave the group or individual credit. This was similar to the feelings of Esther Broner on this subject. As the former head of an educational organization, Fine wanted others to do for themselves – to use WICJE books as a stimulus and create. "The problem today is when there are ceremony websites who invite visitors to cut and paste. The visitors do not create for themselves, which diminishes the work."[185]

The Seder

The first WICJE class in the fall of 1978 was a "Haggadah Writing Workshop"[186]. Jane Zones was the teacher. She then became editor of the *San Diego Women's Haggadah*. As plans were made, the class divided responsibilities for the book into parts, with a group of 5 people to begin – and everyone would write a section. Some interesting issues arose from the process. For instance, one woman quit because she felt it (the project) was "lesbian." Another woman came on board as an artist, but for some reason did not want her art in the haggadah. The first version of the haggadah was written in 6 weeks. In order to save money, the group used clip art because there were no fees for its

[184] It has been on her mind, and this is the first time she has spoken out about it.
[185] Interview with Fine.
[186] In 1985, a course was offered called "Revising the Women's Haggadah – A Workshop." In Fine, 117.

use. Fine said that Jane was a wonderful editor, inviting everyone to bring in their ideas and incorporating them. She was a good listener, a good teacher, and generous. Their first haggadah, like many women's haggadot of that time, was stapled, and less than 50 pages. In order to raise enough money to actually publish the next version, they invited people to send in contributions of twenty-five dollars to underwrite the haggadah.

This haggadah was rather unusual because it included sheet music (melody line only). Zones chose to include printed music, because of the stage she was at, in learning about Judaism. She was going to Shabbat services, and found it hard to break into the process of the conservative service. Therefore she wanted everyone to have access to the music as a method of inclusion. Zones received permission from each artist. Fine also liked the idea of printed music, stating that it was good if a lay audience could learn the music. However, because many (not all) people knew the tunes there was no song leader for the majority of the seders. They sang without instruments, and everyone joined in the singing. If they did not know the music, or if songs were new to them, the sheet music was included in the haggadah and the hope was that the women would learn as the seder went along. Cantor Judith Bender did lead the last seder under the auspices of the Institute. Three songs by Debbie Friedman were included in the haggadah. Randee Friedman, who worked on the Hebrew for the haggadah, was a fan of Friedman's. In fact, not only was Debbie Friedman one of Fine's guest speakers at one of the Shabbat afternoon seminars, but the WICJE had a fundraiser for the seder, and Friedman did the fundraiser. However, she never participated in a seder.

The haggadah opened from right to left, as is customary for Hebrew language books, including many liturgical works. The inclusion of sheet music throughout the

haggadah, providing only the melody line, was a significant indication of how important musical participation was in this service. The haggadah was introduced, after a short history of its creation, with acknowledgments of donors. The seder progressed according to the traditional order, with narrative throughout about why each ritual was performed, often mentioning its particular meaning to women. Directives to the reader were given in the feminine, i.e. "her greens." There were some moments where the writers were aware that they were consciously choosing to include a change. For instance, at "Dayeinu", there was a discussion of both the merits of the traditional "Dayeinu" text, and the recognition that "It is important for us not only to be grateful for all the good things that have happened, but also to not settle for less than our full due as human beings."[187] Broner, too, had included this concept, but mostly in terms of women, not women and men.[188]

In "Kadeish," there was an introduction which stated, "This is a special evening, one that our ancestors would not have anticipated in a thousand years! We gather tonight as Jewish women to celebrate as well the special part that women have played in Jewish liberation."[189] The participants read the poem "Blessed is the Match" by Hannah Senesh before the traditional candle blessing. Afterwards, it was explained that they considered Senesh a "...daughter of the exodus, as are all of us here tonight....In Exodus the first steps toward freedom for the Hebrew people were taken by women."[190] It is interesting that with this as a framework no specifics of Senesh's biography were included. The full

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[187] Zones, 44.
[188] There was one Dayenu in which she stated, "If every generation of women together with every generation of men would continue to go out of Egypt, *Dayenu, Dayenu.*" However, in the "Lo Dayenu which follows, she states, for instance, "If we were allowed to advance at work but had to perform housewifely duties as well, *Lo Dayenu.*" In Broner, with Nimrod, 62, 64.
[189] Zones, 1.
[190] Ibid., 3.

traditional Kiddush in Hebrew was accompanied by degenderized English, using "God" and "Creator." Each year, the women then said the "*Shehecheyanu*", because they had not been together since the previous Passover. *Ur'chats*, handwashing, was done by the leader, which was traditional.

A new element was the Song of Songs excerpt, "Rise up my love", in English; echoed by the song "*Kumi Lach*[191]" (added after 1st printing.) The song was short, in 4/4 meter, and the musical line was repetitive. The piece seemed to shift keys. At first, it seemed to be in D major. Then, when the g sharp enters, it became more firmly rooted in f sharp minor, although there was a moment at the beginning of the last verse when the sense of D major returns briefly. The song spoke of the coming of spring, and the setting provided a very serene melody. The following segments, Karpas and Yachatz, were traditional, except that the person uncovering the matsot[192] pronounced: "The four matsot before me represent the pascal lamb, the people of Israel, the power of women, and hope for the freedom of all Jewish people, particularly those still living in tyranny and oppression."[193] This was indeed a different interpretation of the matsot. Usually at this point the leader just broke the middle matza for the afikomen, after the above explanation the traditional ritual occurred.

The Magid was different. Lifting the matsot, the leader mentioned the bread of affliction; but also proclaimed, "Now enslaved, next year daughters of freedom!"[194] The second cup was filled, and she went on to the Four Questions which in this case were dedicated to four foremothers, symbolically brought to the table, and then asked the

[191] "Music by Debbie Friedman, c. 1983", in Zones, 8.
[192] Spelling as in this haggadah.
[193] Ibid., 10.
[194] Ibid., 12.

questions. The Daughters asked of Deborah the Judge, "*Mother,* we ask, *why is this night different from all other nights? Why do we celebrate a women's Seder?*[195]" Of Beruriah, wife of Rabbi Meir, who rebuked her husband, "*Mother,* we ask, *why do we taste this bitterness and keep it fresh in our mouths?*"[196] Of Hannah Senesh, they asked, "*Mother, why then do we taste both salt tears and sweet?*"[197] Gluckel of Hameln, part of a prominent family in 16th century Germany, wrote her memoirs stating, "...I found even my few moments of leisure difficult to enjoy. Women are the ones who create and sustain, and so we can never truly be at rest...." (only the first names are given in the introduction, however). At this seder the daughters asked her, "*Mother, why do we find it so difficult to lean back and relax during this meal?*"[198] The stories of each woman were given as the answer to the questions. The section ended with a poem by Hannah Senesh, the theme of which is the light that remains of those who are gone.

According to Zones, in this haggadah, three of the four foremothers, except Hannah Senesh, were studied in Fine's first class called "The World of Our Mothers"[199]. According to Fine, the students decided as a group which women to include. So, they chose Deborah from biblical times, Beruriah from the rabbinic period, Gluckel from the Middle Ages, and Hannah Senesh from the present, to cover many generations and periods of time. This process was so important to them because they felt that prior to 1977 foremothers were NEVER talked about. Therefore it was very important to talk about them. "I can't describe to you just how important it was. Something we all take for granted, and at one time it didn't happen." As she noted as well, "Now women were

[195] Ibid., 14. Italicized as in haggadah.
[196] Ibid., 16.
[197] Ibid., 17.
[198] Ibid., 18.
[199] Interview with Zones.

not only reciting their names but also popularizing them like those of noted forefathers!"[200]

The Four Daughters were considered the daughters of the above mothers, "one wise, one bitter, one simple, and one who does not know how to question"[201], and the authors spoke in terms of the Shekhina. The wise was told that it is necessary to tell how women participated in the Exodus, the bitter was told that "(b)y saying "you" instead of "we", this daughter alienates herself from the company of women. By demeaning women's intelligence, she keeps herself in a position of inferiority." The simple daughter was told of Miriam's wisdom, and the last was "...led by the hand through the exodus...."

Next, the traditional "*Ma Nish'tana*" was sung[202] (Israeli) in e harmonic minor, 4/4 meter. Only one of the answers was specific to women; the rest were traditional. They read, "Our mothers in their flight from bondage in Egypt did not have time to let the dough rise, so they baked flat bread, called matsa[sic]." Then, the women sang "*Avadot Hayinu.*"[203] The text was sung to the tune most often heard at a seder for "*Avadim Hayinu*," in d minor. The infrequent raised 6^{th}, a common chromaticism, does not change the key however. The changes, however, were in the traditional text (*Avadot Hayinu* and *ata b'not chorine*: We women were slaves *and* now we women are free.). The stories of the Egg and Shank Bone also had traditional explanations.

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[200] Fine, 50.
[201] Zones, 20.
[202] Ibid.., 22.
[203] "Words by Randee Friedman and Rabbi Lenore Bohm", in Zones, 26.

The section with the directive "THE MOTHERS SPEAK IN TURN"[204] first told the traditional story of the Exodus, then continued, "Tonight, we also ask how we, as women, became enslaved among our own people."[205] The authors presented sociological issues confronting the Israelite women after they left Egypt, such as famine and warfare, as well as the hazards of childbirth which limited their lifespan and the economic repression of women by the elders of the community. This echoed the manner in which Broner, in *The Women's Haggadah,* outlined women's oppression in "Song of Our Sources."[206] This was followed by "Liberation Times Three (A Supplemental Story)"[207] which spoke of the plight of Eastern European women before and during Holocaust times, and pointed to the issue of liberation in its many forms. The story began with Rifkah's difficult life in a shtetl, and the equally hard life of her daughter, Hannah, who saw her family taken away by soldiers. It skipped to 1945, when Hannah was liberated from a concentration camp. Finally, when Hannah's children grew up in America, she complained when her daughters go to work after their children turn eight.

> She complained: 'You're allowing strangers to raise your children.' Her daughters patiently explained, 'We need to work...to feel liberated...' Hannah did not understand. She died six years later, two days after her seventieth birthday celebration, still not understanding what her daughters needed to be liberated from.[208]

The seder continued with the "The Liberation from Egypt"[209], telling various stories of the main female characters of the Exodus saga. They spoke of Shifra's and Puah's refusal to kill the first born Hebrew sons; and they told a story from Midrash of

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[204] Ibid., 28.
[205] Ibid., 30.
[206] Broner, with Nimrod, 34-36. See Appendix for full text.
[207] Zones, 32.
[208] Ibid., 33.
[209] Ibid., 34.

how Miriam prophesied that her mother would give birth to a son who would deliver Israel from Pharaoh, and thus convinced Yocheved's husband to return to her (he had divorced her as had many men divorced their wives) and it concluded with Miriam making sure Moses was rescued safely from the river.[210] This part of the narrative was followed by the song "*L'Mir'yam Ha N'viah*"[211]. It was sung to the traditional tune of "*Eliyahu Hanavi*," in g minor, ¾ meter. Interestingly, this new text did not at all mirror the structure of the original text. It was placed in the story, the *maggid*, which was unusual; usually "*Eliyahu HaNavi*" was sung when the door was opened toward the end of the seder. Zones noted that "*L'Miriam Ha N'viah*" was written specifically for this seder. The text was "*L'Mir'yam HaN'viah (2x), Ul'achoteinu Sara v'Rivka Anu notnot b'racha.* (To Miriam the Prophetess, and to our sisters Sara and Rivka, we offer a blessing.)" Alternative verses were listed for "*Rachel v'Lei'a, Ester v'Dina, Shifra v'Pua, Rut u'Dvora.*" The meaning, of course, is quite different from the traditional "*Eliyahu Hanavi*," sung when the door was opened to welcome the prophet into the home, who was assumed to herald the coming of the Messiah.

The story of the Exodus continued on a more traditional vein, until the Ten Plagues. The Ten Plagues in this haggadah were not the ten found in a traditional haggadah. They were introduced as "...the ten plagues brought upon women in Jewish life." There was a similarity to Broner's ten plagues because the plagues again represented the painful issues in women's lives due to their gender. However, Broner

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[210] This story is attributed in the haggadah to Angelo Rappoport, *Myth and Legend of Ancient Israel*, Vol. 2, KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1966, Chapter XVII, in Ibid., 34. The original sources are: Babylonian Talmud Sotah 12a and Exodus Rabbah 1:19 referring to the prophesy. The story of Moses' rescue from the river is from Exodus Rabbah 1:22, Mek, Be-shallah, Shiata, end, in Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitsky, eds. *Sefer Ha-Aggadah* (William G. Braude, translator, The Book of Legends: Legends from the Talmud and *Midrash*) (Odessa, 1908-1911; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1992.), 59-60. (page citations are to the reprint edition.)

[211] "Words by Randee Friedman and Rabbi Lenore Bohm", in Zones, 36. See Appendix B for music.

focused more on the psychological impact of discrimination, where Zones focused on the external causes of discrimination. Fine noted that "(t)o make the 1979 Haggadah timely, we set forth a new set of plagues and recited them at the Seder."[212] Their ten plagues were: male God image, lack of recognition of Jewish women leaders, biblical stories neglecting women, sexist prayer language, repressive divorce/Jewish law, lack of respect for women's education, sexism in salaries/promotion, devaluation of older Jewish women, "denial by omission" of marginalized women, and the "prison" created by Jewish tradition.[213] The section ended with the demand, "From these plagues, Judaism and women must be freed."[214] After the second cup of wine was lifted (not drunk), the women said, "From these plagues upon our lives, we seek redemption."

The traditional "*Dayeinu*"[215] was explained and sung next, in C major, 4/4 meter, with traditional words and music. However, to illuminate the meaning of "*Dayenu*" for women, a special "*Dayenu*" poem, in the style of the traditional song about women's equality, followed. The poem ended, "When we are treated as complete equals, then will men and women go out from Egypt together! Dayeinu, Dayeinu!"[216] The traditional story of the Exodus then continued, followed by a song from Hallel – a short version which usually is just before the second cup - "*Hodu*".[217] The song, in E flat major, 4/4 meter, included the entire traditional "*Hodu*" text, and ended with a verse in English. The haggadah provided a very tranquil melody with one vocal line. Each verse ended with a repetition of the introductory phrase, "*Hodu L'Adonai.*" This was followed by the well-

[212] Fine, 51.
[213] Zones, 41-42.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid., 43.
[216] Ibid., 45.
[217] "Psalm 118: 1-4, Music by Debbie Friedman", c. 1983, in Ibid., 48. According to *The Journey Continues: Mayan Passover Haggadah in Song*, this was copyrighted in 1981.

known quote from Exodus about Miriam dancing with the women (Exodus 15:20-21); and "*Shiru La-Adonai*".[218] The version they included is a very short, but beautiful, piece, in Hebrew and English. It is in 4/4 time, and is in b flat minor. The key signature should have a g flat to indicate this key, although it is missing in the haggadah. The composer added a line to the end, not in the Hebrew, referring to the sea into which the warriors were cast, as "the sea which gave us birth," making the sea a female life-producing entity. In contrast to the song from Hallel, which praised God in a general way, "*Shiru*" thanked God for a specific event in biblical history. Its very nature, therefore, is more dramatic that "*Hodu*." "*Shiru*" was sung with an open 5th, with a very stark but strong sound, and the register was high. The haggadah then concluded the story, with Moses receiving the Ten Commandments.

In Rachatsa, the washing of hands by everyone, the women said the traditional blessing; as in the other blessings, the gender neutral translation offered what was groundbreaking in its time, and is normative in liberal circles today. The second cup of wine was said to be dedicated "...to the Law, which acts as a basis for our ethical conduct toward one another." Like the fourth cup, it included a dedication (which the first and third cups do not. It was blessed with the traditional blessing. Motsi Matsa, interpreted as the Matsa of Hope for freedom of all Jews, and the Maror were blessed with the traditional Hebrew blessing and English translation. The text "*B'chol dor vador*" was discussed in the haggadah where it was identified from the Mishnah. They stated that it was a "...stumbling block for any woman reciting at a Seder who wishes to fully understand what it means to be "free" as a Jew," "How can a woman recite 'ats'mo'

[218] "Exodus 15:21, Lyrics modified from..., Music by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb", in Ibid., 51. See Appendix B for music.

(himself) and still feel she is an adult decision maker?", and concluded, "Freedom can only be gained by a woman when she herself becomes fully knowledgeable and fully capable of speaking and acting for herself."[219] In this vein, they rewrote the Hebrew. "*B'chol dor vador chayevet isha lir'ot et'ats'ma k'ilu hi yatsa mimits'rayim.* (In all generations it is the duty of a woman to consider herself as if she had come forth from Egypt.)"

The section, Koreich, where the Hillel sandwich is eaten, along with its traditional explanation, included a beautiful poem, "A Woman's Seder," which recalled the links among all Jewish women at this time of year, and ended, "Surely God never meant/For women to be passed over."[220] This was followed by a feminist song, noted as a "waltz," called "Womanside."[221] This syncopated folk song was in C major, in ¾ time. The composer is Jewish but the topic was not specifically Jewish. The song spoke of the "womanside" of both men and women, that it was good to bring it out, hoping the world would be balanced some day. The festive meal, Shul-chan Oreich, followed, with a directive to hide the afikoman and pour the third cup of wine at the end. Then, in Tsafun, there was the hunt for the afikoman, during which the directive was given, "Miriam's cup is mysteriously drained during the search,"[222] and the participants ate the afikoman, with the hope to restore all aspects of their lives to wholeness. The seder included a short version of Birkat Hamazon, with no specific changes for women other than gender neutral language.

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[219] Ibid., 57-58.
[220] Ibid., 60-61; See appendix for full text.
[221] "Copyright 1982, Music and lyrics by Robin Samuels," in Ibid., 63.
[222] Ibid., 64.

The third cup of wine was blessed; and followed by the poem, "It is the Celebration of God's Passover,"[223] celebrating women of the Bible and the losses and triumphs which they experienced. The door was opened for Miriam the Prophetess instead of Elijah. An interesting statement introduced this section. The haggadah said, "We are told that Miriam the prophetess visits every house where a woman's seder is being held." This statement sounded as if this tradition of a woman's seder had existed for a very long time; whereas this was one of the earlier woman's seder traditions. They continued, "As we think of Miriam, we admire her unusual strength and courage, and give honor to a great leader." They added to the meaning of the open door, stating that it was "..a sign that no woman is shut off from other human beings...."[224] Hallel was done including a version of "*Hal'luya*"[225]. It was a well-known version of the tune, in g harmonic minor and a strict ¾ time with no syncopation, although in the haggadah no credits were given for this song; and the text used the end of the psalm, "*Hal'luya hal'lu av'dei Adonai, hal'luya, hal'lu et sheim Adonai. Hal'luya.* Let all that live sing praises to God. *Hal'luya.*" Nir'tsa (accepting God's covenant) included the fourth cup of wine, and a conclusion hoping for freedom for women and for men. "L'shana haba-a biy'rushalayim" was pronounced. Zones did not remember singing it, nor did Fine; however, Fine said, they could have broken into song. The atmosphere was structured with a leader, but if someone chose to sing a song not in the haggadah, and everyone joined in, that was ok too.[226]

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[223] Ibid., 69.
[224] Ibid., 71.
[225] "Psalm 113" in Ibid., 72.
[226] Interviews with Zones and Fine.

When asked whether all songs in the haggadah were sung, Fine replied that the intention was to sing all the songs in the haggadah. Anyone who wanted to bring an additional song could bring a song. There was always room for additions. If someone brought a new song, they would include inserts or they would pass out the words or music during the seder. In fact, there was a final section of songs, none of which was a traditional seder tune. "*Im Tir'tsu*"[227] was sung, in g harmonic minor, as was "*Lo Yisa Goi*"[228] in C major, and "*Hinei Ma Tov*"[229] in d minor. Finally, the seder closed with "For Women Everywhere,"[230] which was not a Jewish song but a song about women's longing for freedom. In C major, the song came from the United Nations Conference on Women, 1985, and it was included in the second edition. Zones loved it and decided to include it. She felt it was appropriate to include, as it was important to look at our tradition as Jewish women and see where we were affected by sexism towards women everywhere. Like Broner, the tone of the end of the seder was one of a "call for action" – here specifically for *tikkun olam*. Unlike Broner, the tone was more hopeful.[231]

The haggadah ended with "Notes to the Leader of the Seder."[232] Most notable about the direction in this section was a paragraph explaining that a women's seder was very different from a traditional seder, in that it was an "extended family gathering, the family of women," and that "For many, this will be their first experience at a Seder led by

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[227] "Music by Debbie Friedman copyright 1983, Lyrics by Theodore Herzl and Naphtali Herz Imber (from Hatikvah)", in Ibid., 74.
[228] "Isaiah 2:4, Folk Tune" in Ibid., 75.
[229] "Adapted from Psalm 133:1, Traditional tune", in Ibid., 76.
[230] "Words and music by the Zimbabwe YWCA for the International Women's Conference, 1985", in Ibid., 78. See Appendix B for music.
[231] Broner ended, just before Miriam is to arrive, with the idea that "...I am still on my journey." Yet just before that more hopeful statement, she writes, "When women plan their lives, their battles and escapes, they do not sleep the night. We here gathered learning on the Night of Vigil will not easily sleep this night." Broner, with Nimrod, 68, 67.
[232] Zones, 80-81.

women."[233] As was mentioned earlier, this haggadah's impact can be seen in its continued use at Jewish Federation seders and in homes around the country.

[233] Ibid., 80.

Chapter 7

The 1990's: An Analysis of *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah*

The History

The beginning of *The Journey Continues*[234] haggadah includes acknowledgments which speak of Ma'yan's 1994 beginning, with over 200 women and a few men at the first seder, noting that by 2002 it draws over 1500 women. More than 100 communities use the haggadah for "feminist seders" throughout North America. The acknowledgment section notes Project Directors in 1994, committees and editors thereafter.

Eve Landau, Director of Ma'yan, noted[235] that the 9-year-old organization, started in July, 1993, began from the generosity and interest of Barbara Dobkin, who wanted to give money to Jewish women needing money for out-of-the-mainstream activities. She was a volunteer at Ma'yan as well. Dobkin's interests included a Women's Leadership Initiative, and a feminist seder for Jewish women of the New York metro area. They recognized that feminist seders, albeit private, were happening in NY, in homes. Landau mentioned, for instance, Esther Broner's seder. Interestingly, Dobkin's daughter, Rachel, was an attendee at the women's seder of Broner's group.

Ma'yan's first seder began less than one year after the organization came into existence. Landau said that the seder is based on a haggadah created in Los Angeles. The American Jewish Congress had a national women's program, and Rabbi Laura

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[234] Tamara Cohen, Editor, *The Journey Continues: The Ma'yan Passover Haggadah* (New York: Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project, a program of the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, 2nd ed 2002, 1st ed. 2000.) *The Journey Continues: Ma'yan Passover Haggadah in Song* (San Diego, CA: Sounds Write Productions, Inc., 2000.) See Appendix C for music.

[235] Eve Landau, interview by author, tape recording, New York City, NY, 21 June 2002.

Geller and Rabbi Sue Levi-Elwell created a haggadah for them. They performed the seder in Orange County, with Debbie Friedman as the musician. For the first Ma'yan seder, they invited Joy Levitt, a Reconstructionist Rabbi, and Cantor Nancy Abramson, a Conservative Cantor, to lead the seder. They knew they had a hit when there were 200 seats and 300 wanted to attend.

According to Landau, their target that year was "people like themselves, middle aged women on a path to reconnect and find spiritual connection." The actual participation ran the gamut - all ages, all backgrounds. The end result was a very diverse group of women – gay, straight, with children, without children, with money, without money, affiliated, unaffiliated, secular, practicing Jews. Today, Ma'yan runs four seders, with 500 people attending each one. Tamara Cohen was the original Program Director of the seder, first with Rabbi Elwell, then by herself. She was in charge of the ritual portions, as well as being the primary editor of the haggadah.

One very important decision, made early on according to Landau, was to hold the Ma'yan seder before Pesach. She noted two major reasons for this decision. One, as a program of the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, the organization had an understanding with synagogues not to tread on their toes in terms of holiday programs/rituals. In other words, they did not want to take away from others. Second, the goal was to fulfill Ma'yan's mission to make change, and if the seder was held beforehand, the women could take the text and ritual and use it at home. In fact, at the seder each year, they have talked to the attendees about taking the haggadah home and trying out different parts, for example, "You might want to include this '*Dayenu*,' or have a Miriam's cup." Landau admitted that it has been "slow and personal and difficult to

model change. On the other hand, it is potentially a huge change if 2000 people take something with them."

In the Introduction, the participants read that

> *The Journey Continues* is a celebration of Judaism at its best – inclusive, accessible, spiritually and intellectually challenging, and fully engaged in societal struggles for justice and meaning. Deeply committed to women's full integration in every aspect of Jewish life and practice, Ma'yan has created this Haggadah as a way of modeling the joy, strength and beauty that can result from Jewish feminists' ongoing relationship and struggle with tradition.[236]

It is interesting to note how *The Journey Continues* passed positive judgment on itself as a "celebration of Judaism at its best." The introduction explained that many songs are written by Debbie Friedman, and that, in explaining what the goal of the music of this haggadah is, stated that "Singing the songs in this Haggadah will transform your seder experience and help participants connect with the text in a new way."[237] Through italics, it indicated where to sing, and noted that people can purchase a tape, CD or songbook as well. Likewise, it is interesting that it indicated that "Seders (in a note the editor explains the choice of the term "seders", not *s'darim*) are not rituals led by experts," and that they are performed at home as well as in "communal settings."[238] Next, the haggadah included a section called, "The Evolution of the Haggadah." First, the haggadah gave "A Brief History" of the Haggadah in general, stating that it was

> ... a collection of biblical excerpts and ritual directions, based upon the order for telling the story prescribed in the second-century *Mishnah*. (with a note 2.The *Mishnah* is the legal codification containing the core of the Oral Law). In the early centuries of the Common Era, *Haggadot* were not yet available as separate documents but were included in festival prayer books or legal works about Passover. It was not until the 7th or 8th century that *Haggadot* were first compiled

[236] Cohen, 5.
[237] Ibid., 6.
[238] Ibid.

> as separate volumes. Since the 15th century, more than 2,700 editions of the Haggadah have been published. [239]
>
> The section continued with
>
> The earliest feminist *Haggadot* were born in the late 1960's and early 1970's, a time when seders were being held at anti-war rallies, during civil rights marches, and in lesbian feminist collectives. Some early feminist *Haggadot* changed the English text to include women and men, while others used the context of the seder to explore women's relationship with all of Jewish tradition.[240]

For instance, Solomon noted that "Just as the 1980s haggadot were able to bring the history of Jewish women to women's seders, 1990s haggadot introduce new Hebrew language and prayer created by feminist liturgists."[241] Another important item, contained in a footnote in *The Journey Continues*, mentioned collections of haggadot at Ma'yan and NCJW, and pointed out the proliferation of women's seders around North America, as well as new haggadot. Interestingly, it discussed the issue of borrowing from haggadot that have already been printed, without offering an opinion as to its propriety – it was just stated as fact.

According to Landau, in March of 1995, Rabbi Sue Levi-Elwell worked with Ma'yan. They decided that they wanted to do a complete service, a total haggadah. They asked Debbie Friedman to do the music, expecting to make a recording, and a small committee was to work on the Haggadah itself. The haggadah they produced was revised every year until 2000, when it was published. There was also a reprint in 2002, in which some elements were "tweaked." The music and the recording are used all over the country, in at least 40 different communities. Organizations or individuals who order

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[239] Ibid., 7.
[240] Ibid., 7. With reference to note 3, "...see Maida E. Solomon, "Claiming Our Questions: Feminism and Judaism in Women's Haggadot" in Joyce Antler, ed. *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England and Brandeis University Press, 1998."
[241] Solomon, 235.

from Ma'yan receive with the haggadah a guide to running a community feminist seder. Additionally, some people order the haggadah as a reference for creating their own women's haggadah.

The History of the Music[242]:

In 2003, the Ma'yan seder will be 10 years old; and it will be the 9th year that Debbie Friedman will participate. Her songs are the primary mode of musical expression in the seder, and although much of the seder music is set, Friedman keeps writing and keeps "evolving." She called the seder, "A happening thing," and says, "As time evolves and the world evolves, I respond to the text."

Friedman was first part of the American Jewish Congress feminist seder in Los Angeles run by Rabbi Laurie Geller and Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell. When Elwell moved to Philadelphia, and became the Rabbinic Director of Ma'yan, she invited Friedman to come to New York for the 1995 seder. Her first task was to write music to the texts they already had. Of her songs, she said, "They brew and in a moment of excitement they just come out." For Friedman's first seder, in 1995, changes happened up until the last minute. The day of the 1995 seder, she and Tamara Cohen, the Program Director of Ma'yan, made changes to "The Journey Song" of which Cohen was co-author. Friedman was "very excited" as this was the beginning of writing together. "Light These Lights" was also introduced at the seder that first night, subject to editing until the last minute. Friedman noted how excited the participants were, how they kept talking.

[242] Debbie Friedman, interview by author, telephone, 4 July 2002.

For the next seder, in 1996, she wrote "The Time is Now" and "*Birkat HaMazon*." Recently Tamara Cohen wrote a new prayer, "Water in the Well," which is on Friedman's new CD (although not in the song book for the Ma'yan haggadah); it was included right after Miriam's cup. One year, on the last night, Friedman performed "The Angel's Blessing," in honor of Barbara Dobkin.

Friedman emphasized how important it is for her to be in tune with the moment in each seder. For instance, the seder in the spring of 2002 was very different, because of Jerusalem and 9/11 – and she especially noted the impact of "*Ha Lachma*" and "*L'shana Haba'a*." In terms of her music, she is somewhat limited by the "script" of The Journey Continues. She would like to do other music, but because the women expect certain versions of the songs, or certain prayers, she keeps the majority the same. She said that in fact, she "...doesn't mind doing her beloved songs." She is "...attached to the people," and Ma'yan wants to do everything they can to get the participants to sing. One way in which Friedman supports the singing, according to Landau[243], is by using a band – keyboard, bass, and percussion. Friedman also noted that a couple of years ago, she had the idea to have Cohen run a teaching group to familiarize participants with the text. Thirty to forty people showed up, but they did not have the session again, due to the relatively small turnout.

One of Friedman's favorite moments was

> ...when I was recording the seder at the recording studio. (I sang) "*Ha Lachma*". I totally broke down and just started sobbing. There is something about that piece. It's just heartwarming, a turning point in the seder. We realize we're all together and will have a good time, but this is the bread of affliction and these are the words of the afflicted. (We need to) look at the world from which we came, (and ask,) so what are we going to do?" Of course, another favorite moment is

[243] Interview with Landau.

> "...when they jump up and "Miriam's Song" comes up and they dance with this abandon, it's just lovely.

It seems that the women who attend the seder become caught up in the power of the music of this song, its lively rhythm, melodies and harmonies, as will be discussed. Additionally, it is an important song for the women, as Miriam is seen as the most important woman in the Passover story. The CD[244] is a wonderful way to understand the performance practice of Friedman at the seder itself. Most of the songs include keyboard, bass and percussion.

Friedman stated that "Our objective, because we have this before Pesach, is to introduce some of these issues into the home, to introduce women's presence into their seder at home, even if they can have a reading or two at home." At the end of the seder, she noted that she usually says something to the participants about their power, "our power." Friedman travels around the country around Pesach time. Last year she did nine seders, and this coming spring she will do six to seven seders, not counting the four Ma'yan seders. Friedman noted that "...a nice thing about this Haggadah (is that it contains) no hostility, no resentment. It's embracing. It's consciousness-raising – it's not militant, (about) resistance." It seems that, in contrast to *The Women's Haggadah* and *The San Diego Women's Haggadah*, the first of which was comfortable expressing unabashed anger at the plight of women, the second of which pointed out disappointment as well as hope, Friedman's view of *The Journey Continues* is that this third haggadah perhaps moves forward, to a place of solutions which are more harmonious.

According to Landau, Friedman and her music have been a phenomenal success. Landau knew that there are many reasons women attend this seder, and acknowledged

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[244] Debbie Friedman, *The Journey Continues: Ma'yan Passover Haggadah in Song*, Sounds Write Productions, Inc. SWP 614, 1997, compact disc.

that Friedman is a draw. The music varies, although infrequently. Landau noted that the last night of the four seders Friedman often does an extra song. In other communities, women have requested Friedman to lead, yet Ma'yan encourages them to use other musicians, for instance, local clergy such as women cantors in their area. She said that most use Friedman's music, but other music can be inserted into the seder. At first, Landau said, some of the attendees felt the music was "too feminist" but it grew on them over time, according to a survey done by Ma'yan. She said that Ma'yan has a great working relationship with Debbie Friedman.

The Seder

This haggadah, which has been published in paperback, was designed with beautiful photos and layout; and the inside back cover explained that even the colors chosen have significant meaning related to the Passover story. There were short "Commentary" sections throughout the haggadah, giving not only historical background but social commentary on the role of women both past and present. There were headings for "Readers" and "All" to indicate who reads and when. This was in contrast to both *The Women's Haggadah* and *The San Diego Women's Haggadah*, in which the readers were unidentified (although in the second, some general directives are given for the ritual acts involved, such as breaking the matza). The texts of songs in *The Journey Continues* were printed in *italics*. Boxes saying "Do Something!" occurred throughout, in which social action suggestions were made. Different sections of the seder are color coded; directions for performing the ritual of a certain section were printed in the primary color of the section, i.e. pink or orange. The introduction to the haggadah was in blue,

introductory readings were in green. "Kadeish" through "maggid" were in pink. "Rachtzah" through "nirtzah" were printed in orange, and the appendices were in the blue of the introduction. In the following discussion, only those sections that are fairly distinguishable from a traditional haggadah will be discussed.

In the section, "How is This Haggadah Different?" there was a detailed discussion of the language used in the haggadah. For instance, "...the use of feminine God-language in this Haggadah is intended to offer a balance, enabling us to name God as truly beyond gender and at the same time, as fully encompassing both femaleness and maleness" and the editors pointed out that "there is no option for gender-neutral language in Hebrew."[245] They recognized that this would be new for some participants and possibly uncomfortable. Therefore choices were given for blessings, two in Hebrew and one in English. The first was "innovative," the second was traditional, and the third was a "literal translation of the innovative blessing."[246] Information about specific word choices was given, for instance, *"melech ha'olam" – "king of the world"* was replaced with *"ruach ha'olam"* - "spirit of the world," in which *ruach* is feminine.[247] The haggadah self-identified as an opportunity for women to relate women's experience, for example, telling the story of Shifra and Puah.

Likewise, with "*Dayenu*", the first stanza dealt with contemporary women's issues, and was intended to be read by mother and daughter. When asked how the haggadah was feminist overall, Landau replied that all six to eight women of the current Ma'yan staff would have a different answer as to how it is 'feminist.' They might refer to a gendered lens, a woman's perspective, a consciousness that women did play role in

[245] Cohen, 8.
[246] Ibid., 8-9.
[247] Ibid., 9.

the story of the Exodus, and from biblical times to now. She pointed out the contrast of the rabbis of B'nai B'rak in the traditional haggadah to the women who took the Torah to the Wall for Rosh Chodesh for the first time. One might speculate that this contrast is appropriate because both the rabbis of B'nai B'rak and the Women at the Wall were groups oppressed because of their continuation of Jewish study despite persecution.

According to Landau, the most heated discussion they had was, do we include men in the seder? One of the main issues focused on space limitations: if a man came he took a woman's seat. Another issue focused on group dynamics: the dynamics of an all-women's group would be altered by men. However, they concluded, if the mission was to change community, and have women include parts of the seder in their home, they asked, how do we exclude men? The first seder was the only time men were invited; from then on, only women were invited, but they would not turn a man away who asked to come. That first year, only 5 men – husbands and fathers - came. Since then, more men come each year, but a very small number, compared to the women. Often, those who do come do so as part of a student group. Landau said Ma'yan acknowledged links they have with women who created other feminist seders. The week Bella Abzug died, Esther Broner did a memorial section at the Ma'yan seder. However, many of the other leading Jewish feminists, including Letty Cottin Pogrebin and Arelene Agus, have participated at one time or another in the Ma'yan seder. Landau said they give them a great deal of credit for being the inspiration for women's seders, for being pioneers.

As the haggadah continued, directives were given for those who purchase the haggadah, and are concerned about having a seder on a non-seder night. Additionally, they explained that the Four Cups are "...used to honor Jewish women leaders, teachers,

and activists throughout history who worked to free others."[248] Women were instructed that they can choose their own women role models or pick from among the women profiled at the back of the haggadah. Suggestions were also given for how to divide readings, and for Tzedakah and Tikkun Olam. They explained that suggestions for both were included throughout the book, including the Do Something! social action notes.

In the "Planning Your Seder" section, after talking about the Seder Table, Matzah, and the Seder Plate, the option of placing an orange on the seder plate was discussed. Since there were several explanations circulating around the country about this new tradition, the haggadah explained the truth behind it:

> In the early 1980's, while speaking at Oberlin College Hillel, Jewish feminist scholar Dr. Susannah Heschel was introduced to an early feminist Haggadah that suggested adding a crust of bread on the Seder plate, as a sign of solidarity with Jewish lesbians (there's as much room for a lesbian in Judaism as there is for a crust of bread on the Seder plate). Heschel felt that to put bread on the *seder* plate would be to accept that Jewish lesbians and gay men violate Judaism like *chametz* violates Passover. So, at her next seder, she chose an orange as a symbol of inclusion of gays and lesbians and others who are marginalized within the Jewish community. When lecturing, Heschel often mentioned her custom as one of many new feminist rituals that have been developed in the last twenty years. She writes, 'Somehow, though, the typical patriarchal maneuver occurred: My idea of an orange and my intention of affirming lesbians and gay men were transformed. Now the story circulates that a MAN said to me that a woman belongs on the *bimah* as an orange on the seder plate. A woman's words are attributed to a man, and the affirmation of lesbians and gay men is simply erased. Isn't that precisely what's happened over the centuries to women's ideas?[249]

According to Landau, Ma'yan had <u>always</u> had an orange on the seder plate, reflecting the JCC's inclusive and pluralistic values.

A discussion of Elijah's Cup and Miriam's Cup was next. The haggadah mentioned that Miriam's Cup, a cup filled with water, was a new ritual item.

> It serves as a symbol of Miriam's Well, the source of water for the Israelites in the desert....The waters of this well were said to be healing and sustaining waters. Thus Miriam's Cup can be seen as a symbol of all that sustains us through our journeys, while Elijah's Cup is seen as a symbol of a future Messianic time.[250]

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[248] Ibid, 10.
[249] Ibid., from Susannah Heschel, "The Definitive Orange on the Seder Plate Story," E-mail, 5 Apr. 2001.
[250] Ibid, 15.

Likewise, it was suggested that tambourines be included on every table as Miriam and the women used them at the Red Sea when dancing in celebration of escaping the Egyptians; as well as a Tzedakah Box, to collect money for women's organizations thus "bridging our liturgy with action."[251] The reader was directed to do "B'Dikat Chameitz: Searching for Leaven," and was given the blessings.

Finally, the reader arrived at "haseder: the seder." The seder began with an innovation, "Invocation for Women's Seders." The reading began, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" and included many of the trials of women.

> Why is this night different from all other nights?
> On this night, we gather together to prepare for Passover, outside of our kitchens, in a way our foremothers could have never imagined.
> On this night we join as a community to rid ourselves of a different kind of *chameitz*.
> What do we cleanse ourselves of tonight?
> The exhaustion of cleaning and cooking.
> The echo of exclusionary language.
> The weight of history.
> The fear of women's voices.
> The silencing of women's stories.
> The violence done to women's bodies.
> The pressure to conform to one image of who Jewish women are supposed to be.
> The lingering belief that this tradition doesn't belong to women.[252]

Though no attribution was made, elements of this reading hearkened back to "The Song of Searching"[253] in *The Women's Haggadah*. Another innovation was a text which referred to God as "Herself." The first song of the haggadah, "*B'ruchot Habaot*"[254] was a variation of the wedding invocation; for which the English in the song did not provide an exact translation, and it spoke of the *"Sh'china"*. The appropriate inclusion of "*B'ruchot*

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[251] Ibid., 16.
[252] Ibid., 20.
[253] See Appendix.
[254] Songbook, "Music and lyrics by Debbie Friedman", 5.

Habaot" indicated the importance of the Ma'yan seder as a teaching seder. In order to build the group into a cohesive unit, they recognized the importance of welcoming all the women into the Ma'yan seder "home." The English portion of the song asked for a blessing for all the women. In the commentary section, the writers noted the feminist use of this traditional term for the Divine Presence. Again, following the line of reasoning that the seder was meant to teach, this was a very unusual addition to a haggadah. Yet it seemed perfectly natural in a feminist setting, where inclusion was of utmost importance. The music was to be performed "slowly"[255], in D Major, with a 4/4 meter. However, the song had a serious tone, due to the generous use of guitar chords in minor. The second piece, "The Time is Now", or "*Makom Kadosh*"[256], was in English, for example, "We'll make this space a holy place." It was not specific to women, but mentioned the "*Sh'chinah*". It was appropriately placed after "*B'ruchot Habaot*" as it too spoke of the space into which these women were invited openly and with joy. In C Major and in 4/4 meter, the song was nonetheless marked to be sung "freely."[257] The melody was repeated, and was uplifting in its message of goodwill for the seder participants, as well as in its simple, major tonality.

In the next section, "Hadlakat Neirot: Kindling the Lights," the haggadah began with a song, "Light These Lights"[258]. The text was very interesting, as it was "...based on a *techine* for lighting candles...," but was not specific to Pesach. An uplifting song as a solo, as indicated in the songbook, it was also beautiful on the recording with voices in

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[255] In this chapter, tempo markings are as noted in The Journey Continues: Ma'yan Passover Haggadah in Song; and further references are noted as "Songbook".
[256] Songbook, "Lyrics by Debbie Friedman and Tamara Ruth Cohen; Music by Debbie Friedman. Note that the first title is from the songbook version; the second from the haggadah.
[257] Ibid., 6.
[258] Ibid.,"Music and lyrics by Debbie Friedman", 9.

harmony as well as echoing the solo line. The melody was repeated three times in the recording. It flowed well from the piece before, "The Time is Now", in style – and was recorded in quick succession on the CD[259]. In the Commentary, the reader was informed that

> *Techines* are Yiddish prayers, some of which were written by women between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in Eastern and Central Europe. *Techines* (from the Hebrew word *le'hit'chanen*, to supplicate) were used by women for prayer at home or in the synagogue. They often refer to specific women's commandments like candlelighting and contain references to the Matriarchs and other biblical women.[260]

After the blessing, there was a reading which was a beautiful adaptation of a Sephardic woman's *techine*, honoring "...the mothers of all the children of Israel, including Bilhah and Zilpah, the maidservants of Rachel and Leah."[261] As one of the best known women's prayer forms, this was an appropriate vehicle to honor important Jewish women throughout the ages.

Following this was "Kos Miriam: Miriam's Cup." The invocation for this ritual was "*Zot kos miryam, kos mayim chayyim. Zeicher litzi'at mitzrayim*. This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt."[262] The use of language which sounded like (but was not) ancient formula had precedent in the other two haggadot analyzed in this thesis. The text included a repetition of the question, "Where does the journey begin?/ Where will we go?" The text spoke of the issues women face, for instance, "Stepping into the unknown/ Hear the echoes of Miriam's song/ We awaken, retelling our stories/ As we go along on our journey."[263] The central

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[259] Friedman.
[260] Cohen, 25.
[261] Ibid., 28.
[262] Ibid., 30.
[263] Cohen, 31.

part of the Ma'yan seder began where *The Women's Haggadah* ended, with the participants drinking the fourth cup of wine and saying, "'I have been in Egypt. I have been in the desert. I have learned our history. And I am still on my journey.'"[264]

Shortly thereafter, Miriam the Prophet was welcomed into the room. It seems that the idea of "the journey" that women face, not only a journey through the seder but through life, has been an enduring one. The song, in CM, was inspiring, with a "Jazz rock quarter at 200", in ¾ meter, giving it a sense of motion and purpose. Interestingly, the lowered 7th scale degree gave a sense of the mode *Adonai Malach* by default, although this was not a deliberate move. While the melody thus pulled the listener to F, it was really in C, with a scalar melody. This was followed by a reading reflecting on this song, in which the journey was discussed in terms of the key female characters of the Exodus story – Shifra and Pu'ah, the midwives who defied Pharaoh, Miriam, and Yocheved. This section ended with "*Kadeish Urchatz*",[265] the order of the seder, sung to the tune of the Journey Song, in its traditional order.

The next portion of the seder, "kadeish: make holy," emphasized the prescription to assign the four cups to four outstanding women, not only in the world at large but "...who in their own eras have acted as God's partners in fulfilling the divine promises of redemption and freedom."[266] This hearkened back to *The San Diego Women's Haggadah*, in which women from four different eras were honored for their accomplishments. For "Kos Rishon: First Cup," they explained the link to Exodus 6:6, God's promise to free the Israelites, but additionally, they chose to "...honor Jewish women throughout history who worked to bring Jews out from under the burdens of

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[264] Broner, with Nimrod, 68-69.
[265] Songbook, "Music by Debbie Friedman, Lyrics from Haggadah", 13.
[266] Cohen, 35.

poverty, oppression, and anti-semitism in the many Egypts where Jews have lived." This was followed by list of women they choose to honor at this point in the seder. As was mentioned above, the beginning of the haggadah suggested each community choose women to honor. There was also a suggestion to go around and ask women to share other names to honor. This was followed by the blessing over the wine.

The theme for "urchatz: wash," the first handwashing, was the story of Miriam at the Nile, watching to make sure that the basket with Moses in it is rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. The emphasis was that "From wine, we step back to water."[267] When the group read "karpas: fruit of the earth," before the blessing, the explanation for dipping in salt water was out of the mainstream. The eloquent reading explained that it was "(t)o feel the sting of society's refusal to celebrate the blossoming of women's bodies and the full range of our capacity for love./And why should salt water be touched by *karpas*?/To remind us that tears stop. Spring comes. And with it the potential for change."[268]

When the reader arrived at "yachatz: breaking the middle matzah," the reading mentioned the perfection of a loaf of challah and how we are often missing key "ingredients" of our lives. Likewise, it praised "our cracked surfaces and sharp edges"(matzah)[269]. This was followed by the song "*Mi Shebeirach*",[270] the version of the healing prayer done in many temples in the Torah service; it was not Pesach specific. Composed in B flat Major, in 4/4 meter, it was meant to be sung "slowly, with

[267] Ibid., 44.
[268] Ibid., 47.
[269] Ibid., 49.
[270] Songbook, "Music by Debbie Friedman, Lyrics by Debbie Friedman and Drorah Setel", 14.

expression."[271] It seems that the references within the earlier writing about what may be missing from our lives, and what is not perfect, lend themselves to a song of healing.

The Journey Continues introduced "maggid: telling the story" with a song, "*Ha Lachma*"[272]. It was noted that the text was the traditional Aramaic, with the suggestion to use "imhatana" for "avahatana." The music was attributed to Emanuel Pugatchev, and was a tune used for traditional seders as well. Written in e flat harmonic minor, it was meant to begin slowly, then increase in tempo. The difference for this version was in performance, with the use of instruments during the seder. In the reading which followed, lines from "*Ha Lachma*" were re-read, interspersed with commentary on the enduring social issue of hunger worldwide. Interestingly, the "Arba Kushiyot: The Four Questions" were mentioned as a "rite of passage" for all participants; but there was no woman-specific interpretation. When the "all youngest children, regardless of age"[273] sang"*Ma Nishtana*", the text was traditional as was the music, a "Traditional Israeli folk melody, Lyrics from Haggadah"[274]. What was more unusual was the addition of accompaniment. It was written in c harmonic minor, in 4/4 meter, marked "moderately".[275]

The first answer to why this night is different, "Avadim Hayinu: We Were Slaves" was elucidated by a fictional dialogue between Shifra and Puah, which explained how their role in saving baby boys was instrumental in the Israelites' departure from Egypt. The segment drew to a close, stating, "And all who elaborate the story of the

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[271] Ibid., 14.
[272] Ibid., "Music by Emanuel Pugatchev, Lyrics from Haggadah", 16.
[273] Cohen, 54.
[274] Songbook, 18.
[275] Ibid.

Exodus deserve praise. And the telling that includes the actions of women is exalted."[276] This section ended with the song "*Avadim Hayinu*[277]". The text for this song interspersed the traditional text with the feminine. It added in "*u'vnot chorin*" (line 2) and repeated the second half of the song with "*Ata b'not chorin*" The music was attributed to S. Postolsky, and was a tune most often heard at Ashkenazi seders. It was written in c minor, in 4/4 meter. The text repeated three times, faster each time. Again, what was unusual was the accompaniment, but also the variation in gendered text.

In "Ma'aseh: A Tale," instead of telling the story of the rabbis at B'nei B'rak as in a traditional haggadah, participants read the story of the Women of the Wall who prayed and read Torah at the *Kotel* in Jerusalem. As was mentioned earlier, this was an example of modern female Jewish resistance in the manner of the rabbis at B'nei B'rak. This was followed by the song "*Kadish D'Rabbanan*"[278], whose text was a prayer for study, and "for peace and loving kindness." Likewise, the Women at the Wall were both teachers and students of Torah. Again, the song was not Pesach specific. The tempo began slowly, "andante"[279], and increased as the ending section was repeated over and over. The music was in 4/4 meter, and was clearly anchored in c minor. The sparing use of A natural was a chromaticism common in Western music, harmonized with an F major chord.

The "Arba'a Banot: The Four Daughters" were described in a way which does not necessarily reflect the usual characteristics ascribed to the four sons. The merits

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[276] Cohen, 57.
[277] Songbook, "Music by S. Potolsky, Lyrics from Haggadah", 20.
[278] Ibid., "Music and lyrics by Debbie Friedman", 23.
[279] Ibid.

described reflected the need for women to become more visible, both in the past and the present.

> The daughter in search of a usable past. *Ma hi omeret?* What does she say?" (the text explains why the women coming out of Egypt weren't counted.)...it is up to her to fill the empty spaces of our holy text. And the daughter who wants to erase her difference...'And why are these women's issues so important to you?'...since she forgot struggles of women ancestors, tell her stories. And the daughter who does not know that she has a place at the table....teach her...the Haggadah is an extended conversation about liberation, and tell her that her insights and questions are also text. And the daughter who asks no questions? You must say to her, 'Your questions, when they come, will liberate you from Egypt. This is how it is and has always been with your mothers and grandmothers. From the moment Yocheved, Miriam and the midwives questioned Pharaoh's edict until today, every question we ask helps us leave Egypt farther behind.[280]

Thus women were encouraged to embrace the power of questions. This section ended with the song, "*L'chi Lach*"[281], which was appropriate to going forward, farther away from Egypt at every moment. The Torah text was used in many settings, and was not Pesach specific. It spoke of God's promise to Israel. On the CD[282], this was one of the songs that had an extended instrumental introduction. Instructed to sing this song in a "gentle" manner, "slowly,"[283] the recording included harmony from about halfway through the song to the end. The rhythm had some syncopation as well. The pace was slow enough to encourage participation, and the gentle nature also served to make participants comfortable singing.

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[280] Cohen, 61-62.
[281] Songbook, "Music by Debbie Friedman, Lyrics by Debbie Friedman and Savina Teubal, Based on Genesis 12: 1-2", 21. Note that in the songbook and on the CD, the order of "*Kaddish d'Rabbanan*" and "*L'chi Lach*" are reversed.
[282] Friedman.
[283] Ibid.

A sub-section, "Mit'chila: At First," included a reading, a poem, which "...offers a vision of the lives of the Matriarchs and their journey to and eventually out of Egypt."[284]

The message was emphasized with "V'hi she'amda - It is She Who Sustained." The text pointed out that

> (i)n a traditional Haggadah, the *V'hi She'amda* emphasizes the fact that the Egyptians were not the only ones in Jewish history who oppressed the Jewish people. According to a commentary by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Kalischer (1795-1874), the first word of the Hebrew, V'hi, "And She" (which literally refers to the promise of the covenant which has stood the test of time), can be read as a reference to the *Sh'chinah*, the feminine aspect of God.[285]

After the Hebrew text, an English version followed, talking about how the Shechina did many socially progressive things for all Jews and for women, for example, "She strengthened the American immigrant women who organized kosher meat boycotts, labor unions, settlement houses, and aid societies."[286]

"Tz'i ul'medi Go forth and study," according to this haggadah a traditional commentary on Deuteronomy by the rabbis, has been feminized here, thus commanding women to "go and study." There was also a commentary on oppression. This was followed by "Eser Makot: The Ten Plagues," in which the plagues remained the same as in a traditional haggadah. This was followed by a midrash about the parting of the sea and Miriam's dance following. An additional prayer was included, "*Yah Sh'chinah*, (God's female presence), soften our hearts and the hearts of our enemies. Help us to dream new paths to freedom." This was in direct contrast to the concept of "shfoch dam", spilling the blood of one's enemies, as found in traditional haggadot at this point in

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[284] Cohen, 64.
[285] Ibid., 65.
[286] Ibid., 66.

the seder. This was followed by "*Miriam's Song*"[287], which told the story, in chorus/verse structure, of the parting of the sea and Miriam's dance. This upbeat song was indicated to be sung in a "Rhythmic, energetic"[288] fashion. One particularly noticeable characteristic of this song was its syncopated rhythm in the chorus; and the even rhythm of the verses. Perhaps this was to distinguish the telling of the story (the verses) from the chorus, where the women "dance." At the end of both musical sections, the meter changed from 4/4 to 6/4 time. The song, in B flat major, was not scalar, and because of the lowered 6th, could seem to be pulled toward the subdominant, E flat. However, the harmonies provided by the guitar chords kept it firmly in B flat. Participants might have found the song a bit difficult to pick up at first, because of its fast pace and syncopation. However, the key was accessible and uplifting in B flat major, and anyone listening would be pulled into the mood created by not only the music but the dancing. According to Landau, there were tambourines on every table at the Ma'yan seder, and during Miriam's song there was a lively dance around the room.

In "Dayeinu: Enough," (which in and of itself seems to indicate both a positive and negative interpretation – i.e. gratefulness as well as a sense of being "fed up") the haggadah provided three of the most well known verses of traditional "*Dayeinu*"[289]. (*hotzi'anu mimitzrayim, natan lanu et hashabat, and natan lanu et hatorah.*) The music was a traditional rendition, a 4/4 meter folk melody in B flat major as was "Miriam's Song." "*Dayeinu*" was followed by a reading which speaks of the traditional positive message of this song, along with a warning of all the work still to do in "repairing the

[287] Songbook, "Music and lyrics by Debbie Friedman, Based on Exodus 15: 20-21", 25.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid., "Traditional folk melody, Lyrics from Haggadah", 27.

world."[290] Next the participants read a list of all the mitzvoth they could perform, and as was indicated by the title of the section, were told that yet "It will and it will not be enough"[291]

As the reader arrived at "Pesach, Matzah, Maror," there was a reading which was a traditional rendition of what Rabban Gamliel said about fulfilling these three obligations. The song "*B'chol Dor*"[292] was introduced with the following statement: "The text of this song closely follows the text in a traditional Haggadah, but it has been reformulated in the plural in order to explicitly include both males and females." The music was in d minor, with a 4/4 meter. The explicit direction was given to "Repeat song several times, each time faster."[293] It sounded a great deal like an Israeli folk dance. This song was followed by a suggestion to help gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities.

In "L'fichach: Therefore," a traditional text praising God, the Hebrew remained male (except for the addition of "imoteinu) while the English translation was gender neutral. This was followed by "Hallel: Giving Praise," a short Hallel, as only one psalm was included here, *B'tzeit Yisrael (Psalm 114)*; and it was the traditional text, celebrating the Exodus. This was followed by an explanation of what Hallel was. This was a "traditional melody, lyrics from Psalm 114: 1-4."[294] It was in e flat major, 4/4 meter, and the accompaniment was an "um-pah" type, emphasizing the joy in the song. Interestingly, in the songbook only (not the haggadah) a traditional version of the song

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[290] Cohen, 72.
[291] Ibid., 73
[292] Songbook, "Lyrics from Haggadah, Music by Debbie Friedman", 28.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Songbook, 29.

"*Ma L'Cha Hayam*" was included as well, in c harmonic minor, and "*B'tzeit Yisrael*" transitioned into it on the CD[295].

The reading accompanying "Kos Sheni: Second Cup," described the traditional promise of deliverance. However, in the manner of the first cup, the second cup was again designated to honor women, this time women who empowered other women to "deliver themselves from bondage."[296] Again, before the blessing, four specific women to honor were listed, but it was suggested that participants dedicate the cup to women they wish to honor personally and to tell their stories. Next, for "rachtzah: second hand-washing," the traditional blessing was said. "Motzi matzah: matzah blessings" was also traditional. Along with the traditional blessing for "maror: bitter herbs," there was a reading which spoke of the bitterness of horseradish and the bitterness that life can bring, for example, "This was the way to experience bitterness: hold the hand of a friend in pain, listen to her story, remember Naomi who renamed herself Mara, bitterness, because she "went away full but God brought [her] back empty" ("RUTH 1:21")[297] As the participants continued through the reading, it becomes clear that the purpose was to make the women aware of bitterness in their own lives so that they, too, could understand the bitterness of the slavery spoken of in the haggadah.

As the seder drew near to the meal, the participants do "Korech: hillel sandwich" and then "shulchan oreich: the festive meal." As was the custom in many circles, they began with a hard boiled egg. After the meal, for "tzafun: retrieving the hidden matzah," it was suggested that children stealing the afikomen represented an early form of resistance, in which they learned about freedom. They learned to hold the afikomen

[295] Friedman.
[296] Cohen, 78.
[297] Ibid., 86.

"Just long enough to learn to ask for what they want."[298] Following this was "bareich: blessing after the meal." This was not the complete "*Birkat Hamazon*", however. (A full "*Birkat Hamazon*" was offered in Appendix One of the haggadah.) Following the blessing, the women sang "*Shir Hama'a lot*"[299], with traditional text. The indication was to sing this liturgical piece "joyfully"[300] Written in cut time, it was in the joyful key of D major, and utilized syncopation as well as a return to the chorus four times. There was a reading foreshadowing a song immediately following, both entitled "*Birkat Hamazon.*" The reading incorporated some of the traditional text, but was an English praise of God (using the word God), in verse form. In "*Birkat Hamazon*" Friedman had mostly used English to represent in lengthy form this prayer of thanksgiving. Written in 4/4 meter, it was in c minor, and in the same manner as "*Kadish D'Rabanan*" seemed to be pulled toward the subdominant (enhanced by many f minor chords in the accompaniment) but was truly c minor. The effect was that sometimes there was a sense of a key shift, which enhanced the sense of movement of the lengthy prayer.

As with the first two cups, in "Kos Shlishi: third cup," women were honored as before, with this variation: "...we recall now Jewish women who used their power and strength to make real this Divine promise of redemption." Following this, the seder came to the traditional "Kos Eliyahu: Elijah's Cup. In order to introduce the traditional singing of "*Eliyahu Hanavi*", using the traditional text and tune, the haggadah explained the tradition behind welcoming Elijah the Prophet to bring a Messianic age; "...and our longings for peace, for healing of earth, body and spirit, still bring the hope-drenched melody of *Eliyahu Hanavi* to our lips." However, the text went on to add a caveat:

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[298] Ibid., 93.
[299] Songbook, "Music by Debbie Friedman, Lyrics from Psalm 126: 1-6", 34.
[300] Ibid.

"With that melody we bridge our hopes for the future with our commitment to the present. We thus invite to our seders not just Elijah, harbinger of the Messiah, but Miriam, inspiration for the journey."[301] This statement, therefore, provided the rationale for emphasizing Miriam in a haggadah called *The Journey Continues.* The inspiring text of "*Miriam Han'vi'a*", sung to the same tune as "*Eliyahu Hanavi*" in c harmonic minor, was the following:

> *Mir'yam han'vi'a oz v'zimra b'yada, Mir'yam, tirkod itanu, l'hagdil zimrat olam. Mir'yam, tirkod itanu, l'takein et ha'olam. Bim'heira v'yameinu, hi t'vi'einu. El mei ha'y'shua. El mei ha'y'shua.* Miriam the Prophet, strength and song are in her hand. Miriam will dance with us to strengthen the world's song. Miriam will dance with us to heal the world. Soon, and in our time, she will lead us to the waters of salvation.[302]

Next the women were led in a longer "hallel: songs of praise" that was included earlier in abbreviated form. The first song, *Min Hameitzar*, used traditional text. The music was by Baruch Chait, the lyrics from Psalm 118:5.[303] Like many preceding songs, it began slowly and increased in tempo. It also had the "um-pah" accompaniment, and was in c minor, in 2/4 meter. The atmosphere created by Friedman's use of this type of accompaniment was festive, in a manner reminiscent of klezmer music. The next song in the songbook (not the haggadah) was "*Hodu*"[304], also using liturgical text. The music was to be performed "slowly, with intention."[305] The piece, in E flat major, 4/4 meter, was a beautiful melody that split into two voices in the second verse, and three voices when the chorus returned. An especially unusual song musically was "Hal'luyah –

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[301] Ibid., 101.
[302] Ibid., 102. According to the Sources page, "Conceived by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner and Rabbi Arthur Waskow; Hebrew by Leila Gal Berner. This song originally appeared in *Or Chadash*, a Shabbat morning siddur published by P'nai Or Religious Fellowship. Used by permission of author," 138. See Appendix C for full text.
[303] Songbook, 48.
[304] Ibid., "Music by Debbie Friedman, Lyrics based on Psalm 118: 1-2", 46.
[305] Ibid.

Psalm 150" or "An Additional Song of Praise (Psalm 150).[306]" In ¾ time, the piece shifted throughout from a sense of C major to c minor. In the verses, the melody felt like it was in d, then f, then g. The e flat in the beginning gradually changed to e natural and a sense of C major. Interestingly, this was followed by "Sfirat Ha Omer: Counting the Omer." The commentary taught why Jews count the omer (traditionally, the first harvest produce) during Pesach. However, it was careful to point out that it was done only on the second seder night or following. Thus it was clearly shown that if this seder was done as Ma'yan does it, before Pesach, the women would not count the omer.

"Kos R'vi'i: Fourth Cup," was the final opportunity to honor special women. The reading explained

> The fourth cup we drink tonight was linked to the verse from Exodus which tells of God's promise to create a special relationship with Israel. We therefore honor women who, by teaching Jewish texts and promoting Jewish education, have brought individual Jews into a relationship with God and the Jewish people.[307]

As the haggadah reached "nirtzah: concluding the seder," the question was asked, "How does the journey to freedom continue?" The responses to this profound question spoke of risks and stumbling blocks. The desperation of some was heard in the statement, "Some cry out to Egypt, longing to return to the known." Then the question was asked again. This time, the response was positive: about looking ahead, planning, and hoping, as they wrote, "For ours is a holy journey. We falter, but will not turn back. Embracing the challenge of tradition, we clear new paths to the future. Ours is a holy journey, a journey towards new song."[308]

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[306] Ibid., "Music by Debbie Friedman, Lyrics from Psalm 150", 50.
[307] Cohen, 108.
[308] Ibid., 110.

The hopes for "Yerushalayim: Jerusalem" were pronounced next, and all responded, "A year of equality and inclusiveness. A year of wholeness for our people. A year of peace for all the peoples who sing to you, Jerusalem."[309] Everyone sang "*L'shanah Haba'ah*". This version was by Moshe Nathanson, in C *Ahava Raba,* with lyrics from the end of traditional haggadot. According to the haggadah, the next song was *T'fillat Haderech*, although it was not included in the songbook. During this song, the ritual was to pass around Miriam's cup and everyone sipped the water in the cup. Although not specified, it seems that this ritual was another way of creating a circle of community among the women who have shared this experience, sipping the water representing the healing waters of Miriam's well[310]. The text was original, by Debbie Friedman, blessing everyone as they go their separate ways, and was not only heard at Pesach but other occasions throughout the year.

As was mentioned earlier, "B'irkat[sic] Hamazon: Grace After Meals", which was complete, yet contemporary, alternating "feminine and masculine God language," was offered in "Appendix I: Additional Blessings and Songs." Another offering was the song *Orah Hi.*[311] The song mirrored the traditional Pesach song, *Adir Hu*, an "acrostic poem" praising God's many attributes. *Orah Hi*, in contrast,

> ...is written in the feminine. Like 'Adir Hu,' it is a Hebrew acrostic, and it can be sung to the traditional melody. Almost all of its images come from the Bible, from rabbinic literature, and from Jewish mysticism. Yet this song does not dwell on God's power and distance. Rather, it emphasizes God's sharing in human joys and griefs, and God's ability to renew life. These are traits which many modern Jewish women have chosen to ascribe to the Divine as they seed their own ways of understanding God. In this version, we can imagine God's house as the

[309] Ibid., 111.
[310] Ibid., 15.
[311] Text by Rabbi Jill Hammer. See Appendix C for full text.

> Temple, or as our entire world infused with the *Shekhina*, the indwelling Presence.[312]

The song *Orah Hi* was presented with both an English and Hebrew text, English first in this case. The song was sung to the traditional tune of *Adir Hu*.

In "Appendix II: Biographies for Four Cups," a list was provided of examples of women who were honored for each cup at Ma'yan seders. It gave the directive to choose from these or to choose one's own four when doing this seder.[313] This was followed by a list of the "Do Something!" resources, providing contact information for the social action projects suggested throughout the haggadah. A glossary of about seventy terms, all Hebrew in transliteration, gave a brief definition (1 sentence) of each term, either a literal definition or an explanation of a concept, ranging from defining simpler terms such as "bat" to a short explanation of the Mishnah. Finally, the haggadah included a listing of "Sources and Credits," and "Colophon" (layout detail) round off the contents of the haggadah. A final item of interest was contained within the Colophon, on the inside back cover. It reads:

> The colors used in the different sections of the book are PMS 321 (blue), the color of water & a symbol of the journey across the Red Sea, the living waters of Miriam and the identifying color of Ma'yan; PMS 361 (green), denoting a major theme of Passover – spring – and its promise of renewal; PMS 220 (red), the color of wine, a symbol of the unnecessary blood lost in the struggle for freedom; PMS 166 (burnt orange), celebrating the expansiveness of the desert and the ongoing journey of life.[314]

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[312] Ibid., 122.

[313] The suggested names are: Bella Abzug, Asenath bat Samuel Barazani, Rachel Auerbach, Glikl of Hameln, Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, Rachel Kagan, Rebecca Gratz, Nehama Liebowitz, Emma Lazarus, Doña Gracia Nasi, Rachel Luzzatto Morpurgo, Bertha Pappenheim, Pauline M. Newman, Rose Schneiderman, Justine Wise Polier, Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, Manya Wilbushewitch Shochat, Lillian D. Wald, Henrietta Szold

[314] Cohen, inside back cover.

Thus, from beginning to end, *The Journey Continues* was replete with detailed description and well thought-out structure and content. The effect seems to be a widespread popularity that continues today.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Over the last three or so decades, the women's seder has evolved from a grassroots production of women in smaller circles to larger, widespread networked seders such as *The Journey Continues* which have reached women across the country and continue to be used today. Currently both forms still exist and are used. Elements of all the haggadot have been incorporated into seders around the country, including family seders as well. The progression of the three haggadot studied can be seen as serving functions relative to their time of creation. Of the three, the one from the first decade, the 1970's, *The Women's Haggadah*, is the most forthright in its anger at patriarchal subjugation of women. It is also the only one not created by a large committee of women. However, as Judith Plaskow states, in reference to Broner's seder:

> There are many Jewish feminists who feel that women can take on positions of authority, create new liturgy, and needs in the present without dredging around in sources that can only cause us pain or lifting up little sparks of light as if they were sufficient to guide us. As the simple daughter asks in Esther Broner's Passover Seder, "If Miriam lies buried in sand,/ why must we dig up those bones?" On this view, we need to acknowledge and accept the patriarchal character of the Jewish past and Jewish sources and then get on with issues of contemporary change. Studying our past can only cause us bitterness. "Mother, asks the wicked daughter,/ if I learn my history,/will I not be angry?"
>
> But while the notion of accepting women's past invisibility and subordination and attending to the present has some attractiveness, it strikes me as untenable. If it is possible within any historical, textual tradition to create a present in dramatic discontinuity with the past – and I doubt that it is – it certainly seems impossible within Judaism.[315]

In Plaskow's view, the idea of discarding the painful past women have experienced is not possible or practical. She seems to point to the need for reconciliation. However, the

[315] Plaskow, 28-29.

importance of this groundbreaking haggadah is not lost on Maida Solomon, who states that the *Ms.* publication in 1977 of *The Women's Haggadah* created a huge following for women's seders. "In the United States, women from around the country immediately borrowed from its powerful words and images, taking them as given but also as a springboard to create their own tellings over the next decade."[316] Likewise, she notes that "(w)ritten to be used on the seventh night of Pesach in a setting with women rather than with family, the *San Diego Women's Haggadah* was clearly a forerunner of the 1990's community seders...."[317]

The San Diego Women's Haggadah, from the 1980's, is in fact more conciliatory. While detailing the struggles of several famous women, it nonetheless most often gives a message of hope that men and women can live together in peace and equality. Finally, *The Journey Continues*, from the 1990's, offers a balance of old and new, anger and reconciliation. Its far reaching message of *tikkun olam*, repair of the world, seems to be an outgrowth of the feminist desire for justice for all people. No men have ever participated in Broner's seder; nor did men participate in the San Diego seder. The Ma'yan seder, however, does include men if they wish to attend, although they are usually few in attendance. The more universal message of "righting the world" in this last haggadah is perhaps what makes the men feel welcome. It is not known at this time what the women who attend feel about men being in attendance. What is known, however, is the equally influential role of this recent haggadah to that of the earlier women's haggadot covered in this thesis. According to Solomon, for instance, "The 1994 Ma'yan seder became the spark igniting a community women's seder coalition in

[316] Solomon., 226.
[317] Ibid., 236.

Westchester County, New York."[318] The unique contribution of *The Journey Continues* and its sister haggadot from the 1990's is summarized in the following statement: "Just as the 1980s haggadot were able to bring the history of Jewish women to women's seders, 1990s haggadot introduce new Hebrew language and prayer created by feminist liturgists."[319]

Solomon finds that "two of the most influential haggadot – Broner and Nimrod's *The Women's Haggadah* and the *San Diego Women's Haggadah"* are certainly worthy of this type of comparison.

> Although they use some similar images and historical information, these haggadot represent two different strains. The *San Diego Women's Haggadah* attempts to find balance within the traditional haggadah...(while) Broner and Nimrod try to create a consistently nonpatriarchal ritual....daring to speak of anger and pain. Broner and Nimrod move beyond anger, just as the *San Diego Women's Haggadah* moves beyond accommodation.[320]

She notes how both haggadot mention the story of Beruriah, although of course Broner and Nimrod were first. The difference in presentation, she states, is that

> The *San Diego Women's Haggadah* delivers the message that women are men's intellectual equals and that the battle for such recognition continues today; Broner and Nimrod name the danger that women's learning brings to a male culture and question the intertwining of guilt with a double standard.[321]

Another interesting aspect of the haggadot is the use of ancient-sounding language to lend an air of authenticity to the text written by the authors of the women's haggadot. It is interesting to consider whether the lack of such language would be detrimental to the haggadot.; or by leaving it out, would be seen as a step forward. This happened in more than one instance, and warrants some attention. In *The San Diego*

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[318] Ibid., 237.
[319] Ibid., 235.
[320] Ibid.., 228.
[321] Ibid., 229.

Haggadah[322], the bitter daughter's answer is explained with the following: "By saying 'you' instead of 'we', this daughter alienates herself from the company of women," using the style of the traditional haggadot. *The Women's Haggadah* has the following reading: "It is said that four women gathered in Bnai Berak, reclining on cushions and relating the Exodus from Egypt."[323] Finally, in *The Journey Continues,* we find the text, "This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters. Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt."[324] All three of these examples show that there is merit in sounding "ancient" perhaps to lend a sense of authenticity to the writing.

While no studies have been done to this point on the music of the women's seders, examining the music of the seders has proved invaluable in understanding the function of the women's seders in general. As one looks at the three haggadot –*The Women's Haggadah, The San Diego Women's Haggadah* and *The Journey Continues,*, it becomes apparent how the music of the seder can weave together the fabric of the whole. The messages which come through the music are heard strongly because the mechanism of music is such a powerful one. Overall, the music of the women's seders has developed to a level where women feel compelled to compose new music for an ancient ritual, the Passover seder. Of course, the ritual itself has changed in the context of the women's seder; but over time, it seems, haggadot such as the Ma'yan haggadah have created a balance of old and new; and the music reflects this. Before this, haggadot such as the San Diego haggadah had taken the significant step of not only changing the text of traditional seder songs, but also adding in feminist songs that were secular, in order to send a message to its participants. In order to have a complete picture of the history of music in

[322] Zones, 20.
[323] Broner, 26.
[324] Cohen, 30.

women's seders, a comprehensive study of all women's haggadot should be undertaken. It is impossible to estimate how many of these haggadot exist; one might estimate there are hundreds.

Although Broner's haggadah does not include music, she has stated that a variety of music has been included throughout the years. However, each of her poems, many of which include "Song of" in the title, is truly a *shirah*, a song. In fact, as was mentioned earlier, her hope is that some could someday be set to music. The content as well as the emotional focus of each poem leads the reader to appreciate the "music" of these skilled poetic compositions. Her choice to emphasize readings over music may have been from practicality, as she noted the group as a whole was not particularly musical. However, she did not choose to bring in an expert, which will be discussed shortly. The poems are consciousness-raising compositions, intended as a sort of "call to arms" for Jewish women to take a stand for themselves. Each poem plays as important a role, albeit in a different form, as the music of the other haggadot.

In the *San Diego Women's Haggadah* it seems that each song was chosen, and placed, to reflect the section of text by which it is preceded. This, of course, is also the function of the music in a traditional haggadah, which usually includes singing of the liturgical text. The music was chosen by the creators of the haggadah, representing the music that spoke to them, either as music from their heritage as Jews or as feminists, and sometimes both. Usually, however, songs unrelated to the liturgy are sung only at the end of the seder. In the women's seder, it is common to have additional, inserted songs which are not a direct outgrowth of liturgy, but which reflect an opinion, a strong statement, or an emotion upon which the women wish to expand from the readings.

There is a level at which one would say that the music of this haggadah is thematic, in that it includes much music by women. However, it is the text of these songs which provide the most continuity. The function of these songs, most often, seems to be to provide a message to the women who participate, of liberation, freedom and hope. Unlike some of the text, especially in early haggadot, which expressed anger and outrage, the songs usually tend to be hopeful. Additionally, the feminist songs also express hope and needs of women everywhere.

Moving ahead in time, Debbie Friedman's pivotal role in the music of *The Journey Continues* gives a different level of importance to the role of music within the women's seder. Friedman has created a consistent tradition of music that has become familiar and loved by the women who participate each year. The music of the first Ma'yan seder was a compilation of many different songs and composers by Cantor Nancy Abramson. This music was completely different from Friedman's in style and performance, yet equally as beautiful and thoughtfully constructed. Thus, in reviewing all of the information, it seems that by having one musical expert in charge of the music of the seder, the end result can be one of great continuity. Because Friedman created most of the music as well as the settings of traditional tunes, she was able to craft a certain style which sets a tone as much as any of the readings of the seder. Certainly many women who refer to the Ma'yan seder mention Friedman's name as a draw. The function of the music in the Ma'yan seder, therefore, is to create a sense of the whole, a sense of the "journey" the women take through the seder; and to teach the women more about the role of women in the story of Passover.

The question is one of consistency. To many people, the music most often sung at a seder, although certainly not composed by one person, has a certain familiarity which lends an air of continuity to the seder. Over time, then, one would suppose that the use of the *The San Diego Haggadah* over many years would create that same sense of continuity. However, for a new user, it would be quite unusual music. One could argue that the accessibility to the songbook and CD for *The Journey Continues* would create easier access for new users of that haggadah. On the other hand, this might also be somewhat overwhelming for a new user. This issue, of the accessibility of the music of the women's seders today, is certainly a topic for further study, as is the impact of widespread availability of songbooks and CD's to accompany such seders. Questions of individual creativity versus continuity arise when one considers whether the polished nature of a published songbook or CD lend themselves to the creativity of the earlier seders. While *The Journey Continues* certainly requires the user to make many choices throughout - version of prayer, activity, choice of women to honor – the same level of choice is not applied to the music.

Additionally, the music must be accessible for the women participating in the seders. The elaborate songleading at the Ma'yan seder, complete with instruments, is nonetheless accessible for women who attend often or listen to the CD ahead of time. It is unknown how well the music works at other seders where women choose to use this haggadah. The *San Diego Women's Haggadah* may seem more accessible musically, except that the folk songs from the feminist movement may not be known today to many women. For both haggadot, unless the participants read music, they will not be able to sing many of the songs unless taught by a leader.

For instance, in the *San Diego Women's Haggadah*, the song "Womanside", proclaiming women's equality, follows a poem which celebrates women's traditional role as seder preparer along with her importance as a Jew. It is startling to think what a shock it must have been for women who had never seen anything but the traditional rendering of a seder, to speak and to sing texts such as these. Most interesting is the inclusion of non-Jewish songs within the haggadah. Today, however, the use of this haggadah would be difficult unless someone knows the song "Womanside". Likewise, in the Ma'yan haggadah, some of Friedman's original songs, while meant to be participatory, nevertheless require some study to learn.

As Esther Broner mentioned, her seder lacked the presence of a consistent musical tradition. It is unclear why this was the case; however, as one moves ahead and looks at the *San Diego Women's Haggadah*, Jane Zones noted that she, as the compiler of the music, was not a musical expert. One might ask, then, why did these leaders not choose a Jewish musical expert to participate in the original group of creators of the haggadah. In this seder in particular, it seems that the feminist concept of collective work was very important, so there was inherently concern that having one leader or one expert in a particular area would lead to an imbalance of power. In fact, there are often no designated leaders for any of these seders. Thus, perhaps the music was never a focus due to "(f)ear of leadership and or hierarchy – that is, fear of domination and subjugation ...."[325]

Another interesting issue raised in this thesis is the nature of creating and producing these women's haggadot. Interestingly, Solomon even names this process. She mentions how "(r)ather than choosing between one haggadah and another, numerous

[325] Rosen, 229.

women have pieced and patched together their own unique texts. These may be called the 'compiled' haggadot." She notes how both *The Women's Haggadah* and *The San Diego Women's Haggadah* were used by the compilers of the *Boston Rotating Seder Lesbian Haggadah.*[326] Many of the haggadot that exist have similarities; one consistently interesting similarity is the inclusion in the majority of the haggadot of the story of the orange on the seder plate. Almost as consistently, they tell the wrong story as well.[327] However, an important finding of this thesis was learning that both Broner and Fine feel quite strongly that the method of cutting and pasting, borrowing from one haggadah to another, while good in terms of sharing the message of the seder, is poorly handled in terms of bestowing proper credit. It is also important to acknowledge the dissenting view, that Zones is not as concerned, and finds it a natural part of this particular creation process. In fact, as noted, she considers it "traditionally Jewish to make one's own haggadah,"[328] and that the editors of Ma'yan's haggadah acknowledge the practice without weighing in on one side or the other. This topic certainly warrants further study.

As women's seders continue to be celebrated throughout the country, it seems that haggadot will most likely continue to be created. Just as changes have occurred over the last three decades, the music as well as the text will continue to change with the times. Hopefully the creativite music written to date will continue to be produced until there is a well-known musical genre known as "music of the women's seders."

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[326] Solomon., 229.
[327] They usually misstate that the orange represents women on the bimah, as opposed to the gay community as a part of the Jewish community as a whole, the correct story.
[328] Interview with Zones.

APPENDICES

A. MATERIAL FROM *THE WOMEN'S HAGGADAH* AND ASSOCIATED SEDERS
B. MATERIAL FROM *THE SAN DIEGO WOMEN'S HAGGADAH*
C. MATERIAL FROM *THE JOURNEY CONTINUES: THE MA'YAN PASSOVER HAGGADAH*

APPENDIX A
MATERIAL FROM *THE WOMEN'S HAGGADAH* AND ASSOCIATED SEDERS

The Themes of *The Women's Haggadah* Seder through 1999[329].

"The Thirty-Six Righteous Women: Each guest brought the name of a just woman (1978).
Veiled References; Woman and the Veil: Iran had become a fundamentalist republic, with the women once again in *chador.* In sympathy, the Seder Sisters veiled themselves (1979).
Sayings of the Mothers: Our mothers' wisdom and recipes. New songs for *Havdallah,* the going out of the Sabbath, and psalms of praise and sorrow for our mothers (1980).
Human-Sized Miracles: We came with work-a-day stories of our mothers and historical mothers (1981).
The Kabbalah of Seven: The mystical number 7 and predictions of the future (1982).
The Kabbalah of Eight: The snake with its tail in its mouth, the journeying and returning of 8; the introduction of the Sacred Schmata (1983).
Who Are Your Miriams? Tents in the Desert: We each brought the name of a "Miriam," someone who led us across the sea. We become movie stars in Rivlin's film, *Miriam's Daughters Now* (1984).
New Bridges, New Songs, New Commandments: Members of the Black/Jewish dialogue come to the seder. Additions to the Haggadah. Presentation of The New Ten Commandments (1985).
Intra-Group Mediation: Quarreling between us. Paley speaks of quarreling and settling. The family of women is both in pain and soothes that pain (1986).
Loss and Continuity: Death mourned. Children
arrive and ask questions (1986).
The Time of Covenant: We are thirteen. Chesler calls us "Daughters of the Mitzvah." We almost destroy the Sacred Schmata (1988).
The Legacy of the Daughters: The daughters plan the seder, ask their questions, bring us to a place we have never been before (1989).
Omission, Absence, Silence: The group discusses the omission of women from history, the silence of women in their past, the absence of women politically and spiritually (1990).
The Plagues We Live Under: Reacting to war, the group is politically split; we speak of plagues, personal and political, that have beset us this past year (1991).
The Change Makers: Those who altered the world .in large or modest ways-educators, writers, young journalists-women from seventeen to seventy honored (1992)."[330]
(no record in print of 1993)

"In The Desert: more textual study incorporated. Discussion of slavery. Discussion of sons (1994).
The Year of the Crab: The name came from the diagnosis of cancer for and healing of Michele Landsberg. The theme was focused therefore on healthy living and recovery

[329] The seder continues to this day; these are the themes recorded in print.
[330] Broner, *The Telling,* 87-88.

(1995).
Stretch Forth Thy Hand: Referring to Moses and the rod, looking for ways the women could be empowered. The women read names of women who are empowered (1996).
The Promised Land: Dream, Mirage or Continuous Creation? There were discussions of the biblical vision of the Promised Land and current visions as well (1997).
In Memoriam: The seder and many of its readings and discussions were in memory of Bella Abzug, who passed away 6 days before the women's seder that year (1998).
Post-Bellum: This seder celebrated Bella Abzug's life, with a great deal of discussion of the injustices of the world (1999).[331]

[331] Broner, *Bringing Home the Light*, 76-100.

departure from Egypt, and the more one tells of the departure from Egypt, the more she is to be praised.

It is said that four women gathered in Bnai Berak, reclining on cushions and relating the Exodus from Egypt. They are our foremothers: Rachel, Beruriah, Ima Shalom, who was a descendant from the house of Hillel, and her niece, the daughter of Rabbi Gamliel.

Our Mothers spent that Night of Vigil relearning their history until their daughters came to them and said, "Mothers, the time has come to say the morning *shema*."

THE FOUR DAUGHTERS

Through four daughters we shall learn the Torah of Departure. Four daughters and their mothers spent this Night of Vigil seeing themselves as if they went out of Egypt. From Egypt they went out, but not from the house of bondage.

Four questions were asked and four answers were given.

THE SONG OF SEARCHING

Why is this night both bitter and sweet?
The story of woman is bitter.
The searching together is sweet.

Why do we dip into the wine of history?
We were led out of Egypt
by the jingle of timbrel,
the echo of song.

What still plagues us in our chronology?
The pestilence of tradition,

the affliction of custom,
the calamity of rabbinic decree.

When shall we lean back comfortably?
We shall not recline
until we find our dignity.

Four daughters arrive, one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who does not know how to question.

The wise one, what does she say? "Mothers, what did the Shekhinah command of you that you sit here all this night and talk of departures?"

The wicked one, what does she say? "Why are you sitting here all the night, only you women? Women have nothing to say to one another. Women have nothing to learn from one another."

By her saying this, she removes herself from the community of women and isolates herself.

The elderly women tell her, "Because you have broken the chain that links you to our heritage and to the legacy of Miriam, you have no history. You are still in the house of bondage."

The simple one, what does she say? "What is this?" She is referring to the inheritance from Miriam. The older women relate to her the legends about the first prophet.

The one who does not know how to question for her the others must open the way.

The first mother, Rachel, begins. Rachel, the daughter of a wealthy family, married the

mocked those who cried: 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. We would rather be slaves to the Egyptians than die here in the Wilderness' " [Exodus 14:12–13].

The Song in the Wilderness

We will be slaves to no nation and
before no man.
We can find our way through the
wilderness.
We can find our way through thicket
and stone.
We can find our way under hot desert
sun to our home.

Ima Shalom continues: "There is a legend that after the children of Israel crossed the Reed Sea, they burst into song. When the prophet Miriam sang, the child on the knee and the suckling baby saw the Shekhinah. The suckling baby let go of the breast and started to sing, and the child on the knee lifted its voice in prayer. Even the embryos heard singing from the wombs of their mothers."

The Song of Questions

Mother, asks the clever daughter,
Who are our mothers?
Who are our ancestors?
What is our history?
Give us our name. Name our genealogy.

Mother, asks the wicked daughter,
If I learn my history, will I not be angry?
Will I not be bitter as Miriam
Who was deprived of her prophecy?

Mother, asks the simple daughter,
If Miriam lies buried in sand,
Why must we dig up those bones?
Why must we remove her from the sun
and stone
Where she belongs?

The one who knows not how to
question,
she has no past, she has no present, she
can have no future
without knowing her mothers,
without knowing her angers,
without knowing her questions.

The daughter of Rabbi Gamliel, who has suffered in her own life, says: "There is anger in our heritage. In the desert Miriam and Aaron asked, 'Is Moses the only one with whom the Lord has spoken? Has He not spoken with us as well?' The Lord passed among them and left Miriam white with leprosy but Aaron unharmed. Miriam was treated like the wicked daughter whose father spat in her face and sent her from the tent for seven days until she was forgiven."

The Lament of the Prophet Miriam

Once she danced at the banks of the sea.
Once the women leapt after her.
Then she praised the One on High
and her tambourine rose in the air.

And the rain in the wilderness
tasted like coriander,
like almond and honey,
but the taste in her mouth was maror,
bitter as her name.

"You shall be a Kingdom of Priests."
She was not appointed.
"And a land of prophets."
She was not heeded.
"Come up unto the Lord,"
Moses, Aaron, and Seventy Elders.
"Come up unto the Lord,"
Joshua.
"Come up to me into the Mount,
and the Lord spoke unto Moses"
"and the Lord spoke unto Moses"
"and the Lord said unto Moses . . ."
"Moreover, the Lord spoke unto Moses."
"And He gave unto Moses . . ."
"Moreover, the Lord spoke with Moses
and He gave unto Moses
two tables of stone."
"Come up unto the Lord"
"Come up to me unto the Mount
And take Aaron and his sons."

"And the Lord spoke
and Moses . . . the skin of his face
shone."
"And the Lord spoke with Moses and
Aaron
and the Lord spoke with Moses

in Mount Sinai."
"And the Lord spoke with Moses
in the wilderness of the Sinai."

"And Miriam and Aaron spoke against
Moses."
Miriam's face did not shine.
"Behold: Miriam became leprous,
white as snow."

Pale in the wilderness
for the counting of seven days,
shut out from the camp,
tented in dishonor.

Soon, she lay herself down,
the sister of Moses,
the prophet of her people,
she lay down
in a place of no seed, no fig,
no wine, no pomegranate,
no water,
and, parched, Miriam died.

The daughter of Rabbi Gamliel says: "When Miriam died, Moses and Aaron prepared her for burial. It is said that she died with a kiss from the Shekhinah, for the Angel of Death could not take her.

"As Moses brought Joseph's bones out of Egypt, so, Miriam, we will bring your bones out of Kadesh, out of the desert."

The daughters ask, "How did it come about that Miriam was treated so badly?"

"That has to do with the legend of our origins," say the Mothers.

Song of Our Sources

We were created together,
the man and the woman,
not one from the other,
not one the helper,
the other the master.
We were created together
for ourselves and each other.

But the rabbis all agree
that woman was created last,
that woman was created least.

Adam was all alone,
jealous of the birds in heaven,
of the reptiles mating on earth,
of the fish in the water,
of the fruit trees in the garden.

The rabbis all agree
that woman was created last,
that woman was created least.

So Adam was given
something a little more
than a bird that sang in heaven,
a creature that crawled on the earth,
a thing that swam in the water.

The rabbis all agree
that woman was created last,
that woman was created least.

She was not made from the head
they said
lest she hold herself too high.
She was not made from the eyes
they said
lest she peer into the sky.

The priests all agree. . . .

She was not made from the ear
for think of the voices she'd hear.
She was not made from the heart
or she would be painfully hurt.

The priests all agree. . . .

She was not made from the hand
or she'd touch everything in the land.
She was not made from the mouth
or soon you would hear her shout.

The ministers all agree. . . .

She was made only from the rib
to do as she was bid.
She was made only from the rib
to do as she was bid.

The ministers all agree. . . .

The men of God agree
that Eve was weak,
that Eve was sinful,
that God on the same day
made Eve and Evil.

The rabbis all agree. . . .

These men, they agree,
but I cannot agree.
My mother was a woman.
My mother was human.
She spoke, heard, touched, felt.
I sing bitterly in this song
that the men of God were wrong.

Originally our foremothers and forefathers were worshipers of gods and goddesses, and they dwelt on the other side of the river from time immemorial until the Shekhinah came. The Shekhinah took Abraham and Sarah from the other side of the river and walked them throughout the land of Canaan. The womb of Sarah was fertilized by the seed of Abraham and they bore Isaac. In order to continue the line, the cousins, Rebecca and Isaac, bore the twins Jacob and Esau. To Esau and to all of his household—to his wives, daughters, sons—the Shekhinah gave Har Seir, even to the wives Ada, the Hittite, Ahalevama, whose mother was Ana, to Esau's cousin, Basmot, daughter of his uncle Ishmael, and to all of the other women who came unto Har Seir to inherit it.

The first exodus, that of Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Bilha, Zilpa, and all their household, is the exodus of one family, and it takes place within a generation. The second Exodus, from Egypt, is of the tribes of Israel, descendants of the house of Sarah and Abraham, whose people dwelled there over four hundred years.

Welcoming the Prophet

Miriam ha Neviah
Miriam from the House of Levy
Soon will come to us
with timbel and song
Miriam, our prophet,
will dance with us.

הַנְּבִיאָה מִרְיָם
מִרְיָם מִבֵּית לֵוִי
בִּמְהֵירָה תָּבוֹא אֵלֵינוּ
בְּתוֹפִים וּבְזִמְרָה
מִרְיָם, נְבִיאָתֵנוּ
תְּרַקֵּד עִימָנוּ.

Ha'Neviah'a Miriam
Miriam me'beit Levi
Bim'heira tavo eleinu
Be'tupim u'be'zimra
Miriam, ne'vi'atenu
Teraked imanu.

Miriam enters for the Festival Meal.

[120]

A WOMAN'S SEDER

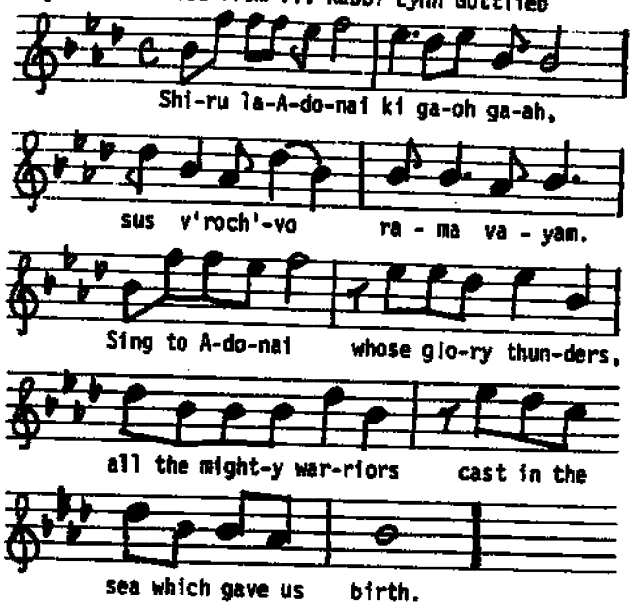
It starts a week before.
Each drawer, each shelf,
  is stripped and scrubbed;
A rite performed each spring
  since Pharaoh forced
The chosen ones to flee
  before their bread could rise.
I wash a dish, streaked black
  from last year's news
And filled with years of
  family seders,
And think of Miriam,
The woman who began
Our journey to the promised land.

Did she lament the flat and
  tasteless bread
She served her men?
Or did she know that we
  would share her deed
Each spring as we recall
  her exodus from bondage,
That has still to be complete?
As smells of spring
  and chicken soup mix pleasingly,
I peel an apple, chop the nuts,
  and sip the wine,
Remembering the bricks
  that stood between
Each ghetto girl and study
of the Torah.
The shankbone roasts
  and fills the air
Within my modern home
With smells of sacrifice
  that women made
So that there would be Seders
  every year.
I fill a dish with bitter herbs,
But feel no bitterness,
Because I know that
  each small task links me
With every Hebrew woman
  who prepared
A Seder meal since God proclaimed
  that Jews
Should celebrate their freedom
  every year.

Surely God never meant
For women to be passed over.

SHIRU LA-ADONAI

Exodus 15:21 — Music by
Lyrics modified from ... Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb



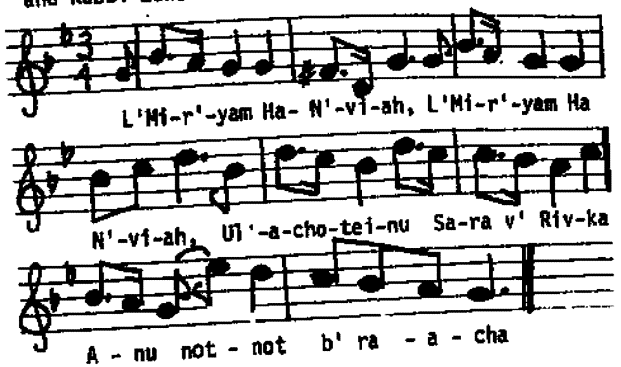
"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam sang unto them" [Exodus 15:20, 21].

[122]

L'MIR'YAM HA N'VIAH

Words by Randee Friedman and Rabbi Lenore Bohm

Music to the tune of Eliyahu Hanavi



Alternative verses:
Ra-chel v'Lei-a...
Es-ter v'Di-na...
Shif-ra v'Pu-a...
Rut u'Dvo-ra...

To Miriam the Prophetess

To Miriam the Prophetess
And to our sisters:
Sarah and Rebekah,
Rachel and Leah,
Esther and Dinah,
Shifrah and Puah,
Ruth and Deborah,
We offer a blessing.

[123]

(2) Women can't be silent when all around the world
people hurt and hungry children cry.
We'll sing out now for justice, and development
And hold the rights of all the people high.

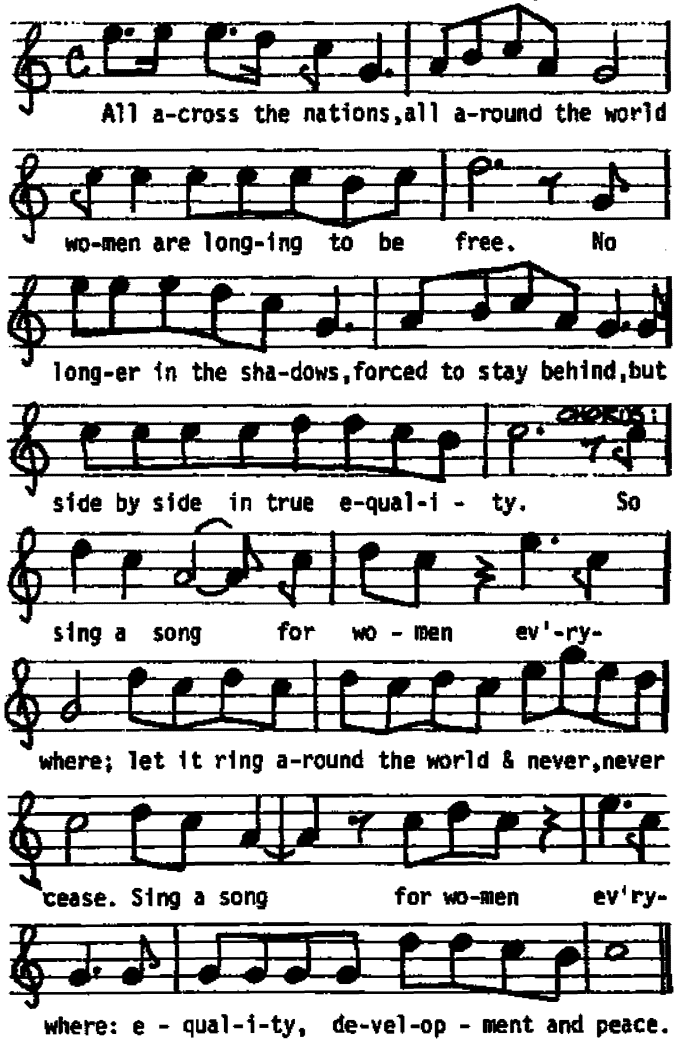
Chorus: (So sing a song, for women everywhere...)

(3) Women now are working to build a better world,
where the dove of peace can rest on every shore,
where men lay down their weapons and learn to
love and share,
and people work to bring an end to war.

Chorus

FOR WOMEN EVERYWHERE

Words and music by the Zimbabwe YWCA 1985
for the International Women's Conference, Nairobi

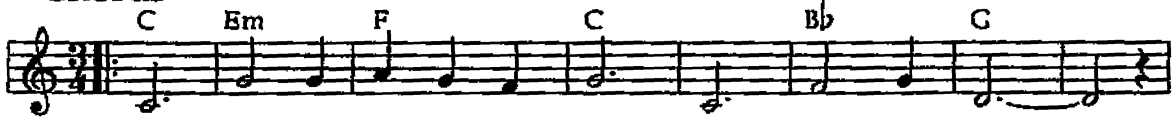


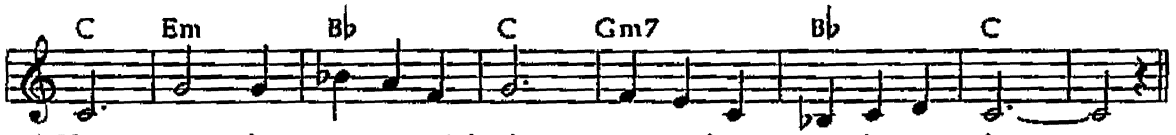
THE JOURNEY SONG

Music by Debbie Friedman
Lyrics by Debbie Friedman & Tamara Ruth Cohen

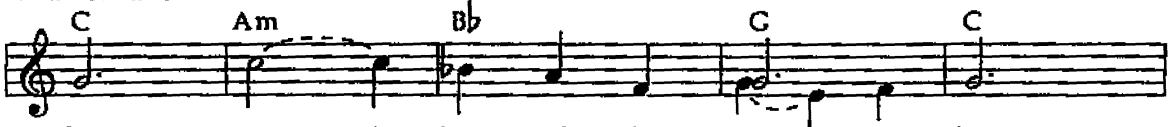
Jazz Rock ♩= 200

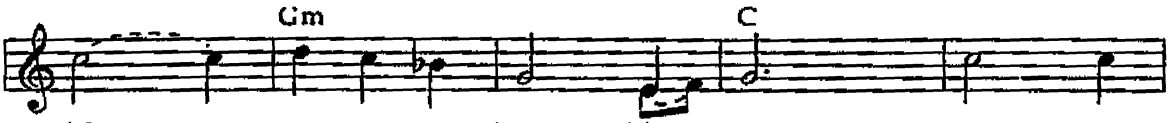
Chorus

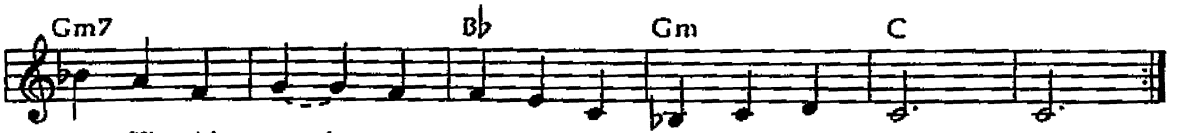




Verses 1-3







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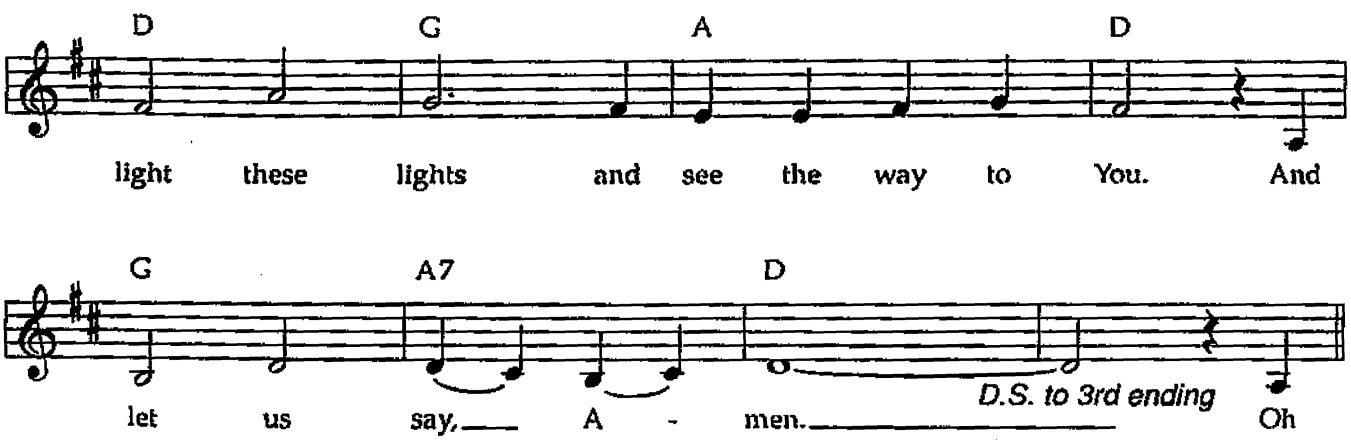


Oh hear my prayer
I sing to You.
Be gracious to the ones I love
And bless them with goodness and mercy and peace.
Oh hear my prayer to You.

Let us light these lights and see the way to You.
And let us say, Amen.

...en, or turn towards the door, rise and sing. Use the same ...ounds for "*Eliyahu Hanavi*" and "*Mir'yam Han'via.*"

אליהו הנביא — ELIYAHU HANAVI

אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא אֵלִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי
אֵלִיָּהוּ אֵלִיָּהוּ אֵלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי
בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ יָבוֹא אֵלֵינוּ
עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד׃

Eliyahu hanavi, eliyahu hatishbi,
Eliyahu, eliyahu, eliyahu hagiladi.
Bimhera v'yameinu, yavo eleinu,
im mashiach ben david. (2x)

Elijah the Prophet, come to us soon,
for you herald Messianic days.

מרים הנביאה — MIR'YAM HAN'VI'A

מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה עֹז וְזִמְרָה בְּיָדָהּ.
מִרְיָם תִּרְקוֹד אִתָּנוּ לְהַגְדִּיל זִמְרַת עוֹלָם.
מִרְיָם תִּרְקוֹד אִתָּנוּ לְתַקֵּן אֶת־הָעוֹלָם.
בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ הִיא תְּבִיאֵנוּ
אֶל מֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה אֶל מֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה׃

Mir'yam han'vi'a oz v'zimra b'yada.
Mir'yam, tirkod itanu, l'hagdil zimrat olam.
Mir'yam, tirkod itanu, l'takein et ha'olam.
Bim'heira v'yameinu, hi t'vi'einu.
El mei ha'y'shua. El mei ha'y'shua.

Miriam the Prophet, strength and song are in her hand. Miriam will dance with us to strengthen the world's song. Miriam will dance with us to heal the world. Soon, and in our time, she will lead us to the waters of salvation.

Close the door and be seated.

Do Something! Support women working for peace and social change around the world. Contact the Women's Empowerment Fund of the American World Jewish service to find out how you can be involved in supporting women activists in developing countries. Support Project Kesher in their work to empower Jewish women of the former Soviet Union. Tell high school girls in your community about Seeking Common Ground, a peace and leadership development program that brings together Palestinian, Israeli, and American high school women.

ALTERNATIVE VERSION OF ADIR HU: ORAH HI

This song, "Orah Hi," patterns itself after the traditional Passover song "Adir Hu," which is an acrostic poem listing God's many qualities of power, righteousness, oneness, sovereignty, and kindness. "Adir Hu" means "He is mighty." The traditional song speaks of God in masculine terms, celebrating God's power as part of the telling of the story of Passover, and praying for the rebuilding of the Temple.

This alternative version is written in the feminine. Like "Adir Hu," it is a Hebrew acrostic, and it can be sung to the traditional melody. Almost all of its images come from the Bible, from rabbinic literature, and from Jewish mysticism. Yet this song does not dwell on God's power and distance. Rather, it emphasizes God's sharing in human joys and griefs, and God's ability to renew life. These are traits which many modern Jewish women have chosen to ascribe to the Divine as they seek their own ways of understanding God. In this version, we can imagine God's house as the Temple, or as our entire world infused with the *Shekhinah*, the indwelling Presence.

She is light, she is light. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

She is wisdom, She is joy, She is tears. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

She is splendor, She is a rose, She is a flowing stream. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

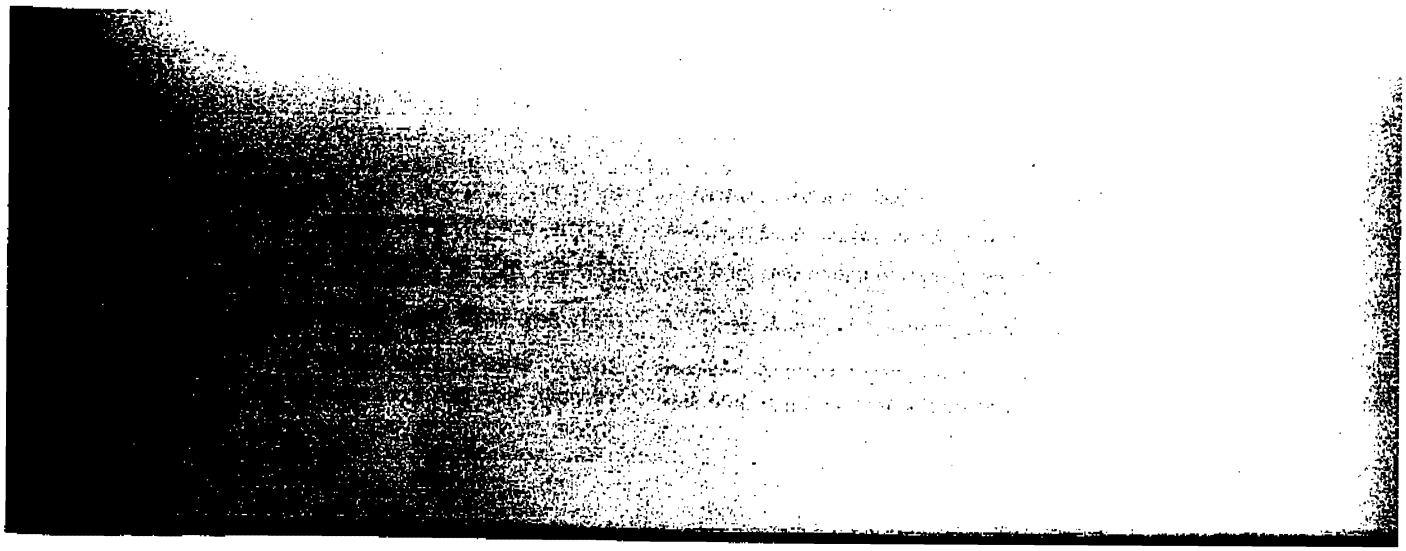
She is renewal, She is the center, She is oneness. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

She is the full moon, She is birth, She is the fountain-source. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

She is comfort, She is forgiveness, She is strength. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

She is redemption, She is righteousness, She is holiness. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.

She is a beloved companion, She is a teacher of change, She is complete and perfect. May She build her house speedily and in our days. God, build Your house soon — close to us in time and space.



ORAH HI : אוֹרָה הִיא

אוֹרָה הִיא, אוֹרָה הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Orah hi, orah hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
בִּינָה הִיא, גִּילָה הִיא, דִּמְעָה הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Binah hi, gilah hi, dimah hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
הַדַּר הִיא, וֶרֶד הִיא, זֶרֶם הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Hadar hi, vered hi, zerem hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
חִדּוּשׁ הִיא, טִבּוּר הִיא, יִחוּד הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Chiddush hi, tibur hi, yichud hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
כֶּסֶא הִיא, לֵידָה הִיא, מַעְיָן הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Kesch hi, leidah hi, ma'yan hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
נֶחָמָה הִיא, סְלִיחָה הִיא, עָצְמָה הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Nechamah hi, selichah hi, otzmah hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
פִּדְיוֹן הִיא, צֶדֶק הִיא, קֹדֶשׁ הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Pidyon hi, tzedek hi, kodesh hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*
רַעְיָה הִיא, שׁוֹנָה הִיא, תָּמָה הִיא, תִּבְנֶה בֵיתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב	*Ra'ya hi, shonah hi, tamah hi, tivnei veitah bekarov,*
בִּמְהֵרָה, בִּמְהֵרָה, בְּיָמֵנוּ בְּקָרוֹב	*bimheira, bimheira, beyameinu bekarov,*
אֵלָה בְּנִי, אֵלָה בְּנִי, בְּנֵי בֵיתֵךְ בְּקָרוֹב.	*elah b'ni, elah b'ni, b'ni veiteich bekarov.*

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