

Seder Supplement: We Were Liberated from Slavery...With Reparations

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The Tikkun Olam Commission of the Reconstructionist Movement invites you, at your seder, to add a line of traditional liturgy back into the Passover Haggadah — a line that Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan originally removed from the song “Dayenu” in 1941.

Reader: Tonight, we add reparations back into the Haggadah.

Dayenu expresses gratitude to God for a series of miraculous blessings bestowed upon the Jewish people during and after the Exodus from Egypt. There is a crucially important blessing missing from Dayenu in our Haggadah, which we are re-inserting tonight. The removed line, אֱלֹהֵינוּ נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־מָמוֹנָם” *Ilu natan lanu et mamonom*, Had God [only] given us their wealth,” thanks God for the gold, silver and jewels we acquired from the Egyptians as partial compensation for more than 400 years of our enslavement to them. Perhaps the lines were removed due to anxiety about Nazism raging in Europe and intense antisemitism in the United States. Or perhaps the decision was based on internalized shame regarding antisemitic beliefs in society about Jewish control of money. Or perhaps it was ethical discomfort with this part of the Exodus story, interpreting the taking of Egyptian wealth as duplicitous and unfair.

Adding this line back into Dayenu reclaims reparations as an essential piece of the story of our liberation from slavery. We acknowledge that we likely could not have survived the 40 years of wandering in the desert, nor built a flourishing community when we arrived in the land of Israel, without monetary restitution. This liturgical repair, re-inserting אֱלֹהֵינוּ נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־מָמוֹנָם” *Ilu natan lanu et mamonom*, Had God [only] given us their wealth,” into *Dayenu*, helps align our Jewish communities with the struggle of other formerly enslaved and colonized peoples currently fighting for reparations. It calls on us to demand reparations today for all peoples who deserve them.

Let us proudly [sing OR recite] [Version 1 (abridged) OR Version 2 (full)] of the newly Reconstructed Reconstructionist ‘Dayenu,’ followed by a thoughtful discussion of these questions:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does acknowledging reparations as part of the exodus from Egypt change your understanding of our story of freedom?
2. How does our story affect your understanding of the need for others’ reparations today?
3. What are your *mitzrayim* (narrow/stuck places) when the topic of reparations comes up? How might you create more expansiveness within yourself around reparations in the coming year?

Reconstructed Reconstructionist 'Dayenu' (Abridged):

(set to this widely familiar Dayenu melody.) ♪

Ilu hotzi hotzianu hotzianu mimitzrayim

Hotzianu mimitzrayim dayenu

Dai, dayenu (3) dayenu dayenu

Had God taken us out of Egypt ... dayenu - it would have been enough.

אלו הוציאנו ממצרים, דינו

Ilu natan natan lanu natan lanu et mamonam

Natan lanu et mamonam dayenu

Dai, dayenu (3) dayenu dayenu

Had God given us their wealth ... dayenu - it would have been enough.

אלו נתן לנו את־ממונם, דינו

Ilu natan natan lanu natan lanu et hashabbat

Natan lanu et hashabbat dayenu

Dai, dayenu (3) dayenu dayenu

Had God given us Shabbat ... dayenu - it would have been enough.

אלו נתן לנו את־השבת, דינו

Ilu natan natan lanu natan lanu et hatorah

Natan lanu et hatorah dayenu

Dai, dayenu (3) dayenu dayenu

Had God Given us the Torah ... dayenu - it would have been enough.

ולא נתן לנו את־התורה, דינו



Reconstructed Reconstructionist 'Dayenu' (Full):

Ilu hotzi'anu mimitzrayim		אלו הוציאנו ממצרים
velo asah vahem shefatim, dayenu.	דינו	ולא עשה בהם שפטים,
Ilu asah vahem shefatim,		אלו עשה בהם שפטים
velo natan lanu et mamonam, dayenu.	דינו	ולא נתן לנו את ממונם,
Ilu natan lanu et mamonam		אלו נתן לנו את ממונם
velo kara lanu et hayam, dayenu.	דינו	ולא קרע לנו את הים,
Ilu kara lanu et hayam		אלו קרע לנו את הים
velo he'eviranu vetokho bekharavah, dayenu.	דינו	ולא העבירנו בתוכו בחרבה,
Ilu he'eviranu vetokho bekharavah		אלו העבירנו בתוכו בחרבה
velo sipek tzorkeinu bamidbar arba'im shanah, dayenu.	דינו	ולא ספק צרכנו במדבר ארבעים שנה
Ilu sipek tzorkeinu bamidbar arba'im shanah		אלו ספק צרכנו במדבר ארבעים שנה
velo he'ekhilanu et haman, dayenu.	דינו	ולא האכילנו את המן
Ilu he'ekhilanu et haman		אלו האכילנו את המן
velo natan lanu et hashabbat, dayenu.	דינו	ולא נתן לנו את השבת,
Ilu natan lanu et hashabbat,		אלו נתן לנו את השבת
velo kervanu lifnei har sinai, dayenu.	דינו	ולא קרבנו לפני הר סיני,
Ilu kervanu lifnei har sinai,		אלו קרבנו לפני הר סיני
velo natan lanu et hatorah, dayenu.	דינו	ולא נתן לנו את התורה.
Ilu natan lanu et hatorah		אלו נתן לנו את התורה
velo hikhnisanu le'erezt yisra'el, dayenu.	דינו	ולא הכניסנו לארץ ישראל,
Ilu hikhnisanu le'erezt yisra'el		אלו הכניסנו לארץ ישראל
velo vanah lanu et beit habekhirah, dayenu.	דינו	ולא בנה לנו את בית הבחירה

Had God brought us out of Egypt without bringing judgment upon [our oppressors], dayenu

Had God brought judgment upon them without giving us their wealth, dayenu

Had God given us their wealth without splitting the sea for us, dayenu

Had God split the sea for us but not brought us through it dry, dayenu

Had God brought us through [the sea] dry without providing for our needs for forty years in the desert, dayenu

Had God provided for our needs for forty years in the desert, without feeding us with manna, dayenu

Had God fed us with manna without giving us Shabbat, dayenu

Had God given us Shabbat without drawing us close around Mount Sinai, dayenu

Had God drawn us close around Mount Sinai without giving us the Torah, dayenu

Had God given us the Torah without bringing us to the land of Israel, dayenu

Had God brought us to the land of Israel without building for us the House God chose, dayenu