

HEBREW MSS. FROM CHINA.

THE KAIFENG/CHINESE JEWS SÉDER



(Silk cover!)

WELCOME TO OUR SEDER

Welcome to our 2nd annual, *2nd virtual*, 2nd night seder. We are honoring a sacred tradition that goes back 354 suns. No, no, the tradition we are honoring goes back thousands of years.

Here we all are, one seder year later, and still on zoom. Enough of the pandemic is still around that most of us are still stuck at home: maybe hating it, certainly tired of it, making the most of what's no longer a new situation. It's been so long that we're almost used to it.

Since we can't travel, what's the furthest place we can think of going? What's the furthest place Jews have gone?

Tonight we're going back in time and across space to what the British Museum site calls "One of farthest flung and most remarkable religious communities of history." We're going to visit with the Jews that built a community in the middle of China. Very isolated. Small. Proud. Prosperous. Lasting longer than many European communities. The subject of Chinese Jews is one of those that is peculiar enough for us to do a double take.

There have been a lot of scholarly books that delve into the history and stories of this community. I'm willing to bet most of you don't know a lot about them. We certainly didn't. So let's dive in.

This is the Haggadah they used. Written in the late 1600's

They celebrated at least 1,450 seders (2/year¹) maybe as many as 1,800, from perhaps the year 960 through at least 1850.

We'll find out more about them, where they came from, their stories and history, but let's first have Kiddish to get on our way.

Kadesh

קֹדֵשׁ

卡待須

Grey texts for Seders in years starting on other nights

With this Kiddish we give thanks. *You* should be thankful we're not following all the traditions of Chinese Jews – the Kiddish in their Haggadah is "extremely long." One scholar called it a Cantor's dream!

ALL: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּזֶן;
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל-עַם, וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל-לְשׁוֹן, וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
 (שְׁבִיבוֹת לְמִנְחָה) מוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְיָמִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן אֶת-יוֹם

Additions for Friday night

וּתְתַן-לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה

(הַשְּׁבִיבוֹת הַזֶּה וְאֶת-יוֹם) חַג הַמִּצּוֹת הַזֶּה. זְמַן חַרוּתֵנוּ, (בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קֹדֵשׁ, זִכָּר לִיציאת מִצְרַיִם.

כִּי בָנוּ בְּחַרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים. (וְשִׁבִיבוֹת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קֹדֵשׁ, (בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרַצוֹן) בְּשִׂמְחָה

וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הַחֲנֻלָּתָנוּ: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, מִקְדֵּשׁ (הַשְּׁבִיבוֹת) וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְחַזְמִנִּים:

On Saturday nights, Havdalah precedes Shehechianu:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ;
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֵשׁ לְחוֹל
 בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
 לְשִׁשָּׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֵשׁ לְחוֹל:
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 שְׂחַחְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׂחַחְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה:

ALL: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has granted us life and sustenance and permitted us to reach this season. *Drink the wine reclining to the left.*

Haggadah ©2021 and Seder produced by Murray Spiegel, of 'Seders For You' (at time of writing: sedersforyou.tripod.com).

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Cover: 1700's Haggadah, Kaifeng, China.

¹ A second day of Yom Tov outside of Israel stems from the days of the Prophets, and perhaps even from the days of Yehoshua (Joshua) ben Nun, so yes, they did two per year

2

But we will follow some of the traditions of the Kaifeng Jews.² They had a *bracha* before washing the hands both times.

Washing the hands וְרַחַץ 洗手

We now wash our hands, as did the Kaifeng, in a stone bowl. More about this later.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם:

ALL: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.

The Haggadah of the Kaifeng Jews did not have both Karpas and Yachatz. If we were following their Haggadah, we'd skip this. Actually, so many essential things are omitted - no blessing over the matzah, some of the cups of wine, these omissions and more – as one scholar, Chaim Simons, put it to me, strictly following the Haggadah "would not fully perform the mitzvot of the Seder." They did not have a printing press, so the Haggadahs had been repeatedly copied. Simons uses several arguments to conclude most are copyist errors.

Karpas כַּרְפָּס 卡嘞斯

Everyone partakes of parsley, dips it into saltwater, and says:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruits of the earth.

From now on you may partake as often as you like from the table snacks. Hunger shall not be one of the seder plagues.

Break middle matzah יָחַץ 把馬扎餅從中分成兩半

The leader takes the middle Matzah and breaks it in two, leaving one half between the whole ones, and puts the other half in a safe place for the grand Afikomen hunt.

Ha Lachma הָא לַחְמָא 哈 拉喝嗎

This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all on the silk road who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy in Henan province come and celebrate Passover. At present we are here, isolated from all other Jews, even those in other Chinese cities; next year may we be in Israel. At present we are slaves; next year may we be free.

The Kaifeng were a viable community 40 years after their final rabbi died, at least through 1850. In that year, the last of the knowledgeable survivors wrote a letter describing how on the 14th day of the 2nd moon, they celebrated "The feast of dry wheat (unleavened bread). Cakes called 'oil fragrance' (yu-xiang) are distributed to friends."³ We know from this letter than even 40 years after their last rabbi died, and a decade after their synagogue was demolished, the community was still honoring their traditions, celebrating holidays and even praying each week.

So now it's time to do something strange – we'll pour a 2nd cup of wine. This is supposed to elicit a question from all those watching carefully to ask, why is tonight different?

² Based on descriptions by Chaim Simons and Mark Loeb

³ Scholars conclude this refers to *Matzah Ashira* ("rich matzah"). In many other communities, Matzah was made with fruit juice, olive oil, or wine. Like our present-day egg matzah, it's often allowed during Passover, but not during the first seder (unless needed by the sick or infirm).

The second cup of wine is poured and the youngest on Zoom asks The Four Questions:

Ma Nishtana

מה נשתנה 嗎 你須他那

On all other nights we eat chametz and matzah; tonight we eat only matzah. On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs; tonight, we only eat bitter herbs. On all other nights we do not dip even once; tonight we dip twice. On all other nights we eat sitting or reclining; tonight we recline.

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות?

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה. הלילה הזה בלוי מצה:

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין ששאר ירקוֹת. הלילה הזה מרור:

שבכל הלילות אין אנו מטבילין אפילו פעם אחת. הלילה הזה שתי פעמים:

שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בין יושבין ובין מטבין. הלילה הזה בלנו מטבין:

Yugambeh-Mbinyah/Bandjalang [10 native speakers] Gold Coast, Australia (Intro and dipping Q):

Minyahgu gali yawun-yawun yugam nginyehr munu yawun-yawun?

Munu yawun-wayun yugam ngali jalehla nungany guhngga;

gali yawun-yawun ngali gayi-gayibilimahla nungany birendah.

1 billion+ native speakers

為什麼今晚與其他的夜晚不同?

Why is our Jewish community so so different from all others?

All other communities pray in houses of worship;
but only ours displays huge stone inscriptions depicting our history.

All (well, most) other communities live in fear of anti-Semitism;
but ours never faced discrimination; we even had leaders follow our holidays.

All other communities show a wondrous variety of family names;
but only ours are so tight-knit into 8 (now 7) clan names.

And since we're asking questions, how the heck did we get here?

Magid

מגיד 嗎基的

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. It started when Jacob went down to Egypt, compelled by the word of God. Here, we usually tell the story of our ancestors: Jacob's son Joseph rose in the hierarchy, helped a good Pharaoh, had some dreams, had a multicolored coat, was reunited with his brothers; then there's Moses, who was picked up from a basket, grew up in Pharaoh's palace, left for a while, saw a burning bush, told Pharaoh terrible plagues are a'coming so you should Let My People Go, which became a very singable spiritual; the Hebrews wandered around the desert for 40 years, but the upside was The Torah and Manna (not in that order), oh yes, and the Promised Land also. That's it in a nutshell, except there's 2000 more years of history and we keep hearing from a bunch of Rabbis, in Bnai Brak and elsewhere.

Tonight, instead, we tell the story of a different set of ancestors. If you come from European stock, it's not your direct line, but your distant cousins.

These are a reporter's "Wh" questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why.

What means the Jews of Kaifeng. In time, we'll meet a bunch of **W**ho's throughout the seder.

Where did "we" come from? Well, all our Haggadah instructions and a lot of our non-Hebrew prayers are in Judeo-Persian, so that hints of the primary theory of our origins. We obviously came from Israel, but no one knows via what path. It depends a bit on the answer to ...

Judeo-Persian instructions

סודוה רמא בכמא: וכמו קרה רמא בשווי: 4017
בשווי ברבא 4017:

When? Some say the Song Dynasty, some say it was the Tang Dynasty, others say as far back as the Han Dynasty. For the Spiegels' Egyptian archeological seder, we posted the timeline of Egyptian Pharaohs and Israelite Kings. Tonight, we probably need a timeline for China:

Silk Road:
130 BCE-1453

漢朝 **Han** Dynasty: 206 BCE–220 CE
 唐朝 **Tang** Dynasty: 618–907 (the "glorious")
 宋朝 **Song** Dynasty: 960–1279 (a prosperous economy and radiant culture, considered a golden age)
 元朝 **Yuan** Dynasty: Early 1200's–1368 (aka the Mongol Dynasty)
 明朝 **Ming** Dynasty: 1368–1644
 清朝 **Qing/Ch'ing** Dynasty: 1644–1911 (the final Imperial dynasty)

Jewish merchants were among the earliest people to traverse the Silk Road when it started ramping up during the Han Dynasty. The Silk Road was the place to get all sorts of luxuries. Jews were involved with a group of merchants called Radhanites;⁴ their origin is unclear but for centuries they managed a big-time trading operation selling goods. The Radhanites were the go-to merchants of choice, because at that time Jews and Muslims got along famously, or at least better than the Christians and Muslims. They played a unique role in the linking of the markets of the East and West during unstable times in that part of the world.



One famous Radhanite who built up quite a fortune was called 贸易商卓 (mao yii sahng zhūo, aka Trader zhūo).

The Radhanites transported several revolutionary inventions that shaped history: paper, our number system, banks. Historians believe the methods of Chinese papermaking may have been transmitted to Europe via Radhanites and Jewish merchants. Some credit Joseph of Spain (possibly a Radhanite) with introducing Arabic numerals from India to Europe. Finally, Jewish communities used letters of credit to transport large quantities of money without the risk of theft. Radhanites used these on an unprecedented scale – these transformed into the banks of the Middle Ages and early modern period.

Traders from all points between China and Rome were the worker bees of the whole system. Despite regular visits from Jewish travelers and traders, during the early days of the Silk Road, there were no Jewish settlements; no place in China where you were guaranteed to find a minyan or a hot kosher meal.

There's one theory that when the Assyrians invaded Israel's northern kingdom and exiled the 10 tribes in 721 BCE, one tribe escaped to Asia and came to China, or at least India. Or in 70 CE, when Titus destroyed the second temple, Jews scattered. Or the failed Bar Kokhba revolt in 136 CE provided an impetus for Jews to escape the heat and flee to Han China. All speculation. The community itself maintained they had been there since the first century. The popular consensus has Jews coming to China at least since the Han, with no settlements until the Song period.



But these origin stories explains the **Why**: either to escape persecution and wars with the Romans, or the chance for a better life, via lucrative trading.

The earliest evidence of a Jewish presence is a business letter from 718, written in Persian using Hebrew characters. It mentions sheep trading and cloth, showing its commercial nature. The author said he'd written "more than 20 letters," indicating a thriving trade already existed. It includes an intriguing request for a harp for teaching a girl how to play.

History:⁵ First reliable evidence - a 718 business letter (they went back 1300 years).

Now let's get to the main part of our story, Kaifeng 開封. In its heyday, Kaifeng was the capital of China – it was the capital seven times throughout China's history. From 1013 to 1127, Kaifeng was the largest city in the world. It was the commercial and political center of Song China, right

⁴ A book by Ibn Khordadbeh mentions Radhanites as being Jewish traders, and that they were gifted in all the languages along the Silk Road.

⁵ Sampled from [youtube.com/watch?v=c_s2mLhxWTU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_s2mLhxWTU) (All links worked at time of publication)

at the time when China was the richest, most vibrant economy on the planet – as it had been for centuries. If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere, it's up to you, Kaifeng, Kai ...

Between 960 and 1126, during the Southern Song Dynasty, a contingent of Jews arrived in Kaifeng and established a community. There were Jewish merchants all over China and they can be found wherever there were major markets: Guangzhou, Chenzhou, Ningbo, Yongzhou, Hangzhou. There could have been settlements at these places, there could have been synagogues built too, but there's only one place where historical records show unimpeachable evidence of a Jewish settlement; native people following Jewish laws and traditions, like their fellow Jews in Europe. Only Kaifeng.

The famous poet Xin Guong described the city of Kaifeng as having "level land in all directions. Its communication with surrounding regions is aided by many rivers. The waterways teem with boats, the bow of one touching the stern of another, while men, carts and animals jam the roads in an endless flow from every corner of the country."

The original Jewish settlers left en masse with their families and brought everything they owned from a previous (no longer known) locale. The numbers of the Jewish community were not great – originally 500 but never growing to more than a few thousand. In a city whose population exceeded a million, you'd expect them to barely be noticed. But their influence and the respect they achieved was outsized.

In 1163 the Jewish residents of Kaifeng received the okay to build their synagogue. The Emperor Xao Tshu himself gave the approval, and even gave an imperial order that they should follow the customs of their forefathers and settle in Kaifeng. For context: this is about when the compass was first used for navigation, and one year before Genghis Kahn was born. The synagogue was erected at the intersection of Earth Market Character Street and Fire God Shrine Street. Location, location, location. The alleys on either side were renamed Teaching Torah Lane North and Teaching Torah Lane South 南教經胡同, names they still have today.⁶



The Jews there found a tremendous amount of tolerance for all religions and races; followers of Islam, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorianism as well as Judaism could be found in the capital. The country has a history of pluralism and multiculturalism. They did not believe they had a monopoly on the truth, and therefore they were tolerant of all religions. Later the locals grouped them with the Muslims because they looked similar, and also avoided eating pork. The Jews were called the blue-headed Muslims (they wore blue kippot).

God's Grand Scheme – by Randi Spiegel (c)2021
(Tune of *I Enjoy Being a Girl* from Flower Drum Song)



Here we are gathered to commemorate
Our ancestors and their tribulations
With their lives they could barely tolerate
How tormented they were for generations

You can't buy him with hush money
Only scare tactics do the trick
And nothing remotely funny
Would it work to get him sick?

Our people were living in Mitzrayim
As the slaves of the Pharaoh of the land
God sent Moses to carry out His grand scheme
But the Pharaoh would not follow his command

Well God had sophisticated power
And Moses a staff to wave around
The plagues would make all Egyptians cower
And just maybe would work on Pharaoh to back down

So God had a plan to break through
Pharaoh's stubbornness with the Jews
He'd send down some horrid plagues to
Try to change the Pharaoh's views

Ten plagues were then set in motion
First the Nile's waters changed to blood
And the frogs caused a great commotion
But the Pharaoh did not care, and he just glared and stood

⁶ But not before being named "Lane of the Sect that Plucks Out the Sinews" a reference to laws of Kashrut

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The lice then the flies attacked them
Wild beasts died 'round them everywhere
Boils hurt and the hail did pound 'em
But the Pharaoh did not scare

Now locusts came down severely
Thickly covering all the land
Darkness fell and no one saw clearly
But God had the upper hand

The tenth plague was really quite a doozy
The first-born Egyptians all were killed
It made Pharaoh seriously woozy
So he said all the Jews could leave and be fulfilled

So that's why we're celebrating
And retelling this tale of strife
We were free after years of waiting
For a land, all to ourselves, where we can build a new life

Our people from far away, with their strange rituals and traditions, became very active in the local community. Before long, our numbers and influence began to grow, and for the next couple hundred years they served in the military and civil service. The community peaked and had their prime during the Ming Dynasty. Their population at that point was about 5,000. They were quite prosperous, engaging in every profession and business in the city, with a silk mill that had a national reputation.



Mr Polo

During Marco Polo's travels in China in the 13th C, he mentions running into these Jews. In 1286, Marco Polo wrote that Kublai Khan was familiar with and celebrated their holidays.⁷

Location, location, location. Unfortunately, the spot they settled in had a slight water problem. Kaifeng was next to the Yellow River, part of the Grand Canal – an 1100-mile canal ... think LA to Dallas, dug by hand. The Yellow River's nickname was China's Sorrow. Over the years, millions have died from its floods (even down to the modern era: three of the worst were in the 1930's and 40's).

Their synagogue structure – and likely their homes too – were mostly made with organic materials. Their synagogue didn't have a chance whenever there was a major inundation; it had to be rebuilt each time. In fact, the synagogue was rebuilt at least 9 times. They commemorated each major rebuilding by inscribing a stone slab. Each of these monuments is called a stele. [Sounds a lot better than slabs.] In time, there were four of them, but one was lost – we only have three today. They were always placed in the courtyard of the synagogue. For centuries, they stood telling the stories of their history and showing the prayers so that all future generations might keep the faith alive. Being totally isolated from the rest of the world, the Kaifeng Jews believed they were the last of their kind, and were panicked that if they were to die out, Judaism would be lost..

A most devastating flood in 1642 was caused by a siege on the city. Many people died and most of the buildings were destroyed. One congregant, Gao Xuan, dove repeatedly into the flooded synagogue to rescue 10 Torahs and 26 other works. Many were severely damaged. The floods were so ruinous that the city was *abandoned for years*. 10 years passed when the Jews were urged to return and rebuild. All seven clans helped restore and rewrite 13 scrolls.

When the synagogue was completed in 1653, officials of the town took part in a congratulatory procession, accompanied by trumpets and drums. The officials were of the highest ranks, with representatives of Kaifeng's many neighborhoods. This was another example of the respect the surrounding community had for the Jews. The officials carried traditional *pien* 匾, lacquered boards – 5 feet by 2 feet – bearing inscriptions with various precepts: "Temple of Perfect Purity" "Hall of Perfect Instruction" "Religion is Derived from Heaven" and so on.

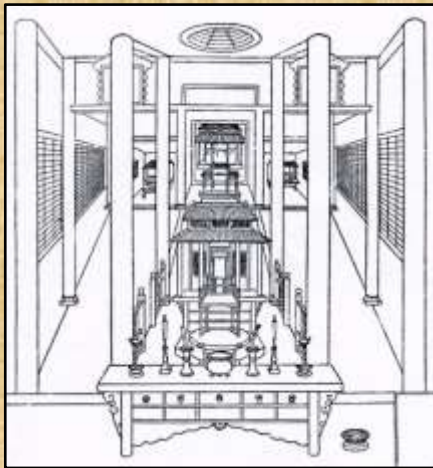


Site of former synagogue and remaining stele (circa 1912)



⁷ Kublai Khan = Emperor Shih Tzu 順治帝 (1215-1294), founder of the Yuan Dynasty

Following the town officials were the Jewish community's clans. They carried *dui-lian* 對聯, presentation tablets with honorific couplets honoring the completion of the synagogue, the continuity of Judaism, and Jewish identity.⁸



What did the newest synagogue look like? There are no descriptions of the earlier ones – but each rebuilding was a bit grander than the previous ones. For much of the time, the community was growing and the Jews became more prosperous. We only have drawings made by Jesuit visitors in the 1700's.⁹ (We'll learn about their meeting later.)

On left: Detailed drawing of the synagogue courtyards based on the drawings of Father Domenge in 1721.



What about their Torahs? The Torahs we have today, which are at the British Museum and at Southern Methodist University (Dallas), date from 1643 and 1663, but we know the Kaifeng had Torahs when the first synagogue was built in 1163. As the community grew and the synagogues became larger, they had more Torahs. At the time of the big flood in 1642, they had 13. We know they had at least 15 later on. This was a very large synagogue!



Floods and fire were repeatedly destroying the holy books. They got replacements from communities in Ningxia and Ningbo. Another scroll was bought from a Muslim (!) at Ning-keang-chow in Shanxi, who had acquired it from a dying Jew in Canton. From this, they made several copies. Of the 15 Torah scrolls they had, only seven complete scrolls survive. All are from this later time period, because floods and fires destroyed all the older ones.



The two Torahs now at museums and university libraries were used until around 1800. The text is largely identical to standard Torahs (except for a few scribal errors), but structurally they're different from western

scrolls: they are sheepskin instead of parchment; rather than using animal tendons, the strips are stitched together with silk. Instead of being wound on wooden rollers, the scrolls have thin rods with knobs varnished with Chinese-style golden lacquer.



Torah case in front of mosque (1906)

⁸ "Acknowledging Heaven, Earth, Parent, Teacher" "You are not far from the correct road of Reason and Virtue" "Cultivating the virtues of Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Wisdom and Faith" "You reach the first principle of sages and philosophers." These antithetical couplets are an ancient Chinese tradition, and are often seen adorning doors and entranceways. Our *dui-lian* banners, by Paul Tong, show the same phrases.

⁹ Based on the Jesuits' detailed reports, there were multiple courtyards: The synagogue was located in the central building at the end of the 3rd courtyard. A terrace, 50 ft wide and 40 ft deep, enclosed by a marble balustrade, led to it. Four round wooden columns on stone bases carried the overhanging roof in front of the building, leaving an open front porch. The architecture of the synagogue and most of the interior furnishings were quite Chinese in character.

8

What about the Haggadahs, I hear you ask. There are only two left, both at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

One is from the mid 1600's; the other is its copy, made around 100 years later. They were written using a reed pen, a typical Chinese practice, on stout Chinese paper (~6½ by 7½ inches). The Hebrew lettering has something of a Chinese appearance. The text is quite similar to present-day Haggadahs. Both are bound in silk. Remember silk? Their silk mill, the silk road. The Torahs were held together by silk. We could've called this the Silk Seder.



Back to the memorial stones. The three inscriptions that survive to the present day are dated 1489, 1512, and 1663. Most of what we know about the community's history and families comes from these inscriptions.

The oldest stone 重建清真寺記 (5 feet tall) is from 1489 and is divided into three parts. The first tells the Biblical stories of Abraham, Moses, through to Ezra. It mentions the prayers, fasting and repentance of Yom Kippur. This tablet says they came from India during the Han period. It lists the Chinese names of 70 clans, and describes their audience with the Song Dynasty emperor who gave them the OK. The rebuilding of their synagogue, after it was flooded, occupies much of the remainder of the tablet.



"Record Of The Synagogue Reconstruction". A Large Original Rubbing From Jewish Stele In Kaifeng Of China In 1489, Judaica Documents The History Of Judaism And Jewish People In China.
By Jews In Kaifeng, China

Item Price:
\$250,000.00
\$18.00 shipping to USA

The 1512 memorial 尊崇道經寺 describes the loyalty of Jews to the Chinese state, that they were civil officials and members of the literati. Most remarkably, its carvings contained all 19 blessings of the Amida, the Shemona Esrei, and Sim Shalom. If a Jew from the Middle Ages came upon this shul in Kaifeng, he'd know these guys were legit. (Assuming the visitor could read Chinese!)

The 1663 stone 祠堂述古碑記 is a larger record of the temple's history. It lists similarities between Judaism and Chinese religious practices, especially Confucianism: family, the traditions of education and scholarship, the moral basis for life, and charity to all.

In 1605, there was a meeting of two cultures, from which we've learned a lot about the community.



Matteo Ricci 利瑪竇 is the most scholarly of several Jesuits sent to China. No slouch, Ricci mastered the script and language of classical Chinese, and composed the first European-style world map in Chinese. At the same time, a knowledgeable Kaifeng Jew, Ai Tian 艾田 had passed civil service exams and was in Beijing looking for an appointment to government civil service.

The Kaifeng community had been so isolated since the 11th C, none of them heard of Christianity. So when Ai Tian learns there's a monotheistic European in town, Ai Tian thinks Priest Ricci must be Jewish. Before meeting Ricci in the Mission House, Ai Tian sees a painting of the Virgin and Child, and thinks, "Of course, it's Rebecca with Jacob or Esau."

On the other hand, Ricci had never heard of Jews in China, and first thinks Ai Tian belongs to the Nestorians, a lost sect who brought Christianity to China. The Jew thought the Priest was Jewish, the Priest thought the Jew was Christian.

Soon Ricci realizes something's different about Ai Tian. He sends some junior Jesuits back to Kaifeng to investigate. They find a thriving community, a synagogue, a mikvah, the whole works. Jesuits report back to Ricci, Ricci reports back to Rome, and their letters verify the Kaifeng were observing the Jewish Sabbath, Jewish festivals, circumcision, had Hebrew manuscripts, Hebrew prayers, several Torahs, didn't eat pork. These letters from 1605 survive in many collections, including the Vatican archives. They're the strongest evidence we have of the strict Jewish observance in Henan Province right in the middle of the center of the

cradle of Chinese civilization.¹⁰ This "mistaken identity" story of Ricci and Ai Tian is especially important; it's the first time the Western world learns about a community of observant Chinese Jews.

Four Sons, Four Daughters, Four Stelae ...

The Four Children אַרְבֵּנָה בְּנִים 四個孩子

ALL: The sacred stone tablets that depict the history of our people enshrine the archetypes of Four Types of Children. The 聰明的孩子, the 邪惡 孩子, the 沉默的孩子, and 不能問的孩子.

The wise child says: "I have taken all the civil service exams because I want to receive the respect of my countrymen."

The wicked child says: "Whaddya talkin' about? Ya can't even tell the difference 'tween a Jesuit priest and an Italian Jew. The Virgin Mary ... Mother and Child Reunion, eh?"

The simple child says: "Isn't Simon and Garfunkel just a little anachronistic?"

The child who does not yet know how to read Chinese says:

What do we know about how the Kaifeng celebrated Passover?

Like all Jewish holidays, Passover began the evening before. The Kaifeng Jews prepared for the holiday by killing a paschal lamb and using a new writing brush to spread the lamb's blood over their doorposts. This symbolized that the ancient Israelites smeared the blood of lambs on their doorposts to signal 'This is a Jewish home' to the Angel of Death in Egypt. An elderly Jew interviewed in the 1980's recalled observances when he was young. Even though the community had almost completely assimilated by the time of his childhood, many practices were as they had been for hundreds of years. Shi Zhongyu said his father painted the top ledge of his front gate. "Normally, we used lamb's blood. If we didn't have lambs, we'd use rooster's blood or mix cinnabar with water instead; sometimes we used red paint. We believed the symbolic meaning was the same no matter what we used to create it."

The Passover symbol for horseradish used by the Kaifeng was a mutton soup with an unpleasant taste. Everyone had to drink the soup though it tasted awful. It served as a reminder of the bitter lives our ancestors led in Egypt. Around the same time, their neighbors were celebrating the Chinese spring festival. The other Chinese households erected and worshipped the Buddhist icons, including door protectors, the Lord of the Heaven, and the Earth King. Although the Jews saw great similarity to Confucianism, they never paid homage to those Buddhist spirits. It was another way they kept their traditions alive.

In the traditional Haggadah, we relate with awe the power of God to free the Israelite slaves from the grip of Pharaoh's tyranny. In tonight's story, the Jews had no tyrannical leader. The government was benevolent. Accepting. Tolerant. But hardships in our story were suffered by the Jewish community. Let's list them.

With each listing of a plague, remove a drop of wine:

10 Plagues	עֶשֶׂר מַכּוֹת	+災
	Floods	Assimilation
	Fires	Floods
	Isolation	Poverty
	Floods	Bad Fortunes in Cookies
	Lack of Rabbis	Chopsticks at a Seder

Rabbi Judah, who holds the Guinness record for World's First Recorded Acronym, formed the initials thus: 匹配, 十個, 保存

¹⁰ Why were the Jesuits interested? They thought the Kaifeng were so isolated and ancient, that their copy of the Torah would be uncorrupted and uncensored by Jewish rabbis from days gone by. Perhaps the Torahs held by the Kaifeng would say something about Jesus being the Messiah. (Nope)

Remove a drop of wine while reciting each plague.

ALL: **T**hese are the ten plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt:

1. Blood
2. Frogs
3. Vermin
4. Wild Animals
5. Cattle Disease
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. **Darkness**
10. Death of the Firstborn

דָּם. צְפַרְדֵּי. כְּנִיס. עֲרוּב. דְּבַר. שְׁחִין. בָּרָד. אֲרֵבָה. חֲשָׁד. מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת:

Dahm · Tz'fardeyah · Kinim · Arov · Dever · Sh'chin · Barad · Arbeh · Choshech · Makat Bechorot

What names do you find in the community? An emperor during the Ming Dynasty bestowed eight surnames upon the Jews, which they considered a great honor. (Legend has it that the Emperor said "We want you to stay, but we can't pronounce your Hebrew names.") They are all still identifiable today by those family names: **Ai, Shi, Gao, Gan, Jin, Li, Zhang** and **Zhao**. The Zhangs later converted to Islam, but all other descendants of the Jewish community today have one of those names.

Li	石	Ai	愛
Shi (Shih) ("Stone")	石	Zhang (Chang)	張
Zhao (Chao)	趙	Gao (Kao) ("Tall")	高
Jin (Chin) ("Gold")	金		

Let's move on with two rousing Dayenus. The Kaifeng Haggadahs we have today contain no Dayenu. So we need to add one for the community.

Dayenu 代阿奴

If our ancient Emperor had said, "C'mon down to our capital, build a place of worship, you're gonna love it here," and did nothing else for us, Dayenu.

If Kublai Kahn had said: "I love latkes and matzah, count me in for a good time, I'll follow your holidays," Dayenu.

If ancient records confirmed we'd survived over a 1000 years, Dayenu.

If our story would be preserved for posterity – not in newspapers or books or parchment, which as we know sorta get crumbly over time unless you store it in a huge building with temperature and humidity controls, which is a hassle and gets kinda expensive for all time – but is inscribed in *stone*, I mean, look at the pyramids, or why go to another religion, look at the Western Wall, you see anyone worrying about humidity around those landmarks, well double Dayenu. Dayenu, Dayenu.

If we had never experienced discrimination, persecution, Antisemitism, but welcoming Emperors, leaders following our holidays, Dayenu.

If we had to be special, then why not go all out? Why not establish a community where no other Jew would dream of living? Dayenu.

If we did have the bad luck to build our community near the Yellow River, which flooded a lot, and a bunch of fires wiped out our synagogue, at least we had the prosperity and resources to rebuild the synagogue 9 times ... I mean, who doesn't like a renovation every few centuries? Dayenu.

If we must have a decline, and, well yeah, usually what goes up eventually does come down I guess, then having many influential people, of several religions, and many organizations, and rabbis, all try to rescue us, because yeah, we were super special, Dayenu.

If someone centuries later decides to have a seder following our customs, and a hundred people show up, can we finish up with the Dayenus already?

For those of you hankering for the traditional Dayenus and the best melody north of the Festive Meal, here is a sampling:

Had He brought us out of Egypt, and not executed judgments against the Egyptians, It would have been enough — Dayenu!

Had He executed judgments against the Egyptians — Dayenu!

Had He split the Sea for us — Dayenu!

Had He fed us the manna, and not given us the Sabbath — Dayenu!

Had He given us the Sabbath, and not brought us to Mount Sinai — Dayenu!

Had He brought us to Mount Sinai, and not given us the Torah — Dayenu!

Had He given us the Torah, and not brought us into Israel — Dayenu!

אֱלֹהֵינוּ נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת, דַּיְנוּ:

Ilu natan, natan lanu,

Natan lanu et ha-Shabat.

Natan lanu et ha-Shabat, Dayenu.

(chorus)

אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, דַּיְנוּ

Ilu hotzi, hotzianu,

Hotzianu mimitzrayim.

Hotzianu mi-Mitzrayim, Dayenu.

(chorus)

ALL: How much more so, then, should we be grateful to God for the numerous favors that He bestowed upon us: He brought us out of Egypt, and punished the Egyptians; He smote their gods, and slew their firstborn; He gave us their wealth, and split the Sea for us; He led us through it on dry land, and sunk our foes in it; He sustained us in the desert for forty years, and fed us with the manna; He gave us the Sabbath, and brought us to Mount Sinai; He gave us the Torah, and brought us to Israel; He built the Temple for us, to atone for all our sins.

One family of the Kaifeng stands above all the rest: the Zhao family is most famous. The first to be written up was Zhao Cheng 趙乘, a physician who served in the early 1400's. He was a soldier in the Henan Central Guard. He discovered a treasonous plot by the Emperor's nephew. Zhao reported the plot to the Emperor. When it was confirmed, he was awarded an appointment as officer of a national security force, and later rewarded by Imperial edict, ultimately, rising to lieutenant governor. (Real-life echoes of Mordechai vs Haman!). It was an honored Chinese tradition to reward good deeds by bestowing a favorable surname, which is how Zhao (original name An San, denoting a low birth) got his name ("Zhao the Honest"). The change was both an honor and a mark of social acceptance. Zhao supervised the rebuilding of the Kaifeng synagogue in 1421, and his entire story is told on the 1489 stone monument that stood in front of the synagogue.

Later members of his family continued to receive great honor and achievement. 200 years later, his great-great-great-grandson Zhao Cheng-ji was the first official appointed in the new Qing Dynasty. As military commander of the Kaifeng district, he oversaw the town's restoration after it flooded.

With his brother, Zhao convinced the Jews to return to the city and financed the rebuilding of the synagogue in 1653. There are many more: a cousin received a coveted rank¹¹ in the highest imperial examinations, leading to many high appointments; another cousin was selected to study at the Imperial College, and as county magistrate, greatly advanced academic learning, which brought great prosperity to Yunnan Province.

Over a dozen family members of later generations obtained prestigious scholarly or official posts, bringing glory to the family. Whenever the community listed its surnames, they always put Zhao first to honor the family.

¹¹ *Jin Shi* grade



I Enjoy Being a Jew – by Randi Spiegel (c)2021
(Tune of *I Enjoy Being a Girl* from Flower Drum Song)

[Not relevant to the story of Passover, but a parody that was too good to pass over]

I'm a Jew and by me that's really great
I am proud that my shape is kind of curvy
But I walk with a shleppadikah gait
And perhaps I can sometimes be quite nervy

Our family gatherings are shrilly
Everyone talking all at the same time
Gotta plan, can't just go in willy-nilly
Better practice all your gestures and your mime

The holidays that we honor
Purim, Pesach, to name just two
With food that is just to die for
I enjoy being a Jew

On Pesach we eat some maror
Extra strong for our friends true blue
We laugh as they choke in horror
I enjoy being a Jew

I love when I get some Shabbas flowers
I drool for those cookies choc'late lace
I talk on the telephone for hours
With a pound and a half of food shoved in my face

I'm strictly a female female
And my future I hope will be
In the home of a handy real male
Who'll enjoy (might be a goy), having a girl like me

We're born with high expectations
Doctor, lawyer or CPA
Professions for generations
So our mothers won't be dismayed

Traditions are steeped within us
Such as winters in Delray Beach
And a movie to see on Christmas
Chinese food after to eat

There's just one degree of separation
Between all the Jews who are alive
Go back far enough through generations
And you'll learn all the things we did just to survive

Transitioning to a free male
Now my future I hope will be
In the home of a loving female
Who'll enjoy (might be a goy), having a boy like me

Rabbi Gamliel said whoever does not mention these three things on Passover has not fulfilled his duty:
ALL: The sacrifice of Pesach, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs.

The Paschal Lamb פֶּסַח 胚塞喝

ALL: The Paschal Lamb, which our ancestors ate during the existence of the Temple – why was it eaten? Because the Omnipresent, blessed be He, passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt, as it is said: "You shall say, it is a sacrifice of the Passover unto the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote Egyptians and spared our houses, and the people bowed and worshipped." Two thousand years later, Shi Zhongyu's father will be spreading rooster blood on his gates. His neighbors thought it was a little strange, but they didn't mind.

This Matzah מַצָּה 這個馬扎餅 *Show the unleavened bread and say:*

ALL: This Unleavened Bread, which we now eat, what does it mean? It is because the King of Kings, the Holy one, revealed Himself to our ancestors and redeemed them before their dough had time to ferment, as it is written: "They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into unleavened cakes; for they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provision for their journey." Two thousand years later, the Kaifeng will still be making unleavened cakes according to the same recipe.

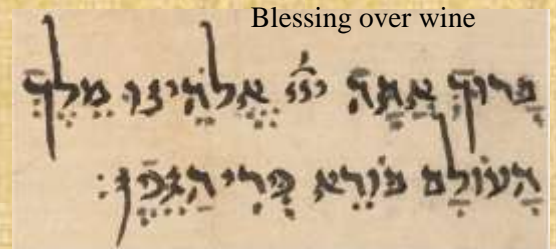
ALL: This bitter herb, which we soon shall eat, what does it mean? It is eaten because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt, as it is written: "They embittered their lives with hard bondage, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of labor in the field. All their labor was imposed upon them with rigor." Our own Kaifeng community may not have used horseradish, since the tradition of a mutton is recorded more recently. Communities around the world use different gustatorial representations for Maror: pretty much as long as it's an unpleasant bitter taste, it's kosher.

In every generation **בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר**

In every generation, each individual is supposed to regard himself as though he personally had come out of Egypt. Certainly the Kaifeng did this by pretending their homes were being visited by the Angel of Death, passed over when the Angel saw the blood on their front gate. Was the Angel fooled by red paint? There's no record of Kaifeng Jews losing their lives during Passover eve, so perhaps.

We Kaifeng Jews have been able to stay together as a community, through thick and thin, for perhaps a thousand years. Our devotion to God and to our traditions kept us together, even if it was due to our fear that if we were to die, Judaism itself would be lost. And so, we give thanks.

ALL: **T**herefore it is our duty to thank and praise, pay tribute and glorify, exalt and honor, bless and acclaim the One who performed all these miracles for our fathers and for us. He took us out of slavery into freedom, out of grief into joy, out of mourning into a festival, out of darkness into a great light, out of slavery into redemption. We will recite a new song before Him! Hallelujah!



Blessing over wine

Second Cup

כוס שני 第二杯

Over the second cup of wine, recite:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן:

Rachtzah

רחצה 拉喝紫

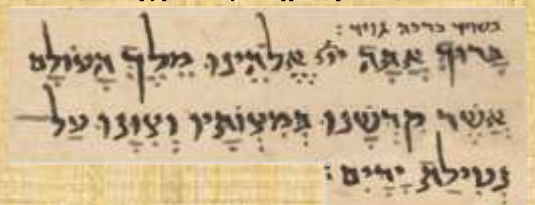
Wash the hands for the meal

We saw this bowl before. They had this limestone basin in the courtyard. The Kaifeng community washed their feet before entering their synagogue. Maybe they used a stone bowl during their seders – most certainly something smaller than this, no one knows – but we'd need a big basin for the large community we have tonight.



ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו על נטילת ידים:

ALL: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.



Take the two whole matzahs and the broken one and say the following blessing:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, המוציא לחם מן הארץ:
ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על אכילת מצה:

ALL: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us concerning the eating of unleavened bread.

Take some bitter herbs, dip them in charoset and say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר:

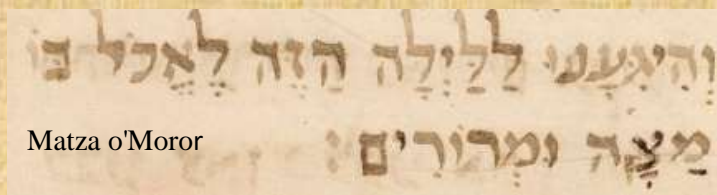
ALL: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us concerning the eating of the bitter herbs (aka mutton soup).

Cecil Roth/Chaim Simons notes that for Korech, the Kaifeng Haggadahs do not have the usual prelude for Hillel's sandwich. They had something similar to some Yemenite communities. I wanted us to say that now, but none of my consultants could find the text. So we'll just say zecher latit [ulateven]: זְכַר לַטִּיט [וּלְתֵבֵן]:

Hillel's Sandwich זְכַר לְמִקְדָּשׁ כְּהִלֵּל

Break the bottom matzah and distribute with some bitter herbs and charoset, and say:

ALL: **T**hus did Hillel during the existence of the Holy Temple: he took matzah and bitter herbs, and ate them together, in order to perform the Law: "With unleavened bread and bitter herbs shall they eat it."



Matza o'Moror

The Festive Meal שְׁלֶחַן עֹרֵךְ 節慶餐

ALL: Now, all eat.

Tzafon צָפוֹן 查風 Find the Afikomen. Eat the Afikomen.

Barech בָּרַךְ 飯後禱告 Grace after meals

Use one of the following versions or your own copy of Birkat Hamazon (... or your favorite Grace)



Pour the third cup and recite Shir Hama'alot and Birkat Hamazon.

[Exclude * paragraphs for shorter prayer]

ברכת המזון

(Read rightmost column first)

שיר המעלות בשוב וְ אֶת שִׁיבַת צִוּוֹן הֵינּוּ כְּחֹלְמִים: אִזּוּ יִמְלֹא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ וְיִשְׁוֹנְנוּ רַנָּה אִזּוּ יֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְדִּיל וְ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי: הַגְדִּיל וְ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הֵינּוּ שְׂמֵחִים: שׁוֹבָה וְ אֶת שְׂבִיתָנוּ כְּאַפְיָקִים בְּנֹגֵב: הַיָּרְעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרַנָּה יִקְצְרוּ: הַלֹּדֶף יִלְךְ וּבִכְחֹ נִשְׂא מְשֻׁד הַזֶּרַע בֹּא יָבֵא בְּרַנָּה נִשְׂא אֲלֻמְתָיו:

- Leader: רבותי בברך!
- Group: יהי שם וְ מברך מעתה ועד עולם.
- Leader: יהי שם וְ מברך מעתה ועד עולם.
- Leader: ברשות החברה, בברך אלהינו שאכלנו משלו.
- Group: ברוך אלהינו שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו.
- Leader: ברוך אלהינו שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו.
- Group: ברוך הוא וברוך שמו:

ברוך אתה וְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךְ הַעוֹלָם, הֵנּוּ אֶת הַעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ בְּטוֹבוֹ בְּחַן בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים הוּא נוֹתֵן לָחֶם לְכֹל בְּשֵׁר כִּי לַעוֹלָם חֶסֶד. וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַגְדוֹל תִּמְיֵד לֹא חֶסֶד לָנוּ, וְאֵל יִחְסֶר לָנוּ מִזֶּן לַעוֹלָם וְעַד. בַּעֲבוּר שְׁמוֹ הַגְדוֹל, כִּי הוּא אֵל זֶן וּמִפְרִנְס לְכֹל וּמִטֵּיב לְכֹל, וּמְכִין מִזֶּן לְכֹל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה וְ, הֵנּוּ אֶת הַכֹּל:

כְּתוּב: וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ, וּבִרְכַתְּ אֶת וְ אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאֲרֶז מִטְבַּח אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה וְ, עַל הָאֲרֶז וְעַל הַמִּזוֹן:

וּבְנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה וְ, בּוֹנֵה בְרַחֲמֵינוּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. אָמֵן.

הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִמְלֹדֶף עָלֵינוּ לַעוֹלָם וָעַד. הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִתְבַּרֵךְ בְּשִׂמְיִם וּבְאֲרָץ. הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ בְּרַכָּה מְרַבָּה בְּבֵית הַזֶּה, וְעַל שְׁלָחוֹ זֶה שְׂאֲכָלְנוּ עָלֵינוּ. הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַנְּבִיא זְכוּר לְטוֹב, וּבִשְׁרָ לָנוּ בְּשׁוֹרֹת טוֹבוֹת יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנַחֲמוֹת.

* הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִבְרַךְ אֶת-כָּל-חֲמִסְוִבִין פֶּאֵן, For communal meals: אוֹתָנוּ וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָנוּ, כְּמוֹ שְׁנֵיתֵיכֶם אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֲבִרְחָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב: בְּכֹל מְכַל כֹּל. כִּן יִבְרַךְ אוֹתָנוּ בְּלֵנוּ יְחַד. בְּבְרַכָּה שְׁלֵמָה, וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

בְּמִרוֹם וְלִמְדוֹ עֲלֵיחֶם וְעָלֵינוּ זְכוּת, שְׁתִּמָּא לְמִשְׁמַרְתָּ שְׁלוֹם, וְנִשְׂא בְּרַכָּה מֵאֵת וְ יִצְדָּקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנִמְצָא חַן וְשִׂקָל טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם:

הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִנַּח יְלָנוּ יוֹם שְׁפָלוֹ שֶׁבֶת Shabbat: וּמְנוּחָא לְחַיֵי הַעוֹלָמִים:

הַרְחֵמוּ, הוּא יִנְחִילָנוּ יוֹם שְׁפָלוֹ טוֹב: Festivals:

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם, עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

* יִרְאוּ אֶת וְ קֹדֶשׁוֹ, כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו: כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרַעֲבוּ, וְדוֹרְשֵׁי וְ לֹא יִחְסְרוּ כֹל טוֹב. חוֹדוּ לֵי כִי טוֹב, כִּי לַעוֹלָם חֶסֶד: פּוֹתַח אֶת יְדֵי, וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכֹל חַי רְצוֹן: בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּיָ, וְהָזָה וְ מְבַטְחוֹ: נַעַר הֵייתִי גַם זְקֵנִיתִי וְלֹא רָאִיתִי צָדִיק נֶעְזֵב, וְזָרַעוּ מִבְּקֹשׁ לָחֶם:

וְ עוֹ לַעֲמוֹ יִתֵּן, וְ יִבְרַךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשְׁלוֹם:

Pour the third cup and recite Shir Hama'alot and Birkat Hamazon.

[Exclude * paragraphs for shorter prayer]

בִּרְכַת הַמְזוֹן

(Read rightmost column first)

Merciful One, be our God forever. Merciful One, heaven and earth alike are blessed by Your presence. Merciful One, bless this house, this table at which we have eaten. Merciful One, send us tidings of Elijah, glimpses of good to come, redemption and consolation.

* For communal meals: הוא יברך את כל חמסובין כאן, אֹתֵנוּ וְאֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָנוּ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְבָּרְכוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֲבֹרְהֵם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב: בְּכֹל מִכַּל כָּל. כֵּן יְבָרֶךְ אֹתֵנוּ בְּלֵנוּ יָחַד. בְּבִרְכַת שְׁלֵמָה, וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

May God bless all who are gathered here and all their families, as well as all dear to us. Even as our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were blessed in every way; so may He bless all of us together with a perfect blessing, and let us say, Amen.

בְּמִרוֹם? לְמַדּוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעֲלֵינוּ זְכוּת, שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לְמִשְׁמַרְתָּ שְׁלוֹם, וְנִשְׂאָ בְרִכָּה מֵאֵת יי וְיִצְדָּקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנִמְצָא חוֹן וְשִׂכָּל טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם:

May our merit and the merit of our fathers secure enduring peace for all of us. May we receive a blessing from the Lord, and justice from the God of our salvation. May we find grace and favor in the sight of God and man.

Shabbat: תְּרַחֵם, הוּא יְנַחֵלְנוּ יוֹם שְׁכָלוֹ שֶׁבַע וְיִמְנַחֵם לַחַיִּי הַעוֹלָמִים:

Merciful One, help us see the coming of when all time is Shabbat.

Festivals: תְּרַחֵם, הוּא יְנַחֵלְנוּ יוֹם שְׁכָלוֹ טוֹב: May God grant us the day that will be entirely good.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם, עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

May the Source of peace grant peace to us, to all Israel, and to all the world. Amen. May the Eternal grant strength to our people. May the Eternal bless our people with peace.

* יִרְאוּ אֶת יי קֹדְשׁוֹ, כִּי אִין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו: כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרָעִבוּ, וְדוֹרְשֵׁי יי לֹא יִחְסְרוּ כָּל טוֹב: חוֹדוּ לַיּוֹם כִּי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד: פּוֹתַח אֵת יְדָי, וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן: בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּיָי, וְחַזַּק יי מִבְּטָחוֹ: נֶעֱזֵב, וְזָרְעוּ מִבְּקֶשׁ לָחֵם:

Revere the Lord, you are His holy ones For those who revere Him suffer no want. Those who deny Him may famish and starve, but they who seek the Lord shall not lack anything that is good. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His mercy endures forever. He opens His hand and satisfies every living thing with favor. Blessed is the man who trusts in God; for the Lord will be his protection.

I have been young, and I have grown older, but I have not seen the righteous man forsaken; nor his children begging for bread.

יי עוֹ לַעֲמוֹ יִתֵּן, יי יְבָרֶךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשְׁלוֹם:

The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוֹב יי אֶת שְׂבִיבַת צִיּוֹן הַיְיָנוּ כְּחֻלְמִים: אֲזַי יִמְלֹא שְׁחוֹק פִּינוּ וְלִשְׁוֹנוֹ רִנָּה אֲזַי לֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְּדִיל יי לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי: הַגְּדִיל יי לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הַיְיָנוּ שְׂמֵחִים: שׁוֹבָה יי אֶת שְׂבִיבַתנוּ כְּאֶפְיָקִים בְּנִיב: הַאֲרָעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ: חֲלוּד יִלְדוּ וּבְכַח נִשְׂא מְשֻׁךְ הַחַרֵּעַ בֹּא יְבֹא בְּרִנָּה נִשְׂא אֲלֵמֹתָיו:

[Psalm 126]

רְבוֹתֵי יְבָרֶךְ!

Let us praise God!

Leader: יְחִי שֵׁם יי מְבָרַךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.
Group: יְחִי שֵׁם יי מְבָרַךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

Leader: Praised be the name of God, now and forever.

Leader: בְּרִשׁוֹת הַחֲבֵרָה, יְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ.
Group: בְּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַיְיָנוּ.

Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten.

Leader: בְּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַיְיָנוּ.
Group: בְּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַיְיָנוּ.

Praised be our God, of whose abundance we have eaten, and by whose goodness we live.

Group: בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ: Praised be the Eternal God.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךְ הַעוֹלָם, הַחַן אֶת הַעוֹלָם כִּלּוֹ בְּטוֹבוֹ בְּחוֹ בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים הוּא נוֹתֵן לָחֵם לְכָל בָּשָׂר כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד: וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַגְּדוֹל תִּמְדִּד לֹא חֶסֶר לָנוּ, וְאֵל יִחְסַר לָנוּ מְזוֹן לְעוֹלָם וָעַד: בְּעֵבֶר שְׁמוֹ הַגְּדוֹל, כִּי הוּא אֵל זֶן וּמִפְרִיָּס לְכָל וּמִטִּיב לְכָל, וּמִכֵּן מְזוֹן לְכָל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הַחַן אֶת הַכֹּל:

God of the universe, we praise You: Your goodness sustains the world. You are the God of grace, love, and compassion, the Source of bread for all who live; for Your love is everlasting. In Your great goodness we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for all. We praise You, O God, Source of food for all who live.

כְּפִתּוֹב: וְאֲכַלְתָּ וְשִׂבַּעְתָּ, וּבְרַכְתָּ אֶת יי אֱלֹהֵיךְ עַל הַאֲרֶץ חֲטֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, עַל הַאֲרֶץ וְעַל הַמְזוֹן:

As it is written: When you have eaten and are satisfied, give praise to your God who has given you this good earth. We praise You, O God, for the earth and for its sustenance.

וּבְנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּמַחְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, בּוֹנֵה בְּרַחֲמֵינוּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. אָמֵן.

Let Jerusalem, the holy city, be renewed in our time. We praise You, Adonai, in compassion You rebuild Jerusalem. Amen.

תְּרַחֵם, הוּא יִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד. תְּרַחֵם, הוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּשִׂמְחִים וּבְאֲרָץ.

תְּרַחֵם, הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ בְּרִכָּה מְרִבָּה בְּבִיַת הַזֶּה, וְעַל שְׁלָחוֹ זֶה שֶׁאֲכַלְנוּ עֲלֵינוּ.

תְּרַחֵם, הוּא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַנְּבִיא זְכוֹר לְטוֹב, וּבִשְׂרָ לָנוּ בְּשׁוֹרוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְשׁוֹעֲרוֹת וְנִחְמוֹת.

Pour the third cup and recite Shir Hama'alot and Birkat Hamazon.

[Exclude paragraphs for shorter prayer]

ברכת המזון

(Read rightmost column first)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, האל אבינו, מלכנו, אדירנו בוראנו, גואלנו, יוצרנו, קדושנו קדוש יעקב, רוצנו רוצה ישראל, המלך הטוב, והמטיב לכל, שבכל יום ויום הוא מטיב, הוא מטיב, הוא ייטיב לנו. הוא גמלנו, הוא גומלנו, הוא גמלנו לעד לחן ולחסד ולרחמים, ולחן המצלה והצלתה ברכה וישועה, נחמה, פרנסה וכלכלה, ורחמים, וחסד ושלוה, וכל טוב, ומכל טוב לעולם אל יחסרנו:

הרחמן, הוא מלוך עלינו לעולם ועד. הרחמן, הוא יתברך בשמים ובארץ. הרחמן, הוא ישתבח לדור דורים, ויתפאר בנו לעד ולנצח ונצח, ויתחדר בנו לעד ולעולמי עולמים. הרחמן, הוא יפרנסנו בכבוד.

הרחמן, הוא ישבור עלנו מעל צנאנו והוא יוליכנו קוממיות לארצנו. הרחמן, הוא ישלח לנו ברכה מרבה בבית הזה, ועל שלחנו זה שאכלנו עליו. הרחמן, הוא ישלח לנו את אלהינו הנביא זכור לטוב, ויבשר לנו בשורות טובות וישועות ונחמות.

הרחמן, הוא יברך את כל המסובין כאן, At communal meals: אותנו ואת כל אשר לנו, כמו שנתברכו אבותינו, אברהם יצחק ויעקב: בכל מכל כל. בו יברך אותנו בלנו נח. בברכה שלמה, ונאמר אמן:

בפרוס ולמדו עליהם ועלינו זכות, שתחא למשמרת שלום, ונשא ברכה מאת יי וצדקה מאתה ישענו, ונמצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלהים ואדם:

הרחמן, הוא יחילנו יום שכלו טוב: Fest: הרחמן, הוא יברך, את מדינת ישראל, ראשית צמיחת גאלתנו: הרחמן, הוא יברך, את אחינו בני ישראל: הנותנים בצרכה, ויוציאם מאפלה לאורח: הרחמן, הוא יזכנו לימות המשיח וילחי העולם הבא.

מגדול וישועות מלכו, ועשה חסד למשיחו, לדוד ולזרעו עד עולם: עשה שלום בפרומי, הוא יעשה שלום, עלינו ועל כל ישראל, ואמרו אמן:

יראו את יי קדשו, כי אין מחסור ליראיו: כפירים רשו ורעבו, ודורשי יי לא יחסרו כל טוב: חודו ליי כי טוב, כי לעולם חסדו: פותח את ידו, ומשביע לכל חי רצון: ברוך הנבר אשר יבטח בו, והיה יי מבטחו: נער חייתי גם זקנתי ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב, וזרעו מבקש לחם:

יי עז לעמו יתן, יי יברך את עמו בשלום:

שיר המעלות בשוב יי את שיבת ציון חיינו כחלמים: אז ימלא שחוק פינו וילשוננו רנה אז יאמרו בגוים הגדיל יי לעשות עם אלה: הגדיל יי לעשות עמנו חיינו שמחים: שובה יי את שביתנו כאפיקים בנגב: חרעים בדםעה ברנה יקצרו: חלוד זלד וכלה נשא משד הצרע בא יבא ברנה נשא אלתמי:

ברכותי בברך: יהי שם יי מברך מעתה ועד עולם. יהי שם יי מברך מעתה ועד עולם. ברשות מרנו ורבונו וברכותי, בברך אלהינו שאכלנו משלו. ברך אלהינו שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו. ברך אלהינו שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו. ברך הוא וברוך שמו:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, חן את העולם פלו בטובו. בחן בחסד וברחמים הוא נותן לחם לכל בשר כי לעולם חסדו. ובטובו הגדול תמיד לא חסר לנו, ואל יחסר לנו מזון לעולם ועד. בעבור שמו הגדול, כי הוא אל ון ומפרנס לכל ומטיב לכל, ומכין מזון לכל ברייתו אשר ברא. ברוך אתה יי, חן את הכל:

נודה לך יי אלהינו על שהנחלת לאבותינו, ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה, ברית ותורה, חיים ומאן. יתברך שמך בפי כל חי תמיד לעולם ועד. כפתוב: ואכלת ושבעת, וברכת את יי אלהיך על הארץ חטבה אשר נתן לך. ברך אתה יי, על הארץ ועל המזון:

רחם נא יי אלהינו, על ישראל עמך, ועל ירושלים עירך, ועל ציון משכן כבודך, ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחך, ועל חבית הגדול ומקדוש שנקרא שמך עליו. אלהינו, אבינו, רענו, זוננו, פרנסנו, וכלכלנו, ומחויבנו, ומחוננו לנו יי אלהינו מחרה מכל צרותינו, ונא, אל תצריכנו יי אלהינו, לא לידי מתנת בשר נדם, ולא לידיחלונאתם. כי אם לקדד המלאה, הפתוחה, מקדושה ומרחבה, שלא נבוש ולא נכלם לעולם ועד:

[If on Shabbat, extra paragraph goes here]

Festivals:

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, יעלה ויבא ויגיע, ויראה, וירצה, וישמע, ויפסד, ויזכר זכרוננו ויפקדוננו, וזכרון אבותינו, וזכרון משיח בן דוד עבדך, וזכרון ירושלים עיר קדשך, וזכרון כל עמך בית ישראל לפניך, לפליטה לטובה לחן ולחסד ולרחמים, לחיים ולשלום ביום חג המצות הזה. זכרנו יי אלהינו בו לטובה, ויפקדנו בו לברכה. והושיענו בו לחיים, ויבדר וישעה ורחמים, חוס וחננו, ורחם עלינו והושיענו, כי אלקי עינינו, כי אל מלך חנון ורחום אתה:

ובנה ירושלים עיר מקדש במתרה גמינו. ברוך אתה יי, בונה ברחמי וירושלים. אמן.

Jews celebrate a new year during Passover (as many of you know, Judaism has four new years – another four!). Nissan was when another year added to the reign of kings. This time period is also the beginning of the lunar year celebrated by the Chinese. Some people see great similarities – even believing one has inspired the other. Warning: very speculative (and probably wrong in some respects).

Comparisons:¹² Exodus and Chinese New Year (so tenuous).

Exactly the same, right! It goes on from there. But this isn't the creation of just this one guy. Many people describe these similarities between Passover and the Chinese New Year, and similarities between Jewish and Chinese values. Showed only because it is interesting.

Back to Kaifeng. We need to come forward in time. First to the 1800's, then to more modern times. The decline of the community had many causes: intermarriage, assimilation, isolation, chaos in China. As the size of their community declined, they were also losing their leadership. Their last rabbi died in 1810. His son was quite unknowledgeable, with none of the scholarship of the father.

"Truly a lack of rabbis, if nothing else, will put a major damper on any Jewish community. There's no rabbi, then there's no one to congregate around. So without this essential leadership to serve the spiritual needs of the Jews, their slide into assimilation and the abandonment of their faith and traditions, happen that much faster. The ability to read Hebrew was one of the first things to go." (Chinese History Podcast¹³)

Then in 1841, the Yellow River flooded again, and wiped away the re-re-re-re-re-restored synagogue. It was never rebuilt again. The former congregants were poor and had lost knowledge of Hebrew and most of the rituals.

In the mid 1800's, they displayed the Torah scrolls in the central marketplace with a sign beseeching anyone who knew how to read Hebrew, to come seek them out. One source said a sign offered a reward in exchange for translation. By 1850-51, the synagogue was in ruins. Poverty was so widespread that surviving Jews sold six Torah scrolls and several dozen liturgical books to emissaries of the Anglican missionary society, the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Jews. Later, three more Torahs and other manuscripts were sold.

Most manuscripts we have today (Torahs, Siddurs, and the two Haggadahs) were due to those Anglican missionaries, who preserved all manuscripts they could get their hands on. Much is currently in the Klau Library at Hebrew Union College, other libraries, museums and private collections around the world. Quite a bit was returned to Kaifeng and is in the town's museum.

Around 1857, a small remnant of the community was seen still davening on Shabbat and celebrating holidays such as Sukkot and Passover.¹⁴ But it was just the elderly and it wouldn't last long.

A letter from 1866: "Morning and night with tears in our eyes and with offerings of incense, do we implore that our religion may again flourish. We sought elsewhere, but could find none who understood Hebrew, which causes us deep sorrow."

Around this time in the 1860's, they dismantled the synagogue, and sold off its timber and stone to pay for food. The land was deeded to Anglican missionaries in the early 1900's.

In all the time that Jews lived there, from 700's or 800's: "China never persecuted the Jews from ancient times, all the way up until [through] World War II when Harbin and Shanghai swung open their doors and gave refuge to Jews fleeing Russia and Europe. China always had a good track record as far as getting along with the Jewish people and making room for them somewhere." (Chinese History Podcast)

We'll learn about the present day, after yet more 葡萄酒. (Here's another item that was missing from the Kaifeng Haggadah, the third cup. Can't skip that!)

¹² Sampled from [youtube.com/watch?v=fVLKyEMxDyc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVLKyEMxDyc)

¹³ Sampled from [youtube.com/watch?v=J3G_wwG0P7U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3G_wwG0P7U)

¹⁴ After his visit to Kaifeng in 1857, Lieberman referred to "a room set aside for weekly prayer meetings." It would thus seem that even then there was at least a minyan of worshippers. Edward Isaac, *Chinese Jews* (Shanghai, 1925)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַתְּנָפֶן:

Over the next century – continuing to the present day – outsiders tried to revive the community.



In the 1900's, a wealthy Iraqi businessman, Elias Sasoon, supported the Society for the Rescue of the Chinese Jews, which tried to relocate Kaifeng Jews to the capital. Lots of effort over the course of three decades, but very little to show for it. (The Sasoon family has been very influential in Shanghai, even funding two synagogues for Jews living there.) The Anglican Bishop William Charles White also tried to revive the community through the 1910's. (The Bishop coordinated a convention in 1919 to gather Western experts along with all the descendants, with the aim of re-establishing the community.¹⁵) Both efforts had no lasting success. Throughout the 20th C, a smattering



of Jewish travelers took an interest in Kaifeng and would visit the community and its museum, as tourists.

Now with the creation of the State of Israel, more recent attempts have tried to help those willing to make Aliya. Recently, one Israel-based organization, Shavei Israel ("Returners of Israel"), ran a school there and facilitated two groups making Aliya from China in the 2000's.



The Sino-Judaic Institute [logo at right], which funds scholarship and research into the communities of "Lost Jews," is focused more on supporting the existing community with education programs and scholarships.



Aliyas in 2009¹⁶ and 2016¹⁷ (There's another video of them singing MaOz Tzur.)

Now since we show Chinese people singing in Hebrew, as counterpoint, we have this from a couple of Brooklynites.



B'klynites¹⁸ speaking Chinese.

Our final video must be this. It's a more serious look at China, and a nice summation of the Kaifeng, from the co-director of the Endangered Language Alliance. Since we're crossing languages ...

Yiddish overview of Kaifeng.¹⁹

Now let's bring ourselves to present times. Recent news has been much sadder. Due to 1) widely publicized seders led by Shavei and the Sino-Judaic Institute, 2) a request for political asylum for religious persecution, 3) a long-standing prohibition against proselytizing, among other factors, authorities responded harshly and vigorously in 2016. All Jewish tours to Kaifeng were suspended, exhibits in a nearby park and two local museums were closed. The Kaifeng Jews were prohibited from meeting collectively. Police ordered individual families to remove mezuzahs from their doorposts.

Even the well, revered by the Kaifeng Jews as the last remaining part of their long-destroyed synagogue site, was filled in and closed off. Individual Jewish families are still gathering to observe Jewish holy days as best they can. China experts say the crackdown is not directed only against the Jews, but is a national campaign against unapproved minority religions, of which Judaism is one.

The Kaifeng community has been through worse, but I wish the chapter being written now wasn't so bleak. This is an appropriate place to demand God's wrath, as a proxy for our own anger and frustration at the current situation, just as Jews have done during times of anger and frustration in past centuries.

¹⁵ In 1912, Bishop White bought one of the stones for safekeeping at his church

¹⁶ Sampled from [youtube.com/watch?v=JmcaAfe8GBw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmcaAfe8GBw)

¹⁷ Sampled from [youtube.com/watch?v=edhtdoPukk0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edhtdoPukk0)

¹⁸ Sampled from [youtube.com/watch?v=7aHIGPB0PVQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aHIGPB0PVQ)

¹⁹ Sampled from www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdcnkL6ANYE

Pour out Your wrath upon the nations and leaders that do not acknowledge You, and upon official policies that belittle You. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let the wrath of Your anger overtake them. Pursue them with anger, and destroy them from beneath the heavens of the Lord. **LEADER:** (I'm more in favor of a *rapprochement*, to achieve harmonious relations, but that wasn't the intention of the Psalmist. However, I'm heartened by the viewpoint that the implementation of vengeance is God's business, not ours.)

Finally, we learn about last year. One of the Kaifeng men who made Aliya in 2009 got married in 2020 during the pandemic. His family in China had previously secured all the necessary visas and arranged for expensive flights to participate in his wedding. The pandemic scuttled those plans.

Let's look at a wider perspective: it's clear that Jews lived in other cities. We mentioned that the port city of Ningbo provided a Torah the first time Kaifeng lost its synagogue. In centuries past, Jews were also in Yangzhou, Quanzhou and Hangzhou.

In more recent times, they came to the cities of Harbin, Shanghai and Beijing. But in those larger cities, these weren't historical settlements like Kaifeng. Harbin's population were Russian Jews who were escaping the pogroms of the late 1800's; those in Shanghai, were eastern Europeans who came in the late 1800's and Russians in the 1900's, as well as Iraqis such as the Sasoon family. (The family was known as the 'Rothschilds of the East.')

And finally, Americans and others came to Beijing in the 1970's. The person who developed the Shanghai Haggadah was an ex-pat Israeli, who led tours of Jewish Shang-Chai.

But none of those communities has a story anywhere near as uniquely compelling as Kaifeng, an isolated community that thrived against nearly all odds.

"Kaifeng was the capital of China in the northern Song dynasty. Today it doesn't have an airport or a train station. It's the boondocks." (Rabbi Tokayer²⁰) It's amazing this town has such a storied history.

The Kaifeng Jews today are a symbol of the larger story of Jewish survival, those who kept a flame alive, around the world, in spite of prejudice, discrimination, oppression, persecution, expulsion and war.

It's almost as though there was an invisible hand, helping us, guiding us. Certainly the ancient Rabbis thought so. To help us survive, so we could keep alive the hope and dreams. Who best to bring those, if not Elijah.

Host opens the waiting room for Elijah

Elijahu Hanavi: 兒哩耶呼 哈那非

ALL: Eliyahu Hanavi, Eliyahu ha-Tishbi;
Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu ha-Giladi.

Beem-hei-rah, V'yamaynu,
Yavo ei-leinu.
/ Eem moshiach, ben David /

Now let's look at an even wider perspective. The person describing Kaifeng as the boondocks was Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, who for many years was the Chief Rabbi of Japan. How many rabbis were there in Japan?

"Asia is a missing page from Jewish history books" (Rabbi Tokayer)

Hallel הלל 哈類兒 *Pour the fourth cup and recite Hallel.*

ALL: Not for our sake, O Lord, not for our sake, but for Your name's sake give glory, because of Your kindness and Your truth.

The Lord who has remembered us will bless; He will bless the house of Israel ... Hallelujah!

How can I repay the Lord for all His kind acts toward me? I will raise the cup of salvations, and call upon the name of the Lord ... Hallelujah!

Give thanks to the Lord, all you nations; praise Him, all you peoples!

²⁰ Sampled from jtsa.edu/pepper-silk-ivory-amazing-stories-about-jews-and-the-far-east

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;

His kindness endures forever	כי לעולם תסדו:	To him who parted the Red Sea,	כי לעולם תסדו:
Give thanks to the God above gods, ...	כי לעולם תסדו:	And caused Israel to pass through it,	כי לעולם תסדו:
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,	כי לעולם תסדו:	And threw Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea,	כי לעולם תסדו:
To Him who alone does great wonders,	כי לעולם תסדו:	To Him who led His people through the wilderness,	כי לעולם תסדו:
To Him who made the heavens with understanding,	כי לעולם תסדו:	To Him who smote great kings,	כי לעולם תסדו:
To Him who stretched the earth over the waters,	כי לעולם תסדו:	And slew mighty kings,	כי לעולם תסדו:
To Him who made the great lights,	כי לעולם תסדו:	Sihon, king of the Amorites,	כי לעולם תסדו:
The sun to reign by day,	כי לעולם תסדו:	And Og, king of Bashan,	כי לעולם תסדו:
The moon and the stars to reign by night,	כי לעולם תסדו:	And gave their land as an inheritance,	כי לעולם תסדו:
To Him who smote Egypt in their firstborn,	כי לעולם תסדו:	An inheritance to Israel His servant,	כי לעולם תסדו:
And took Israel out from among them,	כי לעולם תסדו:	Who remembered us in our low state,	כי לעולם תסדו:
With a strong hand and an outstretched arm,	כי לעולם תסדו:	And released us from our foes,	כי לעולם תסדו:
	כי לעולם תסדו:	Who gives food to all creatures,	כי לעולם תסדו:

Fourth Cup פוס רביעית 第四杯

The blessing over wine is said and the fourth cup is drunk while reclining:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי תגפן:

ALL: **B**lessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, for the vine and its fruit, and for the produce of the field, for the beautiful and spacious land which You gave to our fathers as a heritage to eat of its fruit and to enjoy its goodness. Have mercy, Lord our God, on Israel your people, on Jerusalem your city, on Zion the abode of your glory, on your altar and your Temple. Rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days. Bring us there and cheer us with its restoration; may we eat of its fruit and enjoy of its goodness; may we bless You for it in holiness and purity; and grant us happiness on this Feast of Matzot; For Thou, O Lord, are good and beneficent to all; we thank You for the land and the fruit of the vine. (OK, now the fourth cup is drunk.)

Well that's the thousand-year-old story of the Jews of Kaifeng. Surviving many natural disasters. Sometimes very prosperous, sometimes desperately poor. Keeping their faith alive through thick and thin. Always tenacious. Almost always feeling they were the last outpost of Jewry. Always having the respect of their fellow townspeople. And until recent times, unknown to most of the world. We conclude their story with the hope that the tiny spark, held in those remaining, will somehow have a brighter future. If Judaism in China does disappear because of assimilation, their descendants certainly have an amazing history to be proud of.

Nirtzah נרצה 尼兒札

ALL: **T**his Seder now concludes with traditional words: According to Halacha, our seder is complete in all laws and ordinances. Just as we were privileged to celebrate it tonight, so may we be granted to perform it again. Oh Lord, who dwells in the heights above, establish us as a countless people once again, speedily guide Israel as a redeemed people, to the land of Zion with song. 明年在耶路撒冷

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM? NEXT YEAR IN CHINA!? NEXT YEAR, ANYWHERE IN PERSON!

ALL: *L'Shana Haba'a, B'Yerushalayim ... Habnuya!*

This is the first day of the Omer

Ki Lo Naeh כי לו נאה Adir Hu אדיר הוא Echad Mi Yodea אחד מי יודע? לשנה הבאה בירושלים: היום יום אחד לעומר

חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא

חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא
 דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.

Leader and chorus version

One little goat "Ma Ma"
 That my Abba bought "Thanks Dad"
 With two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came a cat "Meow"
 That ate the little goat "Ma Ma"
 That my Abba bought "Thanks Dad"
 With two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came a dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came a stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came a fire ("Ouch"); That burned the stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came some water ("Whoosh"); That put out the fire ("Ouch"); That burned the stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came an ox ("Moo"); That drank up all the water ("Whoosh"); That put out the fire ("Ouch"); That burned the stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came a shochet ("Chop"); Who slaughtered the ox ("Moo"); That drank up all the water ("Whoosh"); That put out the fire ("Ouch"); That burned the stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then came the Angel of Death ("BOO"); Who slaughtered the shochet ("Chop"); Who slaughtered the ox ("Moo"); That drank up all the water ("Whoosh"); That put out the fire ("Ouch"); That burned the stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.

And then there came our God ("Yay!"); Who killed Angel of Death ("BOO"); Who slaughtered the shochet ("Chop"); Who slaughtered the ox ("Moo"); That drank up all the water ("Whoosh"); That put out the fire ("Ouch"); That burned the stick ("Whack"); That hit the little dog ("Ruff Ruff"); That bit the little cat ("Meow"); That ate the little goat ("Ma Ma"); That my Abba bought ("Thanks Dad"); with two Gold coins, Chad Gadya, Chad Gadya.



חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא

דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.

וְאַתָּא שׁוֹחֵט, וְאַתָּא לְגַדְיָא, דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.

וְאַתָּא כֶּלֶב, וְנִשְׁדָּ לְשׁוֹחֵט, דְּאַתָּא לְגַדְיָא, דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.

וְאַתָּא חוּטְרָא, וְחִפָּה לְכֶלֶב, דְּנִשְׁדָּ לְשׁוֹחֵט, דְּאַתָּא לְגַדְיָא, דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.

וְאַתָּא עֵז, וְשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּחִפָּה לְכֶלֶב, דְּנִשְׁדָּ לְשׁוֹחֵט, דְּאַתָּא לְגַדְיָא, דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.

וְאַתָּא מַיָּא, וְכַבָּה לְעֵז, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּחִפָּה לְכֶלֶב, דְּנִשְׁדָּ לְשׁוֹחֵט, דְּאַתָּא לְגַדְיָא, דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא.²

וְאַתָּא תּוֹרָא, וְשַׁתָּא לְמַיָּא, דְּכַבָּה לְעֵז, דְּשָׂרְף לְחוּטְרָא, דְּחִפָּה לְכֶלֶב, דְּנִשְׁדָּ לְשׁוֹחֵט, דְּאַתָּא לְגַדְיָא, דְּזָבִין אַבְיָא בְּתַרְי זִיגִי, חַד גַּדְיָא, חַד גַּדְיָא!!²

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