

# Rachatz – Washing of the hands before the meal.

Contributed by [JQ International](#)

Source: JQ International GLBT Haggadah

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

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha'Olam*

*Asher Kidshanu Bemitzvotav Ve-Tzivanu Al Netilat Yadayim.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe,  
who sanctifies us with commandments, and commands us to wash our hands

“Mitzrayim,” Hebrew for Egypt, literally means narrow straits. Judaic commentary has always viewed Mitzrayim as more than the literal escape from slavery, more than an escape from a place of narrow straits, an obviously accurate physical description of Egypt, but metaphorically the leaving behind or “exodus” from a narrow place – the place that squeezes the life out of the human soul and body. Mitzrayim is viewed as an intrinsically constrictive state; a state where we are unable to express ourselves and be free, to be who we are as we seek to define ourselves to others.

Besides the obvious homophone (words with different meanings and different spellings but the same pronunciation) of strait and straight, which parallels the Israelites liberation and escape from narrow straits, a place of oppression, our GLBT community often seeks escape from narrow-minded straits. We gather here today as the result of GLBT activists that struggled and fought for the rights and privileges we have today and from the support of countless GLBT allies in the straight community. Those allies who have stood by us personally in our lives and those who we will never know that have stood by countless other GLBTs in our community today and historically. These straight allies have escaped narrow mindedness and chose the path of justice and righteousness.

We spend a lot of time focusing on those outside our community that we feel hold us down and fail to recognize us as equal or worthy of equal rights, but at what point will we focus on what holds us back from within the GLBT community? How can we work from within our community to improve how we view ourselves, our souls and the value of our gender identity and sexual orientation?