

STEPHEN
WISE TEMPLE



"And you shall teach your child on that day..."

(Exodus 13:8)

“וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא...”

Haggadah Supplement 2024

מוֹסֵף לְהַגְדָּה שֶׁל פֶּסַח תשפ"ד

“AND YOU SHALL TEACH YOUR CHILD ON THAT DAY....”

Israeli educator Rabbi Mishael Zion writes of the first seder he conducted in 2002. He was a 21-year old IDF soldier, serving in Rafah-the border between Egypt and Gaza. Home on leave for the holiday, he spent hours and hours with his father, Rabbi Noam Zion, preparing to lead. And then, he writes: “When we finally sat down to the meal, my uncle pulled me aside and said: “There has been a Hamas suicide bombing at the Park Hotel seder in Netanya. Should we tell everyone?” At that moment the joy of the holiday was turned to mourning.” It was also the first year that I celebrated *seder* in Jerusalem.

2 years later, in 2004, the first version of their remarkable *haggadah*, *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices (The Israeli Haggadah)* was published. And almost 20 years later, they had gathered a group of scholars and writers and illustrators and educators to create a new edition, written for a new generation of parents and children. And then, just after that effort had kicked off: October 7. Like every parent, educator, rabbi, and Jew, Rabbi Zion was wondering: what does *seder* look like after October 7. What does it mean to celebrate our freedom when our brothers and sisters are in captivity? What does it mean to rejoice when our hearts are broken? Turning to the *kibbutz haggadot* written over 70 years ago by the founders of the very same *kibbutzim* attacked on October 7, he was moved by the idea that, as he writes: the power of the Exodus is not only in the covenant of common fate that we forged, but also a covenant of destiny.

But more than that, he writes:

In the end it all comes back to the family table. ...The Haggadah reminds us that our family story is always a combination of two things: the memory of the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in Egypt and the commandment to believe that next year we will be free people.

This year, our *Haggadah* supplement was inspired by the foundational commandment of the Exodus: You shall teach your child on that day.....In these pages are reflections on the transformative work of teaching the power, lessons, and promises of the *seder*.

We hope you find inspiration, challenge, and seder table conversation in these words from your clergy, and we wish you all a *chag sameach v'kasher*, a joyous and meaningful Passover.

Rabbi Sari Laufer
Chief Engagement Officer

HOW SHALL WE CELEBRATE PESACH THIS YEAR?

***A Haggadah for This Time, published by the Israel Movement
For Reform and Progressive Judaism***

Passover is a festival of joy. It is the holiday of spring, freedom and redemption. This year, we welcome the holiday with heavy hearts in the shadow of war, when many of us won't celebrate in our homes. Some will be on guard in the military, others still wounded in hospitals, and 133 others still in captivity in Gaza. This year, we blend sorrow with joy, and so we must give space to our pain through changes that emphasize partnership, mutual commitment, and solidarity.

1. A glass half full - The sages instructed us to drink four cups of wine during the Passover Seder, each representing one of the four words of salvation: *vahotzeiti*, *vahitzalti*, *vaga'alti*, *valakachti*. This year, our salvation is not complete; how can we celebrate when many are no longer with us? Just as we lower the flag to half-mast, this year we will fill our glasses halfway and hope that soon we will be able to fill them completely.
2. Yellow ribbons - We will adorn the table with yellow ribbons associated with the struggle for the release of hostages, and symbolizing threads of longing and hope.
1. An empty chair - We will not be able to set the table as usual this year and celebrate as in past years, while so many are still held captive and so many of us are no longer here. This year, we will add an extra chair which waits for the return home of those who were taken. On the chair, we may place a picture of loved ones who are not with us, and before we begin the *Seder*, we will include a prayer for the peace of the captives.
1. *Yachatz* (breaking of the Matzah) - Our hearts are divided in two, this year when we break the matzah in half, we acknowledge the brokenness and heartache.

BA'AVUR ZEH: ON SACRED PURPOSE

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback

וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם:

And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is *ba'avur zeh* that God brought me out of Egypt.'
(Exodus 13:8)

This source text of our Haggadah points to the purpose not just of this holiday, but arguably of Jewish life more broadly.

Much could be said about the act of imagination required to fulfill this commandment. We are to tell our children in our day that God parted the sea and liberated **us** from Egyptian bondage, even though it was, of course, actually our ancestors from 100 generations ago, who experienced the miracle firsthand.

I want to focus this year on two words that I chose, intentionally not to translate in the verse above. In the context of the sentence, those words (*ba'avur zeh*) probably mean, "for this reason." It seems to refer back to the previous verse, which commands us to refrain from eating leavened bread for seven days in the Passover season. Why do we eat matzah? Because of what God did for our ancestors and for us when we went forth from Egypt. The miracle was so profound that it reverberates through the generations.

But I want to suggest that this little phrase be understood more expansively. It can mean "for this purpose" which points us toward something much bigger.

The **purpose** of telling the story of Passover — the master narrative of the Jewish People — is to make us more empathetic, compassionate, sensitive people. Again and again our Torah tells us: "You know the heart of the stranger, the other, the oppressed one, because you were strangers, you were 'others,' you were oppressed in the land of Egypt."

That's the core of what we are required to tell our children, the generations to come.

Seder is a time for family, a time for yummy food, a time for thanksgiving and cheer.

But above all else — *ba'avur zeh* — it exists for the sacred purpose of shaping us and our children and the generations to come into better people.



SILVER DOLLARS: CONNECTING ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Cantor Emma Lutz

The Passover seder is a singular learning experience because the entire family is invited to share in the course. We are not divided by our age, learning level, abilities or experience—we explore the Haggadah and retell the story of freedom together so that each of us might embrace the holiday's significance in our own way. Whether wise, rebellious, simple, or quiet, we are all instructed to imagine the Passover story as our own, and within the framework of the seder, we are encouraged to customize the experience so that we might bring our own creativity and knowledge to this Jewish group project.

Like so many, I have wonderful childhood memories of seder with family and best friends. An old aunt squeezed and grabbed our cheeks and remarked on how much we had grown. Our parents asked us meaningful questions, engaging our minds in deep thought about the importance of freedom. The songs filled us with joy and gratitude, and everyone buzzed from four cups of sugary grape juice or wine. And my absolute favorite moment of the seder was when the grandparents awarded a silver dollar to the child who discovered the Afikomen, remembering, of course, to have enough coins in their pockets for every child there so no one left disappointed. Who doesn't love a holiday whose lesson plan includes a good game of hide and seek? And an inexpensive and simple but shining and creative prize made this moment everlasting for every single one of us, grownup and child alike.

These days, my favorite part of the seder is still the unearthing of the hidden Afikomen, our shared piece of dessert matzah. My daughter Ruby, and my nephew, Guy, have been talking all year long about hunting down the Afikomen again. How special that this sport of seeking not only teaches us about a piece of our ceremonial table, but it also connects us to generations before who observed this ritual tracing back to our ancestors who lived in Hellenistic Greece ("Afikomen" originating from the Greek word for "after-dinner fun"). This year, when the kids race around the house searching for the Afikomen, I will lovingly recall my grandparents pulling the shiny silver dollars out of their pockets, and I will respectfully remember the lessons they taught me around the seder table. As we relive and retell our People's story, let us pray for the generations to come and the celebration of endless seders filled with play, joy, creativity, unity, and hope.



PASSOVER SEDER: THREE MESSAGES FOR US AND OUR CHILDREN

Rabbi David Woznica

While there is much to convey at our Passover Seder, I believe the following three messages are especially important.

I. The History of our Exodus from Egypt

The Torah records the Israelites left Canaan to go to Egypt to avoid a famine. The Israelites were initially well-received. However, “A new King arose over Egypt, one who did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8) and this King (Pharaoh) fearful of the Israelites, enslaved us. Ultimately, slavery would not suffice as the Egyptians want to eradicate our people by killing all male infants.

Moses, directed by God, calls upon the Hebrews to worship God and to freedom. In the events described in the Haggadah, the Israelites are freed from slavery. The Egyptians, however, ultimately find this unacceptable and chase after the Israelites. The Israelites are saved, and the Egyptians destroyed.

II. God's Role

A primary message of Passover is that God freed our people. In the words of the Torah, “And you shall remember you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Adonai, your God, has taken you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.” (Deuteronomy 5:15). God heard our people's cries, and cared about human beings. God did not simply create human beings and “walk away.”

Perhaps the most chilling reading at the Seder is, “And it is that this has stood for our ancestors and for us. Not only one (person or nation) has arisen to annihilate us, but rather, in each generation, they arise to annihilate us. But the Blessed Holy One rescues us from their hand.” It has been a central theme of Jewish history, one we are witnessing at this very moment with the attack against Israel, not only by the evil-doers but also by a large number of people and countries who support them.

God does not save every Jew from evil-doers. The promise is that God will save “us”, the Jewish people. And, despite all the attempts to annihilate us, often by those far more powerful than us, we are, remarkably, still here.



III. Evil is Destroyed

The Torah teaches, "You shall eradicate evil from your midst" (Deuteronomy 21:21).

It is noteworthy that the Egyptian army was destroyed. And it is noteworthy this was only after many opportunities to change. After each of the plagues, Pharaoh could have freed our people, and the Egyptians would have been left to their own devices.

Even after the tenth plague, God's smiting of the firstborn, when Pharaoh finally relents, the Egyptians could have gone on with their lives. It is only after Pharaoh has a change of heart and when the Egyptian army chases the Israelites into the Red Sea that God closes the sea on them, and they are destroyed.

The Exodus from Egypt proclaims to the world that there is a different and better way to live, and God wants human beings to live in freedom and dignity. The Exodus tells us that we should not accept nor reconcile ourselves to evil in this world. The Exodus, then, is not only history; it is to be part of the future. All who are free to celebrate the Exodus of our people from tyranny are to help liberate others who, today, are not free.

With wishes for a kosher and meaningful Passover

"And you shall teach your child on that day..."

“וְהַגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא...”

IN PRAISE OF CURIOSITY

Rabbi Josh Knobel

חֶכְם מַה הוּא אוֹמֵר, מָה הַעֲדוּת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתָנוּ?

What does the Wise [child say]? What are the testimonies and the laws and the statutes that Adonai, our God, has commanded us?

(Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ismael, Pischa 18)

The retelling of the Passover story at our seders begins with someone, typically the youngest child, asking the four questions. Often, we ascribe this tradition to the simple act of keeping children active and engaged with the seder, but there may be more than meets the eye to this custom.

The Passover seder includes the midrashic tale of four children, one wise, one wicked, one simple, and one who cannot ask, each with their own inquiry at the seder. The wise child begins by asking about all the exposition, rituals, and rules of the seder.

When children ask the four questions, they imitate the wise child from the midrash, beginning the seder with the same sense of inquisitiveness and enthusiasm as indicated therein. By beginning with questions, our children remind themselves and us that true wisdom comes not from having all the answers, but from curiosity and a passion for discovery.

As our family's youngest child, I often received the task of launching us into our seder. I can still recall the progression of emotions I felt throughout my years of chanting the questions in Hebrew and English. As a kindergartener, I began the tradition with zeal and joy. As I got older, my recitations became more reserved, having already equated the practice with youthfulness and ignorance. It wasn't until adulthood that I realized that the four questions are meant to remind us that we possess ignorance throughout our lives. But the only antidote for ignorance is to return to the curiosity of our youth, to remember how to once again become the wise child.



MA NISHTANAH FOUR QUESTIONS FOR THIS PESACH SEDER, 2024/5784

Rabbi Gil Nativ

English: Rabbi Daniel Burstyn

Ma Nishtanah haSeder hazeh mikol Sidrei HaPesach?

1. Why is this Seder different from all previous Pesach Seders?
While at all other Pesach seders we see ourselves as if we left Egypt,
halaila hazeh tonight we see ourselves as if we escaped the Gaza Envelope.
2. While at all other Pesach seders we eat the bitter herbs of Egyptian slavery,
halaila hazeh tonight we eat the bitter herbs of Gaza.
3. While at all other Pesach seders we dip in salt water,
halaila hazeh tonight we dip in real tears.
4. While at all other Pesach seders we recline in comfort,
halaila hazeh tonight we tremble in fear of bad news that might come to our door at any moment.

Optimistic question possibilities:

1. How is this night different from all the nights since Shmini Atzeret, 5784?
While on all other nights our sleep was bothered by worries,
tonight we renew our hope.
2. While on all other nights we expected destruction,
tonight we witness renewal and the beginning of *tekumah*, rebuilding.
3. While on all other nights we counted the injured and the dead,
tonight we share in the joy of the healing and the rehabilitation.
4. While on all other nights our table had empty seats,
tonight we hug those who have returned home.

FOUR DIFFICULTIES FOR THIS YEAR'S SEDER

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback

I remember the first time our oldest daughter sang the four questions at a family seder. It was of course beyond adorable. It also filled Jacqueline and me with a deep sense of pride. Another link was being added to the chain of Jewish tradition. Like generations of children before her, our daughter's sweet voice joined the Jewish communal conversation.

Our tradition interestingly calls this part of the seder the “Four Difficulties” (אַרְבַּע הַקְּשִׁיּוֹת - *Arba HaKushiyot*), not the “Four Questions.” It's really just one question, “How is this night different from all others” with various challenges (difficulties) pointed out, i.e., “On other nights we eat both leavened and unleavened products. Tonight, only unleavened.” This year, the questions—and difficulties—seem even heavier.

In this moment of collective pain and sorrow, I want to suggest four “difficulties” that are particularly resonant in 5784/2024.

1. Today is 196 days since our captives were taken from us. Over six months into this terrible war, we continue to mourn those murdered on October 7 and the hundreds of fallen soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice since then. We sympathize with the more than 100,000 Israelis who are still internal refugees. We are still shaken from the trauma of this past Shabbat afternoon when we waited in fear to see how Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel would unfold. Each day we hear another story of how our children are being forced to confront virulent antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric on their college and high-school campuses. We are tired. We are in pain. **How do we not give in to despair? How do we hold on to hope?**
2. After a few initial days of solidarity and sympathy, it seems that the world has forgotten why we are even fighting this war. But for Hamas, the cease fire that existed on October 6 would still be in place and the suffering that has been inflicted on our people (as well as their own) would not have occurred. We feel at times isolated, an embodiment of the [text](#) from the Book of Numbers that describes our ancestors as: “a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations.” **At such a moment, how do we acknowledge these feelings without forgetting that we have real friends, true allies who have stood with us through hard times and who will, God willing, be there for us in the future?**
3. The struggle we are engaged in is no sprint, it's a marathon. If history is a predictor of what will unfold going forward, we will need the strength, courage, and resilience to stand up for ourselves in the face of antisemitism for many generations to come. In the face of double-standards, demonization, and delegitimization, we will need to defend Israel continually. Recently, Franklin Foer argued in [The Atlantic](#) that the “Jewish vacation from history” is over. **In such a time, where can we find the *koach* (כֹּחַ - “energy, strength”) to continue to build Jewish community and embrace our glorious, 3000- year-old heritage? How will we nurture the resilience we need in the face of real enemies who seek our harm to stand up for our inalienable rights as Jews and human beings to liberty, autonomy, happiness, security, and life?**

4. I don't know about you, but in addition to sadness and pain I have felt a great deal of anger well up inside of me over these past six months. When I hear story after story of the victims of October 7, those who survived the trauma, and those whose lives have been upended as a result, I sometimes feel rage. In our traditional Haggadah, we ask that God "pour out wrath" on those who seek our harm. It's an understandable response to thousands of years of antisemitism that has resulted in pogroms, massacres, and even Holocaust. But I fear that anger and hatred will ultimately consume us and distort the essence of who we are as Jews, a people described by our tradition as "compassionate ones, the descendents of compassionate ones (רַחֲמִימִים בְּנֵי רַחֲמִימִים)." Our essential nature is to be loving, good-hearted people. There are times for anger and wrath but our default must be love, empathy, and compassion. **How do we remain a loving, kind-hearted people in the face of the very real hatred that is directed towards us?**

Let's just acknowledge that these four difficulties are **a lot**. I don't know about you, but I'd rather just default to the traditional "Four Questions." They are a lot easier: why do we eat matzah and maror, why do we dip our foods not just once but twice, and why do we recline while eating? The difficulties above are much harder, more nuanced and more painful. But sometimes, often really, **history acts on us** and we have no choice but to respond. The *kushiyot* (questions) of October 7 and its aftermath cannot be ignored. They are, tragically, part of a pattern of challenges going back at least until the time of the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

And perhaps that's part of the way we manage all of these new/old difficulties. As we sit at our Passover tables and retell the story, we remind ourselves of the many moments of redemption, liberation, and joy that have been scattered throughout the moments of oppression, trauma, and pain. We have crossed through narrow spaces before and made it to the Promised Land. We have experienced deliverance in our own lifetimes: 1948, 1967, and perhaps even this past Saturday evening. No matter the difficulties: עוד לא אבדה תקותנו (od lo avda tikvateinu) – we have not yet (nor must we ever) lose our hope.

May this festival of our freedom be one that inspires in us and all Israel strength, resilience, determination, compassion, love, and *tikvah*.



WHY DO WE TELL THIS STORY?

Rabbi Sari Laufer

The seder does not end in the Promised Land. Time and again, I come back to this. It is a choice, made by our Sages millennia ago, to end our seder short of its goal, to end the seder in the wilderness and the wandering. It is the choice that, maybe this year especially, feels poignant and profound.

Last summer, I had the incredible gift of bringing my children—then 9 and 6—to Israel. Both graduates of our Aaron Milken Center Hebrew Immersion program, I wanted them to hear the sounds of Israel all around them. I wanted them to see the sights they had “visited” in Wise School Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations. I wanted to them fall in love with Israel—its history and its vibrancy. I wanted them—through the corridors of the *shuk* and the spectacular beaches and the Saturday night protests for democracy and the twice-daily ice cream—to see Israel as a miracle, not despite its challenges, but because of them. Little did I know in August how important that trip would be for them, and for me.

In a resource dedicated to Passover 2024, this Passover 6 months after the horrible events of October 7, poet and liturgist Tricia Arlin offered the following, entitled Why Do We Tell This Story? It is a piece that is—like the best of Jewish liturgy—completely timeless and deeply of the moment, and it is a piece on which I have been reflecting as Passover approaches. She writes:

*Why do we tell this story?
To remember how we got to Sinai and Torah
So that we can recognize righteous struggle
And have patience for the long hauls.
Why do we tell this story?
To remember this narrative that creates a people
So we can cherish our myth
And hope repetition somehow makes it true.
Why do we tell this story?
To remember when we were underdogs and heroes
So that we can study the times when we are not
And do the right things when we should.*

Our story—our national story and our personal ones—are narratives of journey. They are not linear, and they are not simple. Sometimes we are underdogs and sometimes we are heroes, and sometimes we are both. Sometimes, like the seder, we get stuck in the wilderness and the Promised Land seems miles away. Communally and personally, we need to learn—again and again—about tenacity, about perseverance, about faith. We need to learn to teach—again and again—tenacity, perseverance, faith.

So we tell the story, we tell our stories, year after year. To remember that we are in it for the long haul, that we are in it together, and that we are the people of myth and miracle—destined and determined to make it true.

Chag Sameach.





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