

הַגָּדָה הַיֵּנִי

HAGGADAH HANDBOOK


“Hineni – Here I Am”

A GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING A
PERSONAL PARTICIPATION
PASSOVER SEDER

Written by Rabbi Ron Shulman



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INTRODUCTION

Haggadah Handbook “Hineni – הִנֵּנִי Here I Am” is a guide for facilitating personal participation at your Passover Seder. Use this resource to create a “talking seder” in which you, your family, and friends tell the story and message of Passover through active discussion and engagement.

Passover is celebrated best by talking, asking, answering, debating, wondering about, and exploring the main themes, texts, and ritual symbols of the seder.

Prepare your seder celebration in advance of your family and friend's arrival. Think about who will be present with you. What ideas and activities will best interest and engage them? How can you join in retelling the story of our people's exodus from Egypt?

Before the seder, read through the pages of this Haggadah guide to identify which invitations, insights, inquiries and ideas you want to use. For whatever Haggadah you and your seder participants will have at your places, the materials in this guide will augment and enrich your seder celebration.

Plan for more talking than reading, more conversation than recitation. Keep every one comfortable. Decide how long your Seder will last and inform your guests, as well as those who will be serving the meal.

At a minimum, a Passover Seder should include blessings over wine and all the various seder foods. Be sure to mention the *Pesah*, Matzah, and *Maror*. Be sure to take a few minutes to tell and discuss the Exodus story. Ask the Four Questions. Ask your own questions. Remember the Ten Plagues. Talk about something relevant and personal to you and your guests. Enjoy a delicious holiday meal. Find the afikomen and welcome the Prophet Elijah.

The seder can be an immersive educational experience for all participants. Be sure to focus on the needs of your family and friends at the table with you. Enjoy a Happy Passover and meaningful seder celebration!

Hag Sameah חג שמח -
Rabbi Ron Shulman
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A TALKING SEDER

Is your seder gathering a reading session? Do participants around your table sit with their heads buried in a book, reading and following along? It doesn't sound like a very nice dinner party to me. When I dine with my family and friends, it's the conversation and interaction, the discussion and debate that I enjoy most. We don't get together and then read to one another.

This is an example of what shouldn't be different on Passover. The word Haggadah means telling. We need a Haggadah at our seder tables as a foundation. We use the words to recite the various blessings. We want to follow the prescribed order of the evening's ritual and celebration. We want to remember our history and learn something new together from the interpretations and texts. But the focus of our *sedarim* ought to be conversation and interaction between those present.

At most every seder someone is present who can explain the symbols. In some form, all of us know the exodus story. We can wonder about and answer our children's questions without having to read a text. Then we can refer to the Haggadah for more information and insight when we need it.

Prepare a talking seder. It's not hard to do. Generate questions for discussion that reflect Passover's themes in current events and personal circumstances. Connect the ritual customs to personal memories and experiences. Ask relatives and friends to think creatively about one part of the seder in advance. Actively engage children with various activities and materials.

Preparing a meaningful seder is one of the most important things we can do before Passover. Use this Haggadah Handbook as a resource and guide, thinking about who will be present at your table, how you may tell the story of our ancestors' exodus from Egypt and, most of all, bring your thoughts and reactions to what you are celebrating. A talking seder can be the most meaningful dinner party you enjoy each year.

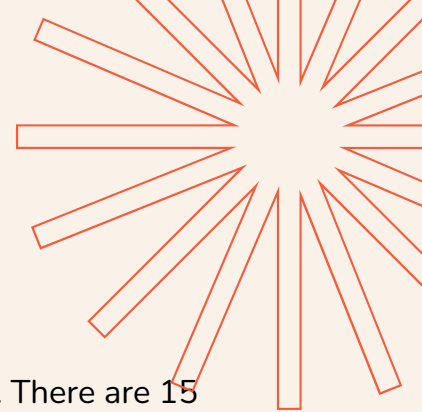
Insight

The word Haggadah means "telling." As the Children of Israel were freed from Egyptian bondage, God commanded them to eat matzah, unleavened bread. This act serves as a remembrance of the very moment of their redemption.

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ V'higad'ta l'vin-kha, "And you shall tell your children on that day, 'It is because of what the Eternal God did for me when I went free from Egypt.'" (Exodus 13:8)

From this Torah verse Jewish tradition derives the mitzvah of telling the exodus story each year. Our sacred privilege is to speak of our people's master story and its meaning for all time.

SEDER - ORDER OF CELEBRATION סֵדֶר



Invitation

The word seder means “order.” Here is the order your seder will follow. There are 15 steps to a traditional seder, grouped into four sections. For most seder steps you will find **Invitations**, **Insights**, and **Inquiries** to enrich your seder experience and elaborate on its meaning. Use your discretion and select those suggestions and ideas for enhancing your personal participation talking seder.

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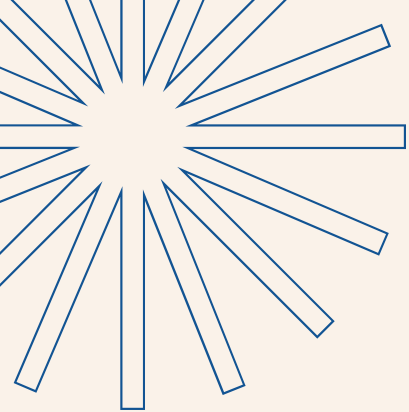
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CELEBRATION

Seder Step 1: **כַּדֵּשׁ** Kadesh... we celebrate Passover with the First Cup of Wine

Invitation

Offer to pour wine or grape juice into someone else's cup. In turn, each one of us is served by, and helps to serve, another. As we do this, let's think together.

Inquiries

How is this simple gesture a symbol of both our being slaves and free people?

Answer: We enjoy the luxury of being served by another. We respond to someone else's bidding as their servant. It is a symbolic way for us in our freedom and comfort to enter into the story we tell at the seder.

Insights

Why will we drink Four Cups of Wine at our Seder?

Our tradition offers two different answers. In the Babylonian Talmud we read that our four cups correspond to the four expressions of God's deliverance in Exodus 6:6-7.

"Say, therefore to the Israelite people: I am the Eternal God. I will **free** you from the labors of the Egyptians and **deliver** you from their bondage. I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary plagues. And I will **take** you to be My people, and I will be your God."

But in the Jerusalem Talmud, we learn that our four cups correspond to the four cups mentioned in the butler's dream and Joseph's interpretation of it when they were both in prison in the narrative of Genesis 40:11-13.

"Pharaoh's **cup** was in my hand, and I took the grapes, pressed them into Pharaoh's **cup**, and placed the **cup** in Pharaoh's hand." Joseph said to him, "In three days Pharaoh will pardon you and restore you to your post. You will place Pharaoh's **cup** in his hand."



Inquiry

What does each of these answers suggest to us about the symbolism of the Four Cups of wine we will drink during our seder?

Answer: The first midrash reflects the end of the story. It imagines how God redeemed the Children of Israel from Egypt. The second midrash looks back at the beginning of our ancestors' enslavement in Egypt. Joseph was sold into slavery. He spent time in prison. He interpreted dreams and rose to be viceroy over all of Egypt. He managed provisions during a time of famine. Joseph's father, Jacob, and his brothers migrated down to Egypt for food.

Seder Step 2: ורחץ Urhatz...a symbolic ritual hand washing

Invitation

At this point, the leader symbolically washes their hands without reciting a b'rakhah. This represents sincerity and the end of our preparations before the seder. If everyone at the table wishes to wash, pass a bowl and cup of water around the table. Consider asking those around the table how they prepared for this celebration.

Seder Step 3: כרפס Karpas... a springtime appetizer

Invitation

Smell the fresh flowers on your table. Enjoy the fragrance of springtime!

Dip a spring vegetable in salt water. The salt water suggests the tears of the Israelite slaves and impoverished people everywhere. The act of dipping represents the elegance of hor d'oeuvres at our holiday table.

Serve an appetizer course to tide everyone over until dinner so hunger pangs don't encroach on your discussions and engagement with one another. (This can be a vegetable platter, salsa or guacamole dips, salads, Gefilte Fish, or any other non-meat no matzah snack.)

Seder Step 4: יחץ Yahatz...breaking the middle matzah, preparing the afikomen

Inquiry

Why are there three "official" sheets of matzah?

Why do we break the middle one?

By breaking the middle matzah we get four pieces.

What can a fourth matzah represent?

Here's a technical answer. The first two replace the hallah bread we eat on Shabbat and holidays. Two loaves represent the double portion of manna God instructed the Israelites to collect before Shabbat. Over these two pieces of matzah we recite the blessing, "*haMotzi*," which is usual custom. The third sheet of matzah is for us to recite the blessing, "*al akhi-lat Matzah*," for the eating of matzah.

Here are some more meaningful suggestions. Three represents the past, the present, and the future all of which we sense in our seder celebration. Three are our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (When we break one and make four pieces of matzah, we then represent our matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah.) Three are the themes of Jewish tradition: either God, Torah, and Israel, or Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. Three are the identity groups of Jews: Kohen, Levi, and Israel. What other meanings of three can you identify?

Why do we break the middle one? Here are some thoughts. The Temple was destroyed and therefore the tribe of Levi is broken, unable to perform their ritual service. It is in the middle. When someone is broken or hurt they need to be embraced by those around them. What other ideas can you imagine?

Insight

Early in the seder ritual, we break a piece of matzah, wrap it in a cloth, and hide the larger portion of it for after our meal. In some of our homes, children steal the wrapped matzah from the seder leader and wait for a good "prize" to return it. In other homes, the leader hides the matzah and the children search the house seeking it and then return it only after receiving their prize.* Everyone knows the seder can't conclude until we eat this hidden matzah piece, the *afikomen*.

More than a fun game for our children, breaking the matzah and hiding the larger portion carry a poignant symbol. Slaves and those who live in poverty don't know when they'll eat next. They ration what they can, saving more for later rather than using it all up. They must conserve. They must think about how to sustain their lives and their families.

Early in the seder we're re-enacting slavery. After dinner, we're rejoicing in our freedom. Even then, in the comfort of our celebration as free people, we know that more about life is hidden from us than revealed. We, too, must consider how to sustain our welfare and our values, our health and our loved ones, our community and our world, unaware of, and preparing for, what may happen next.



Think about this: It is so easy to break things, to hurt or damage the fragile feelings of others. Isn't the challenge of freedom to repair what is broken, to piece together the fragile fragments of our own relationships and society?

We are free, but we remember when we were slaves. We are whole, but we recall those who are broken. The larger part of the matzah is hidden as a symbol that we hope the future will be greater than the past, tomorrow's Passover greater than yesterday's Exodus.

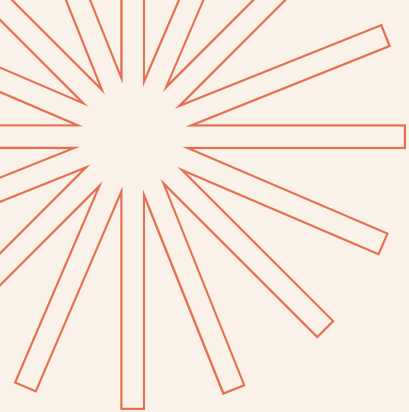
*A Word About Prizes

In some homes, children attempt to steal the *afikomen* and negotiate for a prize later in the evening when it is needed. In other homes, the leader finds a moment to leave the table and hide the *afikomen*, later asking children and other seder participants to search for it. Again, the one who finds it may negotiate for a prize.

Still other people, especially if no children are present, don't hide the *afikomen*. Instead, they play a guessing game, asking the leader where in the Exodus story he or she has placed the *afikomen*.

It is fun and proper to encourage our children to participate in "stealing" or finding the *afikomen*. Their reward, however, should be something consistent with our holiday celebration.

Simple toys, games, puzzles, or books that encourage questions, thought, and involvement with others are appropriate. The promise of a family activity or the chance to enjoy a new responsibility and special privilege are appropriate. Money or expensive gifts seem inconsistent with the symbol of a slave's hidden provisions and the meager possessions of the Israelites whom we remember tonight.



REMEMBRANCE

Seder Step 5: מגיד MAGGID...telling the story of Exodus

Invitation

Here are some things to think about with your guests during your seder. (Select one or two as appropriate to who's sitting around your seder table.)

1. What issue of freedom in today's news most concerns you?

Please lead a brief discussion.

2. What popular song, film, or other item best represents the ideas of Passover to you?

Please share your choice.

3. Imagine that someone were sitting outside, watching your Seder.

*How would you explain to them what you are doing
and what it means to you?*

4. Tell about someone you admire whose life reflects some of Passover's ideals.

5. Is it the first time a guest is attending your Seder?

*Go around the room and tell stories of the earliest, fondest, or funniest
seder memories you have.*

Insights

It is now time to tell our people's story of redemption. Many people are surprised to discover the actual story of the Exodus is not published in the Haggadah. Instead, the Haggadah is a collection of rabbinic midrashim (interpretations and legends).

More than 1,800 years ago, the rabbis of the Mishnah began recounting the story of Israel's freedom from Egyptian bondage by expounding on the Exodus story as told in Chapter 12 of the Book of Exodus and Chapter 26 of the Book of Deuteronomy. The result of this process continued through the generations and the rabbis' teachings were compiled into the Haggadah we use.

The Passover Haggadah is a resource and prompt for us as we celebrate tonight. Many of us here can explain the symbols on our table. In some form, all of us know the Exodus story. We can wonder about and answer our children's questions and refer to the Haggadah for more information and insight when we need it.

Seder Step 5a: **הא לחמא** *HaLahma*...defining matzah and our meal's purpose

Invitation

Remember this important verse from the Torah, Leviticus 19:34. "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the Eternal am your God."

Inquiry

What is the meaning of eating matzah on Passover? Why is it a symbol of slavery? How can it also be a symbol of our freedom? What have we done to demonstrate that we take this ideal of caring, sharing, and hospitality seriously?

Answer: Eating our matzah tonight and this week, pausing from our routines, we act to attach our personal lives and concerns to the grand and potent moral principles for which God brought our ancestors out of Egypt. Tonight, and throughout this festival week, the foods we eat and the springtime visions we dream are all about freedom, goodness, and human dignity.

Insight

On Passover, the food we eat teaches us to pay proper attention to every person we meet. Matzah symbolizes freedom and human dignity. Matzah represents goodness and truth. It is made of any grain that can ferment, become hametz: wheat, rye, oats, barley, or spelt. On Passover, hametz, fermented grains and foods, suggests human arrogance and injustice. Of course, grain is not honest or unjust, good or bad. We are. That's why limiting ourselves to the pure, unleavened grains of matzah we eat on Passover reminds us to live for and to do good, to open ourselves to others, to form relationships and honor every person.

Reenacting the experience of our Biblical ancestors, we look to the simple and lowly fare of the slave. Slaves eat matzah. Slaves live the humblest of lives. In contrast, the taskmaster exalts himself and believes that others must do his bidding. Insensitive to others, the Pharaoh's is a lavish style of food and life.

The freedom and equality we seek for all people requires humility, not arrogance. We wish not to live as people serving our own wills. Fermented grain implies personal and social excess. Unleavened bread suggests modesty. Passover teaches us that human arrogance is held in check by awareness of existence beyond ourselves. The change we make from hametz to matzah symbolizes that our efforts in life are in service of God and the values of God's presence in our world.

Matzah was there from the beginning to the end. It was not only the dough which our ancestors did not have time to let rise as they left Egypt, but the bread of affliction which they ate as slaves. Matzah, the bread of slaves, became the sustenance of a free people.

Invitation

Matzah has two different, even opposed, symbolisms. At the beginning of the seder we call it “the bread of affliction.” But at the end of our seder ritual, we describe it as “the bread of freedom” which our ancestors ate when they were leaving Egypt.

How do we transform the bread of affliction into the bread of freedom? By preparing for our holiday. By removing leavened foods and bringing in matzah. By planning our seder guest lists, menus, and discussions. By sharing with others.

When we share our bread with others, when we share the meanings we find in our identities as Jews, we step away from affliction toward freedom.

We share our bread by reaching out to others. Helping the needy. Feeding the hungry. Being a companion to those who are lonely. Bringing God’s presence into the world by our caring and kindness.

Go around the seder table and discuss what acts of loving-kindness and social service efforts participants have made since last Passover.

Invitation

The ability to question is the mark of a free person. We tell the story of our people’s freedom from slavery by asking and answering each other’s questions about what we are doing and why. **What questions would you like to ask tonight?**

(Encourage your seder guests to ask questions at any time during the Seder. See what discussions ensue.)

Seder Step 5b: The Four Questions... among many others!

Inquiry

Why does the seder provide us these Four Questions to ask in addition to our own? What other seder questions would you like to ask and discuss?



Invitation

Consider discussing these challenging questions:

1. Why do people dislike or disrespect people who are different than they are?
2. Why does someone else's different behavior bother them/us?
3. Are you more or less free this year than last year?
4. What aspect of your personal, social, or religious freedom do you take for granted?

Four more questions to ponder because at the seder our people's history becomes personal.

1. What is our personal accountability to this story and to the Jewish people?
2. What do we do on behalf of people who are not free today?
3. As individuals who were once slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, what, if any, are our moral and religious responsibilities for other peoples' human dignity?
4. What, if any, is our responsibility toward immigrants and refugees because of our story?

Inquiry

The Four Questions aren't really questions at all! They are four statements about how different tonight's celebration is for all of us. Passover is about much more than dipping, reclining, or even eating matzah. Have the youngest seder participant, together with the oldest or with everyone who wishes to, ask the Four Questions. No person's question, and certainly no child's question, should go unanswered. Take a moment and answer the four questions and any others that have been asked.

The four scripted questions come from the Mishnah, dated from 220 C.E. The rabbis who created the Passover Seder sought to use symbolic foods to rouse their children's curiosities.

After unusual foods were eaten or unusual customs were performed, children were encouraged to ask about them. Back then, seder participants ate their full dinner before the discussion. These questions make sense in that order. At our seder, they actually come before we do the things they refer to. The Four Questions in our Haggadah are intended to spark other questions, to be examples of how we might conduct the seder. Since they were published, it became customary to ask them.

Answers to The Four Questions

1. We eat only matzah to honor the Exodus story, and because God commands us in Torah not to eat hametz, leavened foods. Matzah is what our ancestors ate during the years of slavery and in the drama of the Exodus.

2. We eat bitter herbs to ingest the sensation of bitterness. We try to empathize with the experience of slavery.
3. We dip twice tonight to be sensitive to the slaves' experiences. Salt water represents their tears. Haroset represents the mortar of the bricks they were forced to make. When we dip the *maror*, bitter herb, into the haroset we taste something "bittersweet." In the sweetness of freedom, we remember the bitterness of oppression.
4. We recline as free people who rejoice in our comfort. We are grateful for the lives and experiences of those who came before us whose more difficult experiences make possible our lives today.

Insight

The seder is modeled after a first century Roman Symposium during which diners reclined as they ate four courses, drank four cups of wine, debated important topics, and were entertained by others. The ancient rabbis adapted this symposium style of meal and gathering as the setting for celebrating Passover.

Invitation

Go around the table and ask each person to tell a small portion of the story of the Exodus, with the next person adding to what was said before their turn. (Keep a book of the Torah or a copy of Exodus Chapter 12 nearby for details.)

Seder Step 5c: עבדים היינו *Avadim Hayinu...*physical oppression

Insight

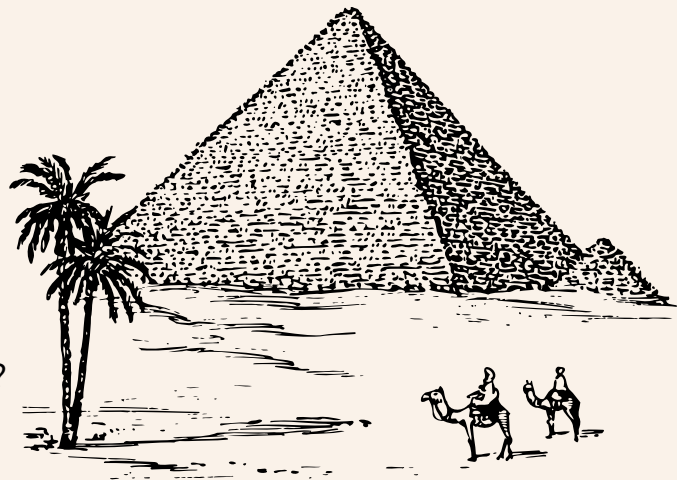
The Exodus is a real memory. No people could sustain such a shared memory through many generations if the core event being recalled never took place. The Exodus narrative and the Torah's description of the Children of Israel encamped at Mount Sinai represent the first core moments of the Jewish people's consciousness of God. The Jewish People's collective memory begins in slavery.

Inquiry

For our children to talk about:

Pretend you were a slave in Egypt.

- What is your worst memory of slavery?
- What do you hope for most in freedom?
- Did you ever think you would be free?
- How do you think it happened?
- What makes you feel sad or mad today?
- What do you do when you have those feelings?



Invitation

Here are some ideas for Children or Adults to find their way in to telling the Passover story:

- When I heard I would be free, I sent a text message to my friend. I told her I was feeling_____, and that the first thing I would do as a free person is_____.
- Imagine you are an Israelite living next door to an Egyptian family. When they ask you why you are painting lamb's blood on your doorframe, what do you tell them? What feelings of theirs do you want to be sensitive to?
- Now that you have been freed from Egypt, you want to tell everyone about this amazing event. You decide to post something to Instagram to help other people relate to what you went through. What would you post?
- You are one of Moses' advisors. Moses senses the slaves are tired of taking orders and as they become free don't want too many rules imposed on them. How do you recommend Moses explain the Ten Commandments to the newly freed Israelite slaves?
- Collect a bag of props, silly clothes, toys, and household items. Ask each child to reach into the bag, select an item or two. Ask the children to act out being a character in the Passover story and guess who they are pretending to be. (Roles can include Moses, Pharaoh, Taskmaster, Slave, God, Miriam, Pharaoh's Daughter, etc.)

Inquiry

If you had to leave home quickly, just like the slaves did, what would you take with you?

Invitation

Pretend you were a slave in Egypt. What is your worst memory of slavery? What do you hope most for in freedom? Did you ever think you would be freed? How do you think it happened?

Invitation

Here's another way to tell the story:

Think of a person or object in the Exodus story. Retell part of the story from that characters or prop's point of view. For example, what might it have been like to be a child walking through the water walls of the Sea of Reeds? What did it feel like to be the basket in which Moses floated down the Nile River? How did a frog understand what was happening during the plague? (Here's a list of possible people and objects: Miriam, Aaron, Pharaoh's Daughter, A Slave, Moses, Pharaoh, A Taskmaster, Matzah, Moses' Rod, Miriam's Timbrel.)

Insight

"The seder is not meant to impart a body of information to the brain; it is meant to implant the story in the heart. The mind may be that of a genius and the heart of that genius might be ignorant; the mind may be adult and the heart childish," taught 19th century Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler.

Inquiry

What are the stories of other Jews and peoples from generations before our own?
What are our own stories?

"What's your story?" is a great question. Sharing our personal narratives opens us up to each other. **Pause now. Put down the Haggadah and talk with each other. Tell personal stories and anecdotes, stories from your past and stories that imagine your future.**

Inquiry

Additional questions with which to engage your seder guests:

1. Describe something you didn't appreciate at the time it happened, or you received it, but now you are grateful for it.
2. What food item, not associated with Passover, would you add as a new symbol to the seder? What would it represent or mean?
3. What's one of the most difficult questions you ever had to answer? What did it feel like to find the words or the necessary explanation?
4. You just made plans to take a vacation, but you haven't yet cleared the dates with your employer. When you inform her of your plans, she reminds you of an approaching project deadline and then asks, "Are you asking me or telling me?" What's your answer?
5. You've been fortunate to travel much of the world. Can you describe the difference between being in a free, open, democratic society and a more closed society? What do the people you meet seem to have in common? What makes their lives appear different?
6. How do you feel when your Teams win or lose? Aware that you are an observer, a fan, and not a player, how do you imagine the players feel when they win or lose? Can you transfer those insights to Moses, Pharaoh, the Israelite slaves, or even the Egyptian citizens who are watching but not going out on the Exodus?

Insight

The Haggadah includes memories of ancient sages to honor the important role teachers play in our lives. All of us teach, often with our words and explanations, sometimes by our behavior. The freedom we celebrate at our seder thrives best in every generation as we teach those who come next, just as we have learned from those who came before. Think about the greatest influences in your life. How do the life lessons they taught you represent freedom? What teachers made a difference in your life? Whom do you teach? How do you teach them?

Inquiry

Four more questions to discuss:

1. What emotions do you imagine our ancestors who left Egypt felt?
2. What emotions are we feeling as we retell their story this evening?
3. To what are we still enslaved?
4. What do we know about the types of slavery that still exist today?

Seder Step 5d: The Four Children...and their parents

Inquiry

Why did the rabbis of our tradition invent this midrash of the Four Children?

Answer: The rabbis wanted each seder leader to be aware of the different types of children and adults present at the meal. Each one of them, as every one of us, needs an explanation appropriate to their, and our, ability to understand and to learn. The rabbis based this midrash on the four times in Torah when a child is described asking about the meaning of the Exodus from Egypt.

Invitation

Look in the Torah at these four citations. Can you identify which one represents the wise child, the wicked child, the simple child, and the child who does not know how to ask, and why?

- *Exodus Chapter 13, verse 8*
- *Exodus Chapter 12, verses 26-27*
- *Exodus Chapter 13, verse 14*
- *Deuteronomy Chapter 6, verses 20-21*

Insight

The first generation of rabbis, those who lived from 70 to 200 C.E. those who codified and organized the form and structure of the seder celebrations we are familiar with, were witnesses to one of Judaism's most turbulent and tragic eras. Among these rabbis were Yohanan ben Zakkai, the initiator of rabbinic Judaism, Rabbi Akiva, the famous scholar, Judah HaNasi, the editor of the Mishnah.

The Romans destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and oppressed the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea. In 135 C.E., under the leadership of a sage named Bar Kokhba, the Jews revolted against Rome and were summarily defeated. Hundreds of thousands died while towns and villages were razed.

Contained in texts associated with two rabbis, Ishmael ben Elisha, a rationalist, and Shimon bar Yohai, a mystic, we find midrash, legend and interpretation expressing intense loyalty to Jewish identity and destiny. We also get a sense of distress, verging on anger, at Jews who left the fold, who defected from Judaism to the pagan world and safety of Rome, or even became part of a new emerging Christian sect.

Reflect on how they reacted in this famous midrash they taught. "There are four sons: a wise son, a wicked son, a simple son, and one who does not know how to ask." Here the rabbis create a reason why four times in the Torah children of the future are imagined asking about the Exodus.

This is the background and historical context for the description of the Four Sons, or Four Children, contained in the Haggadah. Yes, it is there to remind the seder leader to engage everyone directly and personally in telling the Exodus story, but it's also about something else.

Consider two of the four verses and identify which is which. Here's a hint. One of these is the basis for the wise child, and one the basis of the wicked child.

"And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Eternal God because God passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt.'" (Exodus 12:26-27)

"When, in time to come, your children ask you, 'What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Eternal our God has enjoined upon you?' you shall say to your children, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Eternal God freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand.'" (Deuteronomy 6:20-21)

"What does the wise son say? 'What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Eternal our God has enjoined upon us?' Open to him in the details and meanings of Pesah."

What does the wicked son say? "What do you mean by this rite?" "To you" and not "to him or her." This child is portrayed as disassociating from family, community, and people. "Had you been there," this child is told, "you would not have been redeemed."

Those first century rabbis weren't speaking only of Passover and children, but about Jews who seeing the fall of Jerusalem changed sides and allied themselves to Rome. For that first generation of rabbis, this was a kind of betrayal.

Inquiry

To whom and what do our thoughts turn as we try to make sense of the world and connect to the meanings, themes, and message of Passover?

Insight

"The Four Children should not be understood as four distinct personalities," taught Rabbi Yehudah Leib Chasman. "The traits exemplified by them all struggle within each of us. One moment we are the wise child, the next the wicked one; one instant the simple child, the next we are unable to ask."

Insight

To answer the wicked child the Haggadah literally says, "Set his teeth on edge." There is no real way to answer this child. He or she chooses not to see what is being celebrated, not to be open to being touched by the religious and human message of the Exodus, not to identify with their place as a member of the Jewish people.

We meet this wicked child every day in words of racism that offend all people. In acts of violence that scare and hurt. In political hyperbole that prevents genuine debate and decision. In behaviors for which some are excused rather than held responsible.

These are moments that deny the basic principles of our society and our tradition. These are experiences that separate people from one another and frustrate dialogue. These are occasions that demonstrate the lack of respect some among us express toward others.

Underlying our inability to respond to the wicked child is the fact that we do not share the same vocabulary of life. Without common grounding there cannot be persuasive, meaningful argument. Just shouting.

Invitation

Ask children and adults what adjective they would use to describe themselves? Ask them why. If safe, ask someone who knows them, and who will be kind toward them, to choose a different adjective in response to what they said.

Inquiry

Is it right to stereotype or label people? Could we consider the character traits of these four individuals as aspects within each of our own personalities?

Insight

We are taught in Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:12:

“There are four-character traits among people.

Some say: “Mine is mine and yours is yours.” This is the trait of the average person.

Some say: “Mine is yours and yours is mine.” This is the trait of a simple person.

Some say: “Mine is yours and yours is yours.” This is the trait of a wise person.

Some say: “Yours is mine and mine is mine.” This is the trait of a wicked person.

Seder Step 5e: מתחילה *Mithilah*...spiritual denigration

Insight

After the midrash of the four children, the Haggadah text informs us, “In the beginning our ancestors served idols, but then God embraced us so that we might serve God.” This aspect of our liberation story is about the spiritual character and moral quality of being Jewish. It remembers our Biblical patriarch Abraham, the first to espouse and represent ethical monotheism.

Next, this section of the Haggadah quotes the Book of Genesis repeating God’s foreshadow of the exodus from Egypt and promise to Abraham. “Know for certainty that your offspring will be strangers in a strange land... Know with equal certainty that I will judge the nation that enslaved them...” This promise is of a future redemption and living covenant through history.

At this point in the seder, we lift our wine cups and recite, *V’hi sh’amdah* - והיא שעמדה. “It is this that has sustained our ancestors and us, for not just one enemy has arisen to destroy us; rather in every generation there are those who seek our destruction, but the Holy One, praised be God, saves us from their hands.”

Now our discussion begins. Since early medieval years when this statement, *V’hi sh’amdah* והיא שעמדה, was added to the seder ceremony, generations of Jews ask and debate.

Inquiry

What sustains our people through the ages? Is it a Divine promise of on-going redemption, as suggested in God's words to Abraham? Is it our religious heritage and cultural values guiding and encouraging us? Is it an urgency to survive, and even thrive, in the face of each new threat? Is it a messianic hope of living to see better days? Is it the diversity of Jewish identity that enables us to adapt and endure? Is it the uniqueness of Jewish peoplehood that transcends other imposed categories of race, nationality, ethnicity, and individual identity? Is it the dynamic interplay between Israel and the Diaspora? Is it none of these or more than one of these?

Invitation

Invite your seder guests to reflect on these questions and their own. Use their thoughts to frame your discussion of Israel, the Gaza war, and antisemitism. Hear and respect everyone's opinion and perspective. Embrace and honor everyone's emotions and feelings. Differ with dignity and speak with kindness. Our goal is to achieve union and comity for the sake of our families, circles of friends, and the Jewish people.

Here's why. After your discussion, if you continue to follow the Haggadah text, the next two words are, "Go and learn." This instruction precedes another Torah quote recounting in a few verses the master story of the Jewish people, the exodus from Egypt.

On Passover, our vision is to learn anew for our days the meanings and implications of Jewish origins. How are freedom, justice, equality, and dignity present or not in the world today? What are we each to do living and advocating for these ideals, especially during the difficult days of Israel's consequential and defensive war?

Inquiry

1. What is spiritual enslavement?
2. Do you feel enslaved to something or oppressed by someone?
3. What does the story or message of Passover mean for us?
4. What is the nature of the freedoms we seek for ourselves and for others?

Invitation

How would you answer this question: Can you describe a time when you didn't have your smart phone with you and really missed it? Can you describe a time when you had your smart phone with you and missed out on something else?

Insight

Tonight, we do not celebrate our Genesis.

Tonight, we do not celebrate what we were or what our ancestors were.

Tonight, we celebrate who we are and what we have become.

Tonight, we celebrate our Exodus.

Invitation

1. How do Jewish beliefs, values, and history influence us?
2. What elements of Jewish Identity do we freely choose to celebrate or demonstrate?
3. What message of Judaism and the Jewish People do we represent?
4. What lessons of Jewish history or Jewish spirituality resonate with us?

Insight

We are the Jewish People, descendants of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. We live in covenant with God wherever we live today as we have everywhere throughout history.

We are the Jewish People, descendants of Prophets and Priests, descendants of pious rabbis and social radicals, descendants of nobles and paupers, descendants of the persecuted and the celebrated, descendants of survivors and immigrants.

We are the Jewish People, descendants of our parents and grandparents. We represent generations of Jews whose roots come from Europe or Russia, South Africa or South America, Australia or North America, Israel or the Middle East.

A Jew is someone who can tell the story of the Jewish People as their own.

Seder Step 5f: The Ten Plagues...learning the meaning of freedom

Insight

The Torah views occurrences of nature as symbols of God's design and purpose for humanity and society. For example, the plagues brought against Egypt to secure the freedom of the Children of Israel are understood by the Biblical authors to represent God's moral response to Egyptian cruelty. Plagues are linked to the morality of justice, or as the plagues are often translated, judgments. Nature gone awry is a metaphor in the Torah for an immoral human society, one that is imbalanced or out of order.

Invitation

We spill wine from our full cups to symbolize our sadness and our sensitivity to the loss of life as well as the harm that was brought upon our enemies. We do this even as we celebrate the Israelite slaves' Exodus to freedom. We glory in our liberation, but we do not gloat over our fallen foes.

When the water of the Sea of Reeds engulfed the Egyptians, there was singing and celebration. But God silenced those who were rejoicing. "My children perish. Cease your songs!" So, we celebrate with less than a full heart, with less than a full cup. There are ethics in each of Judaism's ritual symbols. Each act is a drama with a message for us to internalize and understand.

The gesture of spilling wine from our full cups as we recite each of the Ten Plagues teaches us sensitivity to the pain of others, even those who hurt us. We are not told not to defend, not to protect, or not to respond. We are not even instructed not to punish.

What we are told is to understand. We are told to care about what we are doing. We are told to see the humanity in others whose lives are not much different from our own. We are told to understand that what may happen as a necessary evil is not something good. This is a very hard task. It asks us to take very seriously the message of human equality inherent in human freedom. Can we see in others something of ourselves?

Insight

Pharaoh is the model of human arrogance and ego who believes he is superior to and a ruler over other people. The drama on Passover revolves around how to defeat the Pharaoh. How do the subjected and subjugated receive their freedom and learn of their dignity? How are the mighty and haughty brought low? By what experience do we discover the truth of human equality and the inherent, sacred worth of every human being?

Three Hebrew words describe Pharaoh or Pharaoh's heart in the Exodus story. The least common is *kasheh* - קשה, which means "hard" or "difficult." It can also mean "argue" or "dispute." When God announces, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," we understand that Pharaoh will be stubborn and difficult. He will argue with God. He will oppose God.

Most commonly, the word *hazak* – חזק describes Pharaoh's heart in Torah. *Hazak* – חזק means "strong," "strength." "The heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to Moses and Aaron as the Lord had spoken." Here, it's not a matter of a hard, stubborn heart. It's a description of a strong adversary, someone who resolves to stand firm.

The other common word used to describe the heart of Pharaoh is *kaved* – כבד, which suggests someone with a "heavy" heart, sad or burdened. It can also mean "honor."

In this case someone who feels that his honor, his role, is diminished. Certainly, these are apt descriptions of Pharaoh as God brings the Ten Plagues upon the Egyptians. "The heart of Pharaoh is heavy; he refused to set the people free."

Three Hebrew words express Pharaoh's obstinacy three different ways. He was stubborn and unrelenting. He was strong in his position and resolute. He felt the burden of the plagues and diminished in his own stature. This was precisely God's plan. "For I have made Pharaoh's heart heavy, in order that I may display these My signs and that you may recount how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, in order that you may know that I am the Eternal God."

By analyzing the words describing Pharaoh's heart we learn something about our own. We can all be stubborn. We can all be strong and resolute. We can all feel less dignity, carrying the burden of things beyond our control or even because of choices we make. On those occasions when our hearts are confused, we find ourselves overwhelmed, unable to control our fate or the things happening around us. We feel enslaved to circumstances beyond our control.

Why did God "harden Pharaoh's heart?" So that Pharaoh, the Children of Israel, and all of humanity could learn that humility and responsibility for others are necessary to build a just and good society, to establish true and enduring relationships.

Insight

In the darkness of midnight God redeemed the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The Midrash tells us, "Some were afraid, some were not." Those Egyptian parents who were afraid sought protection and safety in the homes of the Israelites.

For all, it was a night of dread and fear. The first born of Egypt were slain, even those seeking refuge among the Israelites. In grief, the Pharaoh relented. Hurried and afraid, the Israelites gathered what belongings they could and walked toward the wilderness into freedom.

Ours is not a squeamish history. We know what it is to be attacked and to be saved, to mourn our losses and the losses of others. We own the painful cost of our freedom in every generation and location. We honor it with our rituals and in our lives' values. Rejoicing in our people's freedom we carry concerns for everyone's destiny and opportunity.

The promise of our people's redemption from Egypt is to envision and establish a better future. Realistic about what it takes to build that future, idealistic about what that future can be, pessimistic about the cruel side of human nature, and curious about humanity's potential to do good, during the seder we consider a moral vision of how to live together.



Seder Step 5g: יָנוּחַ *Dayenu*...our popular song of appreciation

Insight

The song *Dayenu* offers repair for our ancestors' ingratitude while wandering in the wilderness. Where they complained about the food, or lack of water, or the harsh environment, or the challenge of entering the land, we give thanks for their experience. Instead of letting their complaints stand, in freedom and relative comfort we proclaim how grateful we are for each moment in the drama of our people's redemption. *Dayenu* says, "It would have been enough for us."

Is that true? Would it have been? Would it have been enough for us to be brought out of Egypt and left in the desert? Would we have been satisfied camping at Mount Sinai and not receiving the Torah? Would you and I really find it sufficient to arrive at the border of the Promised Land and not enter?

Human beings are impatient. We are anxious awaiting what comes next. We don't always remember what came before. It's hard to pause and express gratitude on the way to an elusive or unfulfilled goal. *Dayenu* urges us to be thankful for each moment we experience.

Inquiry

Before we sing *Dayenu* let's ask, "For what are we grateful? What is enough for us?"

Insight

Dayenu, a traditional Passover song, is over one thousand years old. The earliest full text of the poem occurs in the first medieval Haggadah from 9th century.

In the synagogue on *Shabbat HaGadol*, the Great Sabbath preceding Passover, the prophet Malachi speaks God's message. "I will surely open the floodgates of the sky for you and pour down blessings on you."

It's a 6th century B.C.E. promise of rebirth and renewal following a difficult time in Jewish history. Israel and God will reconcile. The Temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Families will reunite.

This ancient memory inspires one of the highlights of every seder. Our most popular seder song, *Dayenu*, recalls Malachi's promise "*ad b'li dai* - pour down blessings." Literally Malachi's phrase means, "Until there is more than enough." The Talmudic sage Rami ben Hama interprets this to mean, "Until your lips are exhausted from saying, 'enough.'" *Dayenu*!

Dayenu is about gratitude to God for all the gifts given to the Jewish people, such as the exodus from slavery, the gift of Torah, and the celebration of Shabbat. Had God only given one of the gifts, it would have been enough. (Not really?!)

This is to show much greater appreciation for all of them. The poem appears in the Haggadah after the telling of the story of the exodus and just before the explanation of the core symbols: *Pesah*, *Matzah*, *Maror*.

Dayenu has 15 stanzas representing the 15 gifts God bestowed, echoing the 15 steps of a seder celebration. Each of the stanzas is followed by the word *Dayenu* - it would have been enough!

The 15 stanzas are as follows:

- ♦ First 5: Freeing the Israelites from Slavery.

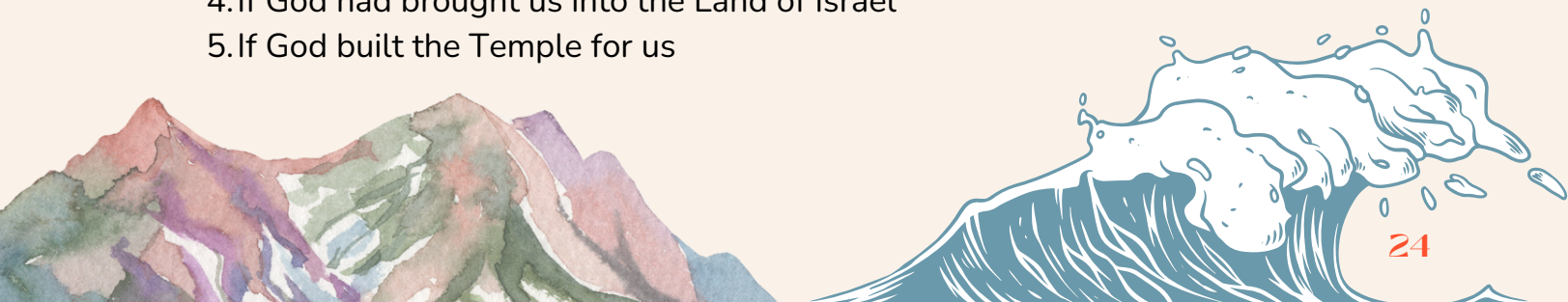
1. If God had brought us out of Egypt
2. If God had executed justice upon the Egyptians
3. If God had executed justice upon their gods
4. If God had slain their first-born
5. If God had given to us their health and wealth

- ♦ Second 5: Miracles God Performed.

1. If God had split the sea for us
2. If God had led us through on dry land
3. If God had drowned our oppressors
4. If God had provided for our needs in the wilderness for 40 years
5. If God had fed us manna

- ♦ Third 5: Honor Closeness to God.

1. If God had given us Shabbat
2. If God had led us to Mount Sinai
3. If God had given us the Torah
4. If God had brought us into the Land of Israel
5. If God built the Temple for us



Seder Step 5h: Rabban Gamliel...Passover's special symbols

Inquiry

In the Book of Exodus, chapter 12, where the story of the Israelites' leaving Egypt is told, we read that on the actual night of the tenth Plague and the Exodus, "They shall eat the lamb that same night; roasted over fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs." Why did the people who were slaves in Egypt have to eat these three things before they left? How are we and they connected through our eating these same things at our own seder?

Invitation

Point to or hold up each item, the Shank bone, Matzah, and Bitter Herb and ask participants to explain the symbolism.

PESAH: What does the shank bone of a lamb on our Seder Plate represent?

"It is the Passover sacrifice to the Eternal God, because God passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when God smote the Egyptians but saved our houses." (Exodus 12:27)

MATZAH: Why do we eat Matzah?

"And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had taken out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves." (Exodus 12:39)

MAROR: Why do we eat the Bitter Herb?

"Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field." (Exodus 1:14)

Invitation

Consider the symbolic meanings of the other items on your Seder Plate.

Haroset is a mixture of chopped fruits and nuts, wine and spices representing the mortar slaves used to make bricks.

A roasted lamb shank bone represents the lamb sacrificed by the Israelites in preparation for the Exodus and brought to the altar when the Temple stood in Jerusalem.

Karpas is a green vegetable representing springtime and renewal.

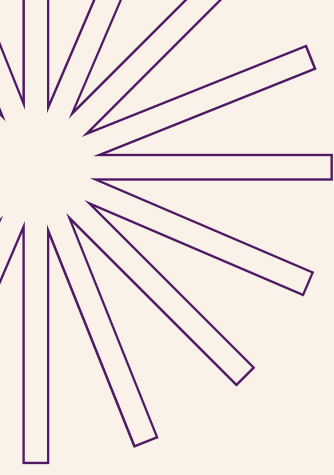
Hazeret is Romaine Lettuce. The rabbis sensed that Romaine Lettuce best represented the Israelite experience in Egypt. Sweet at first taste before it becomes bitter. That's why we have both *maror* and hazeret on the Seder Plate.

Maror is a bitter herb, most commonly horseradish, representing the bitterness of slavery.

A Roasted Egg represents the holiday sacrifice brought to the altar when the Temple stood in Jerusalem.

Seder Step 5i: Hallel and Kiddush...the Second Cup of Wine





FEASTING

**Seder Step 6: רחצה *Rohtzah*...ritual hand washing
before the meal**

**Seder Step 7: מוציא מצה *Motzi - Matzah*...
tasting unleavened bread to begin our feast**

**Seder Step 8: מרור *Maror*...the Bitter Herbs
remind us of slavery's taste**

Inquiry

Why is there no blessing for the *haroset*, just *maror*?

Answer: *Haroset* is a condiment at the seder meal. It is not one of the foods we are required to eat as part of our storytelling. *Maror*, like matzah, is a required seder food. Unlike *maror* and matzah, *haroset* is not mentioned in the Torah. We dip bitter herbs into *haroset* to recall the bitter memory of slavery within the sweet blessing of freedom. *Haroset* represents something more. We take responsibility for the gift of freedom by doing more than the minimum asked of us. We counter the memory of a bitter past with the vision of a sweeter future.

**Seder Step 9: כורך *Korekh*...recalling the Paschal Sacrifice with a
matzah & *maror* sandwich**

**Seder Step 10: שלחן עורך *SHULHAN OREKH*...DINNER is served!
Enjoy!**

Invitation

As we begin our seder meal, we are free. We've retold the story of our ancestors' enslavement and redemption. In addition to enjoying the tastes and aromas of this special dinner, be sure to express thanks to everyone who has prepared this feast. Continue to talk about the themes and ideas of your seder experience. The seder meal often begins with a hard-boiled egg to represent birth and renewal now that we are free.

Insight

As background to our own Passover celebration, food historians are of the opinion that leavened bread originated in Egypt, probably less than a millennium before the pyramids were built. The Egyptians, while also consuming unleavened bread, were the first to produce leavened bread which became a symbol of Egyptian culture.

This offers us remarkable understanding for why the Israelites left Egypt with matzah. For our Biblical ancestors, leaving Egypt with unleavened rather than leavened bread meant they were leaving Egyptian culture behind. They may have been in a hurry but fleeing slavery they were ridding themselves of the culture that enabled their misery.

Let's add this awareness to our Passover celebration. Careful that our food is matzah and not hametz, honoring the symbolism and the memory of our Jewish master story, let's focus on more than our meals. Let's focus on our culture and walk away from the leavened, fermented elements which enslave us.

In our contemporary culture self-importance enslaves us. We prize personal preference over communal norms. We are uncomfortable speaking of social responsibility.

Imagine in the week of Passover absolute kindness and mutual respect between people. Imagine a week in which no one is mocked for their life circumstance. Imagine a week without the crass and the cruel that often passes for entertainment. Imagine a week of sincerity and honesty. Imagine a week during which other people's needs are more important than our own desires. Imagine all of this for more than a week!

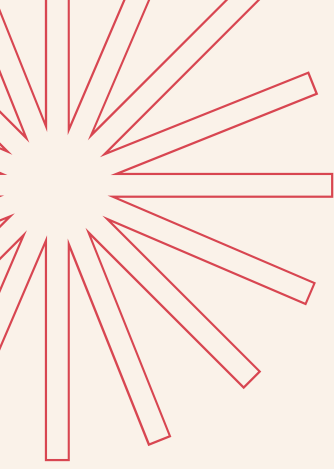
The seder invites us to explore the role and responsibility of an individual in the life of a people. **"In every generation, every individual should feel as though he or she had actually been redeemed from Egypt."** There was no way our ancestors could have left Egypt individually. It was only as a people that we attained our freedom. And it is only in community that we safeguard it.

The society we seek requires humility, not arrogance. Fermented grain implies personal and social excess. Unleavened bread suggests modesty. As a result of our observance, may this Passover season inspire us toward greater compassion in our society and continued caring within our community.

Seder Step 11: צפון Tzafun...concluding our meal with the afikomen, if we can find it!

Invitation

While some go searching for the *afikomen* matzah, others of us will participate in a different search. Get up from the Seder Table. Search the house for different ways in which freedom might be symbolized in artwork, ritual, or personal objects, even furniture or other decor items. When you have completed your search, return to the Seder Table. Describe what you found and describe how it symbolizes freedom to you.



PRAISE

Seder Step 12: בָּרַךְ *Barekh*...Blessings after our meal and then the Third Cup of Wine

Seder Step 13: The Cup of Elijah...we seek the Prophet Elijah's spirit at our seder

Insight

In the Vilna Ghetto in 1942 those who managed to celebrate a Passover Seder declared: “We invite the souls of all who are missing, the souls of all who were snatched from our midst, to sit with us together at the seder.” We bring those words, and certainly those sentiments, to our Seder Table, too.

Now, we will open our door to welcome into our home the spirit of Elijah the Prophet. We open our door, pretending that someone is coming in, to bring the world’s needs, its pains and its joys, into our own homes.

Before we invite Elijah in, however, we utter a protest taken from the Book of Psalms, 79:6: “Pour out Your fury on the nations that do not know You, upon the governments that do not invoke Your name, for they have devoured Jacob and desolated his home.” It is a release of anger, a cry for calm and peace in the face of those who do not share our moral principles, who seek to do us harm.

A French Haggadah from Worms published in 1512 includes an alternative proclamation to introduce Elijah, a statement we can also honor: “Pour out your love on the nations who have known you and on the kingdoms who call upon your name. For they show loving-kindness to the seed of Jacob, and they defend your people Israel from those who would devour them alive. May they live to see the *Sukkah* of peace spread over your chosen ones and to participate in the joy of Your nations.”

As we open our door to welcome the spirit of Elijah the Prophet, we imagine Elijah's entrance to imagine for ourselves how we might live together. Elijah is a Biblical character whose stories teach care for others. Elijah offered help to those whom he met. Elijah was engaged in responding to the challenges of his own days. He worked in the neighborhood. He acted on what he believed with conviction and passion. He discovered God in the quiet of every moment and gesture.

We open our doors for Elijah, not because he needs us to, but because we need to do it. We open our doors to others. We open our doors to bring the world's needs into our homes. We open our doors to be part of what is happening around us. We open our doors to show that we care. We open our doors, pretending that someone is coming in, to open ourselves to the real people we meet and greet every day.

In freedom this Passover let us learn the lesson of Elijah's entrance. How we choose to treat one another determines the value of everything else.

Invitation

We pass an empty cup around the table, symbolic of Elijah's presence at our seder. Each participant pours some wine from their own cup into Elijah's and states what they will try to do in the months ahead to "bring Elijah the Prophet into our world."

Insight

Our religious lore imagines that the Prophet Elijah said: "Heaven and Earth are my witness that Gentile or Jew, man or woman, free person or slave, God's presence rests on people according to their actions and merits."

Seder Step 14: הלל Hallel...Psalms of praise, plus our favorite Passover songs

Invitation

Counting the Omer at the Second Seder

The Torah's vision of counting these 50 days we call "the *Omer*" is to remember God's gifts of freedom and sustenance. Our daily count is an affirmation of the blessings in our lives we take for granted and upon which we depend. *Omer* is a measure, an amount. Our ancestors were told to remember the *manna*, nourishment God provided to sustain them in the wilderness.

Onto this positive purpose, following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, later tradition imposed sad memories. The Talmud recalls the deaths of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiba. To honor these losses, this *Omer* season became a symbolic period of national mourning.

Counting the *Omer* also reminds us that when we approach something of great meaning or symbolic power, it is proper to proceed slowly and with caution. We ought to think, reflect, and be careful. We need some time to prepare.

This is how we approach revelation, the gift of Torah in our lives. We count 49 days. We mark the days between Passover and the upcoming holiday of Shavuot, seven complete weeks of anticipation.

Counting these seven weeks impresses upon us the immediacy and promise of the days we are living in freedom, opportunity, and responsibility. We wait to receive the Torah anew and to rediscover God's presence in the experiences of our lives.

There is a divergence of customs as to how long the Omer restrictions apply. Some honor the full seven-week period. Others wait until *Lag Ba'Omer*, the 33rd day of the count to 50, and still others see *Rosh Hodesh Iyar*, or *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*, Israel Independence Day, as the end of this symbolic national mourning. Everyone agrees. We ought to be grateful every day.

Seder Step 15: נרצה *Nirtzah*...with the Fourth Cup of Wine our Seder concludes

Invitation

One custom is to sing the concluding words of the Passover Seder to the melody of *Hatikvah*, Israel's national anthem.

Here's a translation:

Our Passover Seder is now concluded, celebrated with the rites of our history and religious tradition. Just as we have merited the celebration of this seder, so may we merit to carry its values and message into our personal lives and behaviors. We pray together, through our efforts, God will bring redemption to the world.

“NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!”



MAKING OUR HOMES KOSHER FOR PASSOVER

First, before you begin cooking for the holiday, remove from your kitchen foods containing hametz - grains and their derivatives you won't be eating during the holiday. These include breads, cakes, cookies, crackers, cereals, pasta, and the like. All liquids containing grain alcohol should also be removed. Many Ashkenazi families also remove legumes like rice, corn, beans, and peas, called *kitniyot*, from their kitchens.

You may store unopened packages and dry goods you will want to use after Passover in another place, perhaps in the garage or a closet, or even in a kitchen cabinet that will remain closed throughout *Pesah*. These items should be "sold" before Passover to symbolically cancel your ownership of them. It is customary to make a modest contribution to feed others as part of this "sale." Many people also donate some of these foods to shelters and soup kitchens for the benefit of others.

Second, identify where in your kitchen you will place your Passover dishes, utensils, and cookware. If necessary, thoroughly clean your kitchen paying close attention to the cupboards and drawers you will use on Passover, the refrigerator, freezer, counter tops, and sink. Your stove top should be scrubbed clean. Afterward, turn the burners on to full flame or heat for just a moment.

After cleaning your microwave oven, place a glass of water into it and turn the oven on until the water boils. A self-cleaning oven can be made ready for Passover by its normal cleaning method. Other ovens should be scoured and run on high for a brief period after they are clean. Run your empty dishwasher through a complete wash cycle to prepare it for use. When your kitchen is clean, pour boiling water over any exposed metal surfaces and you'll be ready to bring in your Passover foods and utensils.

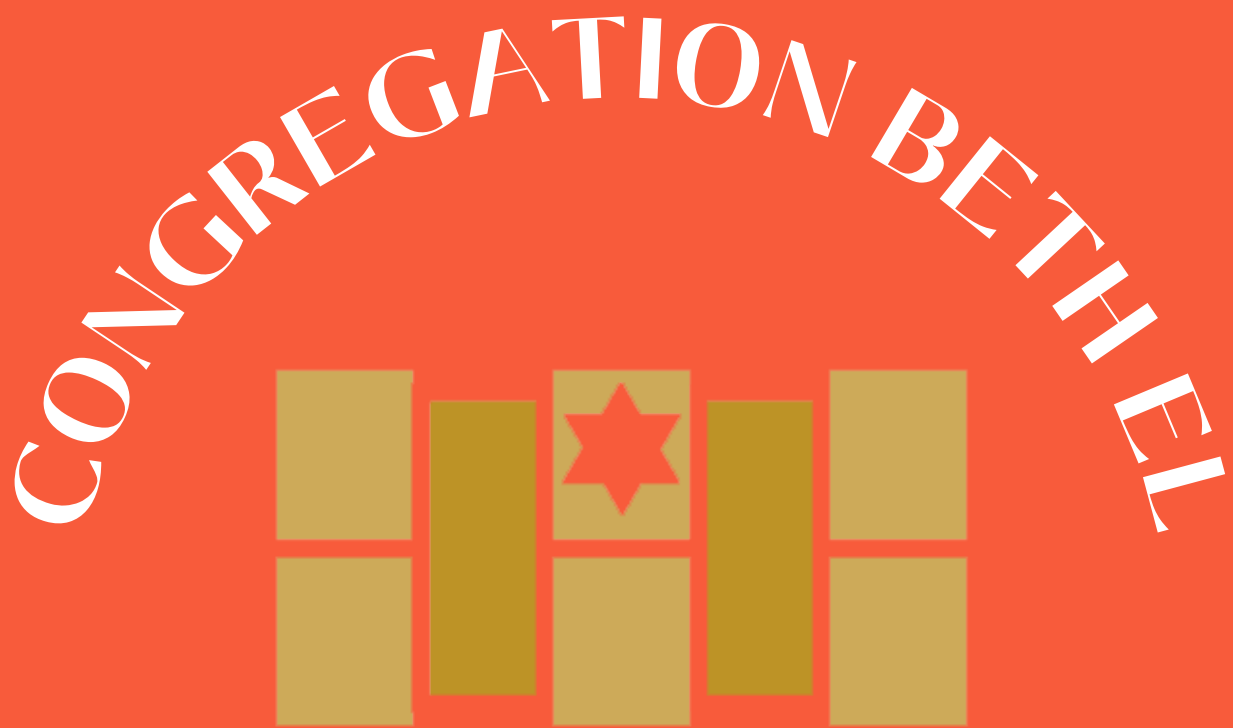
Dishes, pots, and utensils especially reserved for Passover should be used. (If you don't have separate Passover dishes, use paper, plastic, and other disposable or recyclable items to help keep costs down.) Any utensils or pots made entirely of metal you use during the rest of the year may be placed in boiling water after they have been scoured and then used during Passover.

All table glassware can be used after complete cleaning. Earthenware, enamel, wood, porcelain, and plastic items you use during the year cannot be made Kosher for Passover. Towels and linens can be used after they have been washed. Purchase new sponges for Passover. Close away or store those things in your kitchen that you will not be using during the holiday.

Third, bring your Kosher for Passover foods into your prepared and very clean kitchen! The only foods that require a “Kosher for Passover” label are all matzah products and baked goods, processed foods, (canned, bottled, or frozen) wine, vinegar, liquor, oils, dried fruits, candy, chocolate flavored milk, ice cream, yogurt, and soda. Many other products are labeled “Kosher for Passover,” and it is always preferable to use them during the holiday.

Consumer warning: Watch out for the vast variety of foods marketed and sold for Passover that imitate hametz. You probably won’t use or need them anyway. Keep focused on the values of the Passover holiday while remembering it is a festive and special time. A good rule of thumb is, “if I wouldn’t buy this during the other fifty-one weeks of the year, why do I need it now?”





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