

Passover Haggadah Supplement 2023

This is a resource to supplement your family's seder. These readings and questions follow the traditional order of the Haggadah to provide new moments for meaning, connection, and conversation.

1 - *Kadeish* - The First Cup

Reading: A local Jew once came to Rabbi Akiba Eger of Posen on the eve of Passover. "Rabbi, I've got a question: Is it permissible to use four cups of milk instead of wine? I cannot afford wine." The discerning rabbi replied, "I'm sorry, it is forbidden to substitute for wine. Take these 20 rubles and purchase wine." After the man left, the rabbi's wife angrily chided, "Twenty rubles for wine? Two or three would have been sufficient." "Don't be angry," the rabbi replied. "If this man was prepared to drink milk at the Seder he also didn't have money to buy meat and perhaps not even fish or matzah. Now he will be able to observe the Seder properly." That is the real meaning of Passover, if not the whole Torah. Freedom, as far as the Jew is concerned, is not a simple matter but involves thought, action and responsibility for others.

For Discussion: Describe a time when your freedom involved thought, action, and responsibility for yourself or for others. How do you personally connect to the themes of Passover and liberation?

2 - Urchatz – Hand Washing

Reading: Water is refreshing, cleansing, and clear, so it's easy to understand why so many cultures and religions use water for symbolic purification. We will wash our hands twice during the seder: first with no blessing, to get us ready for the rituals to come; and then again later, we'll wash again with a blessing, preparing us for the meal, which Judaism thinks of as a ritual in itself. Too often during our daily lives we don't stop and take the moment to prepare for whatever it is we're about to do. (*The Wandering is Over Haggadah: Including Women's Voices* by Jewish Boston and the Jewish Women's Archive)

For Discussion: What is one hope or expectation you have for tonight?

3 - Karpas - Spring Greens

Reading: The dipping of greens is reminiscent of the historic dipping that led Israel into exile in Egypt and the dipping that facilitated their redemption. The descent to Egyptian slavery began when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and dipped his coat of many colors into a slaughtered goat's blood in order to mislead their father Israel about his beloved son's true fate.

The ascent from exile - moral and physical - began when every family gathered together with their neighbors to share a lamb on seder night and to dip in its blood a hyssop plant and to dab it in the doorposts and the lintel as a protection against the tenth plague.

(Noam Zion & David Dishon, *A Different Night*)

For Discussion: As we dip our greens in saltwater, what is something bitter you wish to let go of?

4 - Yachatz - Breaking of Matzah

Reading: The *Pesach* story begins in a broken world, amidst slavery and oppression. The sound of the breaking of the matzah sends us into that fractured existence, only to become whole again when we find the broken half, the afikomen, at the end of the Seder. This brokenness is not just a physical or political situation. In Hebrew, Egypt is called *Mitzrayim*, reminding us of the word *tzar*, narrow. Thus, in Hassidic thought, *Mitzrayim* symbolizes the inner straits that trap our souls. Yet even here we can find a unique value, as the Hassidic saying teaches us: "There is nothing more whole than a broken heart." Or, as Leonard Cohen wrote: "There's a crack in everything / That's where the light comes in." Some families pass out a whole matzah to every Seder participant, inviting them to take a moment to ponder this entrance into a broken world before they each break the matzah themselves.

(Mishael & Noam Zion, *A Night to Remember*)

For Discussion: What is the narrowness from which you hope to be liberated this year?

5 - Maggid - Telling the Story

Reading: We Went Down Into Egypt - The journey is real. Our lives change. Realities hit us. We experience Egypt and Exodus and Sinai moments. We learn and grow. Passover is about that re-birth - the budding of possibility and hope that proudly says to us that "what is" or "was" is not prescriptive of the future. Our values and ethics often change precisely because of the empathy that arrives from our lived personal experience. Our theology emerges from our personal biographies.

(This is a selection from the commentary Rabbi Knight wrote for the new Reform Haggadah, *Mishkan HaSeder*, available now at ccarpres.org).

Reading: The *Maggid* contains the injunction "*B'chol dor vador chayav adam lir'ot et atzmo k'ilu hu hatza mimitzrayim*" -- "In every generation, a person is required to see themselves as if they went out of Egypt." The Sephardic haggadah adjusts this phrase slightly by adding an additional Hebrew letter to the word *lir'ot*, changing it to *l'hei-ra'ot*. This tiny modification transforms the sentence, which thus refers to an obligation "...to show ourselves as if we had come out of Egypt." What is the difference between "seeing" oneself as free" and "showing oneself to be free"?

~Rabbi Oren Hayon, *Mishkan HaSeder*

For Discussion: How has your experience this last year helped you to understand the ideas of freedom and the story of Passover? How is our freedom demonstrated in our actions, words, our relationships, or our politics?

6 - *Rochtzah* - Handwashing Before the Meal

Reading:

Water flows over these hands.

May I use them skillfully to preserve our precious planet.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, *Stepping into Freedom*)

The health precautions we took during the pandemic included creating new habits of frequent, careful handwashing. For many of us, the mundane act of washing our hands came to assume new significance, reminding us that the ways we use our hands can have real, consequential effects on the world around us.

For Discussion: What are the things you've done with your hands since last Passover that you're most proud of?

7 - *Motzi* - Blessing Over the Meal

Reading: The text of *ha-motzi*, the blessing over bread, praises God as "the One who brings forth bread from the earth." But we know perfectly well that God is not solely responsible for providing our food; the bread we eat has made its way to our table through the hard work of countless human contributors: farmers, bakers, truck drivers, grocery suppliers, retail employees, and so on. Perhaps God's presence is made manifest through the cooperative labors of human beings working together.

For Discussion: Name someone who has had a significant impact on your life but never knew it.

8 - *Matzah* - Blessing over the Unleavened Bread

Reading: The Hebrew word *tamzit* is used to refer to the concentrated essence of a substance, like juice or perfume. It is also linguistically related to the word *matzah*, which gives us a new perspective on these hard, flat crackers that we eat every year on Passover. *Matzah* is, after all, the concentrated essence of bread, containing only its most basic elements - flour and water - and nothing more.

For Discussion: What would you say is the "essence of Judaism," if you had to sum it up in a single sentence?

9- *Maror* - Bitter Herbs

Reading: Words fail. The story of bitterness is the most difficult to tell, perhaps because it is not really a story after all. It is a taste in the mouth. The taste of sharp words — unspoken — dissolving on the tongue. The taste of swallowed anger. Heartburn. It is useful to eat as big a chunk of these bitter herbs as one can bear. If there is hope, it lies in the tears that well up in the eyes and the clear-headedness that comes after.

(Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, *Women's Seder Sourcebook*)

For Discussion: Has there been someone or something that has helped you let go of swallowed anger?

10 - Korech – Hillel Sandwich

Reading: You turned my mourning into dancing so that my soul might sing to You.
(*Psalms 30:12-13*)

In Jewish tradition, suffering and joy exist side by side. We taste Hillel's sandwich and remember that even our greatest moments of happiness are mingled with sadness and loss. And yet, Korech also reminds us that no bitterness is so great that we should let it eclipse our capacity to savor life's sweetness.

(*Women's Seder Sourcebook*)

For Discussion: What was a time you experienced sadness mingled with sweetness?

11 - Shulchan Orech – Festive Meal

Reading:

start without me i'm ok really

i'll be right in

she never sat like i wanted her to she would start to sing so pretty

an ancient melody

and a new melody from her ancient childhood

then i must check on the brisket

or the potatoes or the ceiling or the dishes or the kitchen floor

the festive meal was her palace

her beauty and radiance and sadness all laid out for us on her table

meat and vegetables and sweets and pretty dishes and tablecloths and

things she never had

her time to give us what God had given her: a long table, a festive meal, and a taste of the world to come

(Mayim Bialik)

For Discussion: Who prepares your table for special occasions – either this year or in years past? What went into those preparations to make them special?

12 - Tzafun – Search for the Afikomen

Reading: As children go in search of the afikoman, they remind us of all our searches for the values, the hopes, the fulfillments that despite our freedom still remain hidden from us. The Haggadah before the meal brought us from the slavery of Mitzrayim to the redemption; when the children produce the afikoman from hiding they introduce the themes of the Haggadah after the meal: despite the incompleteness of our redemption today, the afikoman suddenly discovered in its wrap can inspire the faith that the fulfillment of much of what we desire lies within our grasp.

(Rabbi Richard M. Levy, *On Wings of Freedom*)

For Discussion: What are you still searching for?

13 – Barech – Gratitude for the Meal

Reading: During this section of the seder, we open the door for the Prophet Elijah. Many legends, from antiquity until today, are told in which Elijah returns to earth disguised as an ordinary person. In these stories, Elijah often assumes the appearance of a beggar who bestows rewards on those who treat him generously and compassionately. ~Rabbi Oren Hayon

For Discussion: How would we treat those in need differently if we thought they might be prophets in disguise?

14 - Hallel – Psalms of Praise

Reading:

Whatever is too stupid to say can be sung.

(Joseph Addison, 1672-1719)

The human voice can sing a vowel to break your heart. It trills a string of banal words,

but your blood jumps, regardless. You don't care about the words but only *how* they're sung

and the music behind — the brass, the drums.

Oh the primal, necessary drums

behind the words so dumb!

That power, the bang and the boom and again the bang we cannot, need not, live without,

nor without other means to make sweet noise, the guitar or violin, the things that sing

the plaintive, joyful sounds.

Which is why I like songs best

when I can't hear the words, or, better still, when there are no words at all.

For Discussion: What fills your heart with a song of gratitude?

15 Nirtzah – Concluding in Hope

Reading: Last year, I celebrated seder with my men in a big tent near a tel in the Syrian enclave that was being shelled. This year, we had a fine seder at the battalion. The mess hall looked wonderful, and there were lots of wild flowers, which the soldiers had picked after some urging on my part. I talked about the feast of freedom – a thousands-of-years-old liberty. When I sail back over the seas of our history, I pass through long years of suffering, of oppression, of massacres, of ghettos, of banishments, of humiliation; many years that, in historical perspective, seem devoid of any ray of light – yet it isn't so. For the fact that the idea of freedom remained, that the hope persisted, that the flame of liberty continued to burn through the observance of this ancient festival, is to me testimony of the eternity of the striving for freedom and the idea of freedom in Israel.
(Yonatan Netanyahu, *A letter from the Israeli front*, 1975)

For Discussion: Where do you wish to be next year at Passover? What gives you hope?