



Fifteen Steps to Freedom

A J Street Haggadah Supplement



J Street organizes pro-Israel, pro-peace, pro-democracy Americans to promote US policies that embody our deeply held Jewish and democratic values and that help secure the State of Israel as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people. We believe that only a negotiated resolution agreed to by Israelis and Palestinians can meet the legitimate needs and national aspirations of both peoples.

Working in the American political system, in the Jewish community and with others with whom we share core values, we advocate for diplomacy-first American leadership and policies that advance justice, equality, peace, and democracy in Israel, in the wider region and in the United States as well.

Cover art and inside watercolor art by Sasha Kopp

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, we, as a Jewish people, have faced persecution, violence and enslavement. However, for many in this generation, the events of October 7, were the most brutal and large-scale that our people have experienced in their own lifetime. The unfolding events of the Israel-Hamas war has required us to ask hard questions: How could this happen? What is the true cost of our freedom? How many lives must be lost in pursuit of that freedom? When is the cost too high? It seems impossible to celebrate our freedom in a time when our family and friends in Israel remain hostages, and when our Palestinian brothers and sisters are experiencing hunger and violence. Yet, the Passover Seder requires we retell our eternal Jewish story and commemorate our exodus from slavery to freedom.

In times of war and deep conflict, we must remind ourselves that freedom is not a given, but that there is a roadmap to lead us all there. After all, we were all once slaves in the land of Egypt. The rituals of the Passover Seder remind us to approach the world with empathy, compassion and concern. The experience of the Seder reminds us that while we who are sitting here tonight, are fortunate to be free, not everyone in the world has access to that same freedom.

J Street has compiled this haggadah to apply the themes and lessons of the Passover Seder to what it means, in 2024, to be pro-Israel, pro peace and pro-democracy. What questions do we need to ask about our power and responsibility? How might we be responsible for the oppression faced by others? What plagues us, and how can we not simply celebrate our own freedom, but use our freedom to help others become free? This haggadah supplement provides a framework for envisioning ways we can fight to ensure that Israel flourishes as a secure, democratic homeland for the Jewish people and that Palestinians are able to achieve self-determination and independence in a state of their own – ensuring one day we will live in a world of peace, security and freedom for both peoples. It reminds us that as long as others are suffering, our own celebratory glasses of wine are never full to the brim.

Originally compiled in 2020, this haggadah includes pieces written by J Street friends and clergy. You can use the entire haggadah supplement, or pick out particular sections to add meaning to your Seder. As the Seder is one long question and answer session, we hope you'll feel inspired to ask challenging questions — and to listen closely to each other's answers.

FIFTEEN STEPS AND THE SEDER ORDER

Rabbi John Rosove

**15 steps remembering
Our people's great liberation**

**15 symbols revealing
Our journey through time**

**15 stages lifting
In the telling to the told**

**15 phases carrying
From the low to the high**

**15 points shining
From exile to the promised land**

**15 keys opening
Gates for all peoples
Gates of justice and mutual
respect**

**Gates to two states for two
peoples**

Soon in our day

This year and in the next

In Israel and in Palestine

Life and history fulfilled

Amen!

Kadesh	קִדְּשׁ
Urchatz	וְרַחֵץ
Karpas	כַּרְפָּס
Yachatz	יַחַץ
Maggid	מַגִּיד
Rachtzah	רְחֹצֵה
Motzi Matzah Maror	מָרוֹר
Korech	כוֹרֵךְ
Shulkhan Orech	שֻׁלְחַן עוֹרֵךְ
Tzafun	צָפוֹן
Barech	בָּרַךְ
Hallel	הַלֵּל
Nirtzah	נִרְצָה

KADESH

“The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture.” (Israeli Proclamation of Independence, 1948).

“Our hope is not yet lost / it is two thousands years old / to be a free people in our land / the land of Zion and Jerusalem” (Hatikvah, Israel’s National Anthem).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֵחִינּוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, she-hechyanu v'key'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who has kept us alive, raised us up, and brought us to this happy moment.



DRINK FOR THOUGHT:

The Israeli Proclamation of Independence promised equal rights for all inhabitants in 1948. Nearly seventy-three years later, we know that full equality has yet to become a reality for some Israeli citizens — and certainly not for the millions of Palestinians living in the occupied territory. Yet, as Hatikvah teaches us, we cannot give up on our values, even if we must persist for thousands of years. Where do you find the hope to continue fighting for justice?

A KAVANNAH, A WORD OF INTENTION: THRESHOLDS

Rabbi Sharon Brous

One of the first rites of the Seder is urchatz, the ritual washing of hands.

We stand at the threshold. Soon we'll tell the story that reignites our imagination every year, that reminds us that the world can look different than it does, that insists that every human being can live with dignity and love. This story has, for generations, held our most stubborn and audacious insistence: that peace, justice and liberation are not fantasy but reality. That we, every one of us, are called to be partners in our own redemption story.

But before we can hear this story, we have to transition from the mundane of our work lives to the holy and the hopeful of the holiday. The signpost of that transition is a symbolic hand washing.

This year, we also find ourselves, collectively, standing at a threshold. Like the first signs of spring after a long, dark winter, we yearn to embrace new possibilities, to chart a brave, new course.

It will take courage, faith and love to make our shared dreams a reality. First, we must wash away our bitterness and resentment, our exhaustion, narrow-mindedness and cynicism. It's only then that we can begin to reconnect with a world of expansive possibility.

Unlike nearly every other element of the Seder, this washing is unaccompanied by a blessing, perhaps because the washing, itself, is a blessing.

Wash hands without reciting a blessing.

KARPAS

The saltwater of Karpas represents the tears shed by the Israelites while they were enslaved. This year the violence and terror of October 7th, and ongoing Israel-Hamas war have brought unprecedented pain, tears and suffering to both Israelis and Palestinians. Too many, on all sides of this conflict feel locked-in, enslaved to this perpetual violence. Sometimes, we can become numb in the face of so much pain.

How might the ritual of Karpas help open the gates of tears to the trauma we've been witness to? This has been a time of tears and mourning for us all. How might expressing our own grief allow us to better understand the plight of the Israelites, and the plight of those in the Land of Israel today?

Dip the karpas into the saltwater.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאָדָמָה.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ree ha-adama.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruits of the earth.

Eat the karpas.



YACHATZ

Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg

We now prepare to break the middle matzah, this bread that carries conflicting interpretations — the bread of affliction and the bread of freedom. As we divide the matzah into two uneven pieces, we remember our affliction.

On kibbutz, there were always a couple of older women who didn't eat much at the meal in the communal dining room, but who would line up afterwards to fill stacked containers with food to take home. They had survived the camps, places where if you come across a piece of bread, you do not eat it all at once. No you take a little, and you save most of it for later. Tears flow from the cracks in the matzah. As we divide the matzah into two uneven pieces, we remember our affliction.

This year, in the wake of the October 7th massacre in Israel, new tears are flowing. The sense of security and safety that Israel's existence provided for so many, has been shattered. As we divide the fragile matzah into two crumbled pieces, our affliction haunts us.

But this matzah is also the bread of our freedom.

Today in Israel, our people have power. We have land; we have plenty. Yet, too often the tears of our afflictions, both past and present, blind us to these realities. Israel bombs and starves the civilian population in Gaza, grabs and settles territory in the West Bank, out of revenge and fear. We are still victims.

As we break the matzah, we can break the habit of seeing ourselves only as afflicted-ones. We can rise up from the degradation of occupation and the constriction of war and eat our bread in peace, like free people!

Let's embrace the p'shat (the simple meaning) of yachatz, to break our bread and share it with our neighbors. Let's divide the matzah, taking only what we need, and allowing our neighbors to live and be nourished. We can let go of that wrapped-up piece, and we can let go of our fear, because we have faith that this is the only way to make it all whole again.

Divide the middle matzah. Cover the afikomen to be hidden.

Here is where we begin to tell the Passover story. Turn to someone next to you and share a story from a memorable Passover Seder.

What makes this Seder stand out in your memory?

What traditions or practices made a particular impression on you?

HA LACHMA ANYA

Rabbi Michael Knopf, Inspired Change

Rabbi Susan Leider and Liz Alperin Solms, Insyte Partners

הָא לַחְמָא עֲנִיא דִּי אֲכָלוּ אַבְהָתָנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְּכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכֹל, כָּל.
דְּצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִכְסֹח. הַשְּׁתָא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָא עַבְדֵּי,
לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרִין

Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b'ara d'mitzrayim. Kol dichfin yeitei v'yeichol, kol ditzrich yeitei v'yifsach. Hashata hacha, l'shanah habaah b'ara d'Yisrael. Hashata avdei, l'shanah habaah b'nei chorin.

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All those who are hungry, let them enter and eat. All who are in need, let them come celebrate the Passover. Now we are here. Next year in the land of Israel. This year we are enslaved. Next year we will be free.

We say at the Seder, “Let all who are hungry come and eat!” Despite our differences, we are members of a common human family, all of us equally worthy of a place at the table. The Egyptians wouldn’t even dine with the Israelites, considering them abominable, subhuman (Gen. 43:32, 46:34; Ex. 8:22). We respond by saying that everyone is as deserving of a seat as are we..

That everyone has a place at the table is the Seder’s dominant theme: We make space for the four widely different types of children, we lament the absence of the Egyptians who died during the Exodus, and we welcome the spirit of Elijah the Prophet. There’s also a passage in the Haggadah describing a Seder about 2,000 years ago in B’nei Brak (near modern-day Tel Aviv). The attendees, who stayed up all night discussing the Exodus, were five of the greatest rabbis of their generation: Eliezer, Joshua, Elazar, Akiva and Tarfon. Many today don’t realize the group’s diversity: rich and poor, conservative and liberal, old and young, teacher and student. In its subtle way, the Haggadah conveys that a vibrant, viable Judaism gives everyone – regardless of age, class, status, or beliefs – a place at the table.

How do we ensure that everyone has a place at the table, even if they feel and think differently from us on Israel? On American politics? Or on any other hot-button issue that is typically divisive? How do we resist the impulse to alienate, avoid, or antagonize others at the Seder? How can our differences become a source of strength, rather than a force for polarization?

In times of war and societal trauma, when we are consumed with fear and outrage, and see only glimmers of hope, we can find small rays of healing and peace by learning with and from others across lines of difference. The Seder thus provides us an opportunity to create openings in the tight spaces of our minds and hearts for a little bit of light. As we see others around the table, and conversations unfold during Maggid, here are some questions we can hold:

- *What is your inner state as you enter into this Seder?*
- *What are you noticing in your communities, your family?*
- *Where do you find hope?*
- *What is being asked of you? What must you let go of to make space for something new?*

Listen for points of view from others that challenge your own assumptions. Listen with your wide open heart, putting yourself in the shoes of the other. Listen from the future and from the whole. The Seder is not a practice in advice-giving or problem solving. Just the act of deep listening, mirroring, being present for others and tuning in to collective insight creates the conditions for healing and possibly, something new to emerge.

Together, we can ensure that everyone has a place at the table.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS: A MA NISHTANA FOR OUR GENERATION

Claire Davidson Miller, J Street Jewish Communal Relations Fellow 2020

Why is this generation different from all other generations?

מֵה־נִשְׁתַּנָּה הַדּוֹר הַזֶּה מְכֹל הַדּוֹרוֹת

Throughout the haggadah, we retell the story in the plural first person — we, as a community, relive what happened, and we bear some responsibility.

שְׁבַּכְל דּוֹר וְדוֹר

That in all other generations, we were wandering and oppressed, and now we — Israelis, yes, but also Jews — have our own state, government and army. Who, now, is powerless?

שְׁבַּכְל דּוֹר וְדוֹר

That in all other generations, we have sought justice for ourselves against outside forces, but now a portion of our people perpetuate injustice against the Palestinians. How can we continue working toward justice for others?

שְׁבַּכְל דּוֹר וְדוֹר

That in all other generations, we had no choice but to forgive our oppressors, yet we are now the ones who must seek forgiveness. Can we be forgiven for the ways in which we have mistreated Palestinians, and what actions on our part might be necessary before we are?

שְׁבַּכְל דּוֹר וְדוֹר

That in all other generations, love of Israel was often a unifying factor, but in this generation, we are blessed with the idea of critical love of Israel. How can we continue to be unified around Israel without being uniform?



AVADIM HAYINU

עבדים היינו היינו. עתה בני חורין.

Avadim hayinu hayinu. Ata b'nei chorin.

We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. Now we are free.

FOUR CHILDREN FOR A CONTEMPORARY PASSOVER

Rabbi David Teutsch

At the heart of the Passover Seder are questions asked and questions answered. The four children of the haggadah model the process of asking. Four contemporary people might ask their questions about what is happening in the State of Israel.

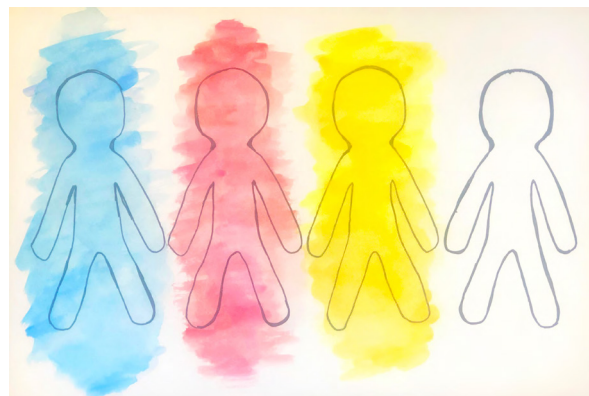
The wise child says, “Israel’s founding principles sound wonderful, but how can Israel be genuinely guided by them, recognizing the rights of Israelis and Palestinians, of Orthodox and secular, of Sephardi and Ashkenazi, of women and men, of poor and rich?”

The troubled child says, “How did you let all those settlements get built, and how do you tolerate the mistreatment of Palestinians by settlers and soldiers? And why have you allowed the protections for poor people to be gradually removed during Netanyahu’s term in office?”

The simple child says, “I love Israel. What’s wrong with that?”

The silent child is completely bewildered by all the contradictory news and perspectives. They simply don’t know what to say.

As people who love Israel but understand all the complexities, how can we discuss this difficult situation with calm and mutual caring? How do we bring ourselves to face all of the facts? Can we start tonight?



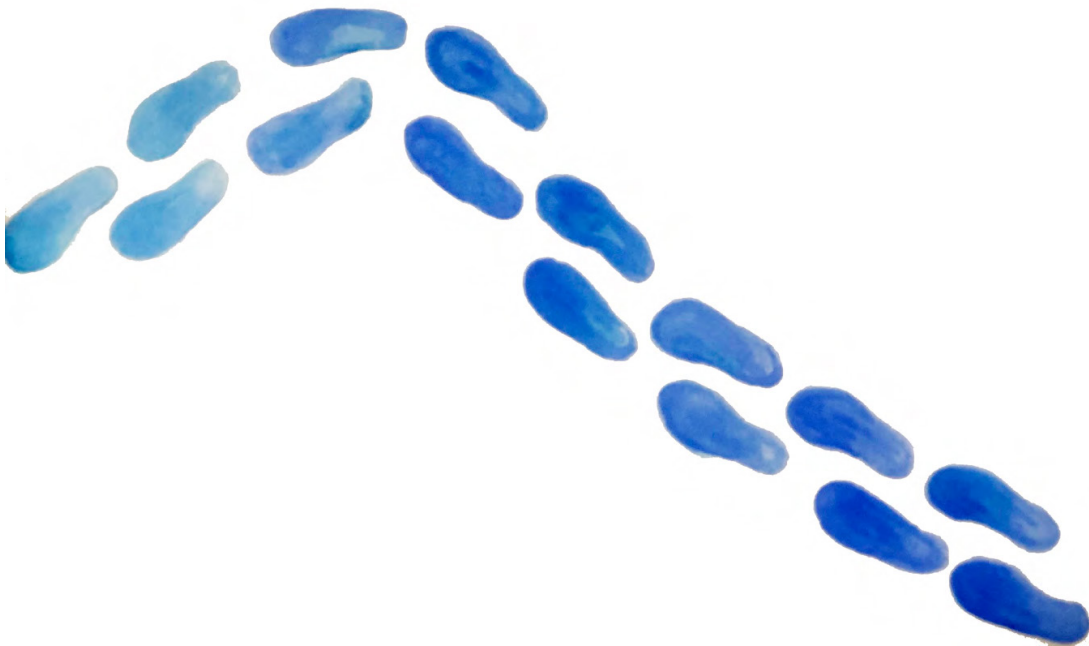
A QUICK HISTORY LESSON

Jessica Jacobs

Our story as a Jewish people begins with Abraham, who, through a call from God, is given the task to lech lecha, to blindly go to a place where God will show him. Our forefathers and foremothers, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, and Leah eventually lead us to the land of Egypt.

Jacob's son Joseph and the Egyptians begin on good terms with one another. However, soon a Pharaoh arises over the land that does not know Joseph or his descendants, the Israelites. From his fear of their great numbers the Pharaoh enslaves the Israelites and forces harsh labor and poor conditions upon them. Israelite first-born boys are drowned so as to thwart the strength of the Israelite people.

But the cries of the Israelite people do not go unnoticed. God sends ten plagues upon the Egyptians, forcing Pharaoh to let the Israelite slaves go free. God brought the Israelites, and us, out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. God brought us to freedom, and now it is our blessing and burden to carry the weight of that freedom.



BEFORE THE TEN PLAGUES

Rabbi Toba Spitzer

When it comes time to recite the ten plagues, there is a tradition of dipping a bit of wine out of our cups as we say each plague, diminishing our joy just a bit as we recall the difficulties that befell the Egyptians.

This Seder tradition calls to mind a famous midrash (rabbinic commentary), on the moment during the Exodus when the Egyptian army was drowning in the sea, just after the Israelites crossed to freedom. The angels turned to one another to sing their daily praises, when God hushed them, saying, “The work of My hands is drowning in the sea, and you would sing songs before Me?!”

While we cannot erase the suffering of the Egyptians from our freedom story, we can acknowledge that a human price was paid. As we recite the plagues, as we drop a bit of wine onto our plates, we are invited to remember that our own freedom — as Americans, as Jews — often comes with a price paid by others. We can take this moment to reflect on the damage done, whether intentional or not, that has allowed us to enjoy our freedom and our privilege.

If I am economically privileged, what is the cost borne by others — in the U.S. and around the world — to allow me my comforts? If I am white, at what cost comes the relative ease with which I move through the world? As a Jew, as someone connected to Israel, how do I reckon with the terrible price paid by the Palestinian people for the creation of the Jewish state? This is not a moment for guilt, but for honest reckoning, for acknowledgment, and perhaps a commitment to make some kind of tikkun, repair, during this season of redemption.

TEN MODERN PLAGUES OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Cantor Evan Kent

1. The Plague of Poor Leadership

Palestinians and Israelis have leaders who have served for too long and often promote their own personal political survival and ideological agendas over the interests of their people.

2. The Plague of Living in Fear

Palestinians and Israelis alike live in trauma and fear. Israelis, grappling with anguish over the unknown fate of loved ones held for over six months by Hamas; Palestinians, who face the constant threat of airstrikes and ground invasions; Everyone bearing the physical and psychological trauma, haunted by threats of more violence, uncertainty about the future.

3. The Plague of Home Destruction

Palestinian home destruction by the Israeli army has been shown again and again to be ineffective in deterring terrorism. Additionally, studies by the IDF have shown that collective punishment such as home demolition may actually encourage retaliatory terrorist attacks.

4. The Plague of the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

With widespread destruction, shortages of essential supplies, and blockades, civilians in Gaza live on the brink of famine. This humanitarian crisis is in direct conflict with our Jewish values and religious obligations.

5. The Plague of False Narratives

When borders, geography and mistrust limit interactions between Palestinians and Israelis, fictions are created about each other.

6. The Plague of Settlements

Israel's democratic and Jewish nature are severely threatened by the continual and seemingly unabated expansion of Israeli settlements and increased Settler violence in the West Bank.

7. The Plague of the Lack of Vision

In the midst of war, we search for leaders who offer us hope, rather than fear, and a path towards co-existence, rather than walls that divide.

8. The Plague of Restricted Movement

Israel stringently restricts the movement of Palestinians within the West Bank, in Gaza, and in East Jerusalem; restrictions compound the crisis, impede access to essential services, and exacerbate the suffering of vulnerable populations.

9. The Plague of Violence

Violence, instead of words, is used on all sides, by all parties, as a way to harm, intimidate, maim, destroy and kill others, perpetuating cycles of suffering and destruction with devastating consequences for civilians on all sides.

10. The Plague of Indifference

We become indifferent when we cease to see each other as human beings with legitimate hopes, dreams, aspirations and ambitions.

THREE SYMBOLS

Rabbi Rachael Bregman

Rabban Gamliel used to say: Whoever does not discuss the following three things on Passover has not fulfilled his duty, namely:

Passover (the Passover-sacrifice),

Matzah (the unleavened bread) and

Maror (the bitter herbs).

Rabban Gamliel answers the question, “What is required to feel the intensity and the urgency of the Seder enough to get you up out of your seat such that you must respond to injustice in the world?”

His answer: Passover, Matzah and Maror. These are the symbols we investigate to identify the wrongs which must be set right.

Especially when considering issues around justice in the Palestinian Israeli conflict, what do these symbols suggest?

Passover: Where are people or their rights being sacrificed for someone else to have power?

Matzah: Also known as the bread of affliction: Where is someone being afflicted or suffering under hardship imposed upon them so that someone else gains power?

Maror: Where have people’s lives been embittered for the sake of someone else to take away the power of others for their own gain?

IN EVERY GENERATION

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם.

B'chol dor vador chayav adam lirot et-atzmo, k'ilu hu yatzav mimitzrayim.

In every generation, every person is obligated to see themselves as though they personally left Egypt.

POUR OUT YOUR WRATH...AND FORGIVE OUR SINS

Rabbi Marc Israel

Just a few times a year.
Rage and sorrow
pours out from our mouths
and from our tears.
Other times we remember, we mourn;
But tonight, we scream.

We scream on Pesach, days of freedom:
Sh'foch chamatchah al ha-goyim
Pour out Your wrath upon the nations.

We cry out on Yom Kippur, day of atonement
Eleh ezkarah v'nafshi alai eshpakh
These I remember, and my soul screams out.

We call to God in our anger
to pour out wrath upon the enemy who,
in every generation, sought to destroy us.
We ask: Where are you God? Answer us!

At the Seder, we sing from Hallel:
Min ha-metzar karati Yah
From our narrow window,
we call out to you God

On Yom Kippur we recite:
Mi-ma-amakim k'ratikha Adonai
We call upon you from the depths.

On Pesach, we watch:
the wine in Elijah's cup shimmers:
Will God redeem our broken world?
(or is that just my parent's knee)

On Yom Kippur, we confess:
We have sinned.
We too are responsible
to heal our broken world.

October 7.
Our enemies again rose to destroy us,
V'hi She'amda - God stand by us,
sheb'chol dor vador,
om'dim aleinu l'chaloteinu,

As they have in every generation,
They tried to wipe us out.

Shemini Atzeret -
as we prayed for rain to sustain our world,
our enemies sought to destroy our lives.
Nir Oz, Be'eri, Nachal Oz, Kfar Azza, Netiv
Asarah
The innocent faces of the victims -
Beaten, burned, and beheaded.
Women raped, babies murdered.
And the faces of the hostages -
Terrified, screaming for help,
An outstretched hand, trying to pull free.

Tonight we scream out:
sh'foch chamatcha al hagoyim,
God, let Hamas feel the heat of your wrath.

Tonight we pray :
Anani bamerchav Yah
God answer me, bring our hostages home,
from their narrow tunnels
To the wide-open arms
Of family and friends,
Yearning to hold them.

Today we acknowledge, too,
that in every war - try as one might,
civilians die. Tens of thousands.
A brother or sister, mother or father,
A child. So many children.
But they are terrorists, some will cry.
But they are humans - we cannot deny.
This cost of war - we feel their pain.

And, also we must atone:
Tag killings on the West Bank,
Protesters blocking food convoys,
Massive bombardments, when targeted, might
do.
Over-zealous young soldiers dancing joyfully,
on remnants of a mosque.
This is not how Jews behave.

We cry out for the victims of October 7:
Hashem Yikom Damam
God should avenge their blood!
Vengeance belongs to God - alone.
The land is soaked with blood,
So many Innocent people, ours and theirs.
Can we hear the cry of their blood, calling us:
our brothers, our sisters, and, yes, even our
cousins?

As we walk in this valley of death,
Our cup does not overflow.

[REMOVE 10 DROPS FROM ELIJAH'S CUP]

May the redemption that feels so far away
Come to us now: Bimheirah, byameirnu
Quickly, in our day.

THE SECOND CUP

“It is our duty, both to ourselves and our children, to see the new world as it is today, to examine the risks and explore the chances, and to do everything so that the State of Israel becomes part of the changing world. We are no longer an isolated nation, and it is no longer true that the entire world is against us. We must rid ourselves of the feeling of isolation that has afflicted us for almost fifty years. We must join the campaign of peace, reconciliation, and international cooperation that is currently engulfing the entire globe, lest we miss the train and be left alone at the station” (Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s Inaugural Speech, 1992).

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Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

DRINK FOR THOUGHT:

Many tell us that we have no choice — that Israel’s actions in the ongoing conflict are necessary for its security. We know that not to be true. Just as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin did in 1993, we possess the capacity to reimagine a different and more promising future for both Israelis and Palestinians; we do have a choice.

How can we effectively convey to our leaders, to family and to friends that violence is a choice, but other choices exist. How do we help people see that the path we’re on isolates Israel further, bringing away from the world of Yitzhak Rabin. How can we work to create a different and better reality, helping to end the cycle of violence, pursuing peace and striving for a sustainable resolution?

RACHTZAH

This ritual hand washing is completed with a blessing, different from the first washing of the Seder. As we wash our hands we say the blessing ending with “al netilat yadain”, often translated as praising God who has commanded us “on the washing of our hands.” However, the true translation hinges on the word “netilat” which literally means lifting or raising. Indeed, the more accurate translation praises God who has commanded us to “raise up” our hands. How might we use this more literal translation to take a moment as we wash and consider the times and places we have chosen to raise our hands this year? In what ways have we shied away from raising our hands, stepping up, lifting up others in need? Can we use this moment of handwashing as time to recommit ourselves to the holy act of raising our hands in service of the holy acts of *tikkun olam*, repairing our world?

Pour water over your hands and then recite this blessing.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to wash our hands.



MOTZI/MATZAH

Everyone takes a piece of matzah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who brings forth bread from the land.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מַצָּה.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat matzah.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to eat matzah.



MAROR

Maror symbolizes the bitterness in our lives. We taste it to remember the bitterness of slavery, past and present, inflicted upon us and inflicted by us. This year the bitterness seems almost too much to bear. Do we really need a reminder of the heartache of the hostages, the harshness of war, the tragedy of civilian suffering?

We hope though, that through tasting the bitterness, our senses can be awakened to empathy and camaraderie. As you taste the bitter herbs, pause to consider: How can you allow yourself to empathize with the pain experienced by both Israelis and Palestinians? How does tasting the bitterness of maror inspire you to have empathy for all those suffering, who are a part of our human family?

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל אֲכִילַת מָרוֹר.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al achilat maror.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who made us holy through obligations, commanding us to eat bitter herbs.

KORECH

Jews Against the Occupation

Dip the bitter herb in the charoset.

The practice of combining bitter and sweet suggests that part of the challenge of activism is to taste freedom even in the midst of oppression, and to be ever conscious of the oppression of others, even when we feel that we are free.

SHULKHAN ORECH: B'te'avon!

Food for thought (to discuss during the meal):

In the midst of war and suffering, it can feel hard to stay connected to joy. Yet it's also so important to rejoice in the things that inspire us, give us energy and remind us why we are so committed to this work. Share a story around the table about an inspiring moment you or someone you know experienced in Israel. What is the Israel that brings you joy?

TZAFUN

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Tzafun, which literally means “hidden”, is the part of the Seder where we seek what is not obvious, when we look for something other than what is in front of our faces. It is also when we return to that which was broken earlier in the evening and try to make it whole again. In this way, Tzafun serves as the organizing principle of the second half of our Seder, where we ask ourselves what world we want to see. Then we commit ourselves to making it real.

Search for, and then eat, the afikomen.

BARECH

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַזֵּן אֶת הַכֹּל.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam Hazan Et Hakol.

Blessed are you Adonai our God, Ruler of Everything, who provides sustenance for all.

THE THIRD CUP

I Have No Other Land

By Ehud Manor

I have no other country even if my land
is aflame Just a word in Hebrew pierces
my veins and my soul
With a painful body with a hungry heart
here is my home
[...]

To Our Land

By Mahmoud Darwish

To our land,
and it is the one near the word of God, a
ceiling of clouds
To our land,
and it is the one far from the adjectives
of nouns,
the map of absence
To our land,
and it is the one tiny as a sesame seed, a
heavenly horizon... and a hidden chasm
[...]

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Food for thought:

In progressive, pro-Israel spaces, we talk about the right to self determination for both peoples.

What does it mean to you for both Israeli Jews and Palestinians to have self-determination?

THE FOURTH CUP

“And there will be a time, not for long, a month is enough, or a week, when every single person will be able to completely fulfill what they were meant to be — everything their bodies and souls have offered them, not what other people have dumped on them” (David Grossman, *To The End of the Land*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

We praise God, Ruler of Everything, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Drink for thought:

When this war and conflict ends — and it will one day end — we will “fulfill what [we] were meant to be” and the surface wounds will surely heal. But even then, decades of conflict and occupation will have left deep trauma and angry scars on all sides. What is the path we can take now, to begin to address the deep trauma experienced by our community? How will we stand in support of our Palestinian neighbors as they work to heal their communal trauma?

ELIJAH'S CUP

Adapted from Rabbi Michael L. Feshbach

Search for, and then eat, the afikomen.

We say that there are four cups of wine at the Seder. These are four cups based upon the promises in Exodus: “I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians; I will deliver you; I will redeem you; I will take you to be My people.”

But there is a fifth cup of wine at the Passover Seder. And there was a fifth promise. The cup is Elijah’s cup. And the promise was “I will bring you into the land.”

But God did bring us into the land. We came, we conquered, we settled... and then we lost and left again. Elijah’s cup sees coming into the land as a promise held for the future. Now the cup of Elijah has come to stand for a future hope of something deeper than mere presence. It is about redemption. It is about setting things right.

And we are not, now, in a place of full redemption. To truly share this cup we must find a way to truly share this space. Sadly we see ... that redemption is not yet complete. “Being there” alone is not enough. The suffering of others, the pain of the Palestinians, has to be part of our world, brought into our minds and our hearts before we can fully taste the sweetness of the final cup. So still we look to a future day, when we will dwell in peace, in two states, and the swords shall be beaten into the plowshares... and none shall make anyone — them or us — afraid.



ELIYAHU HANAVI

אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנְּבִיא
אֵלִיָּהוּ הַתְּשִׁבִי
אֵלִיָּהוּ, אֵלִיָּהוּ, אֵלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי
בְּמַהֲרָה בְיָמֵינוּ יָבֵא אֵלֵינוּ
עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד
עִם מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד

Eliyahu hanavi
Eliyahu hatishbi
Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu hagiladi
Bimheirah b'yameinu, yavo eileinu
Im mashiach ben-David,
Im mashiach ben-David

Elijah the prophet, the returning, the man of Gilad:
return to us speedily,
in our days with the messiah,
son of David.

MIRIAM HANEVIAH

מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיעָא
עַז בְּזִמְרָה בְיָדָהּ
מִרְיָם תִּרְקֹד אֶתְנוּ לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם
מִרְיָם תִּרְקֹד אֶתְנוּ לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם
בְּמַהֲרָה בְיָמֵינוּ הִיא תְּבִיאֵנוּ
אֶל מִי הַיְשׁוּעָה, אֶל מִי הַיְשׁוּאָה

Miriam ha-n'vi'ah oz v'zimrah b'yadah.
Miriam tirkod itanu l'hagdil zimrat olam.
Miriam tirkod itanu l'taken et ha-olam.
Bimheirah v'yameynu hi t'vi'einu el mey ha-y'shuah.

Miriam the prophet, strength and song in her hand
Miriam dance with us in order to increase the song of the world. Miriam dance with
us in order to repair the world.
Soon she will bring us to the waters of redemption.

NIRTZAH

Shaina Wasserman

We made it to the end! The Seder has concluded.

We have eaten matzah and maror, and dipped bitter herbs in the salt water.

We have reflected on the cost of conflict and occupation and discussed ways in which we can make an impact.

We have celebrated being a part of a community who loves Israel and who is concerned about the dangerous path the country's leaders are taking.

At the end of the Seder we say: Next Year in Jerusalem!

It is an aspirational idea. May we all be together in Jerusalem — the land of peace.

But in our reality, Jerusalem is also a symbol of conflict and confusion.

Whose Jerusalem? Municipal Jerusalem? The Old City? The Arab Quarter? East Jerusalem? Ben Yehuda Street?

Let us work together so that by next year, there will be real steps towards peace and away from the occupation.

Let's continue these conversations — around Seder tables, family tables and coffee tables — in which we openly wrestle with Israel.

Let's talk to our Jewish communal leaders and our elected officials.

Together, we will get to a Jerusalem of peace that embodies the national aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians.

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם הַבְּנוּיָה.

Next Year in Jerusalem!



SOURCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Emily Kaiman. *Introduction, commentaries throughout Haggadah (2024)*. Emily Kaiman is the current Deputy Director of Jewish Communal Engagement at J Street. Introductions and commentaries throughout this haggadah have been adapted by Emily from the original 2020 J Street Haggadah which was compiled by Ruti Kadish, former National Director of Communal Relations at J Street, Claire Davidson Miller former Communal Relations Fellow at J Street and Shaina Wasserman former Vice President of Communal Relations at J Street.

Rabbi John Rosove. *Fifteen Steps*, originally published in *Save Israel — Stop the Occupation's Jubilee Haggadah (2017)*. Rabbi Rosove is the Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Israel of Hollywood in Los Angeles, the past National Chairman of the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA) and serves as a national co-Chair of J Street's Rabbinic and Cantorial Cabinet.

Rabbi Sharon Brous. *A Kavannah, A Word of Intention: Thresholds. (2020)*. Rabbi Brous is the senior and founding rabbi of IKAR in Los Angeles.

Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg. *Yachatz*, originally published in the *Americans for Peace Now Haggadah (2005)*. Rabbi Goldenberg is the founding rabbi of Malkhut, a new progressive Jewish spiritual community in Western Queens.

Rabbi Michael Knopf, Rabbi Susan Leider and Liz Alperin Solms. *Maggid - Ha Lachma (2024)* Rabbis Knopf and Leider are two of J Street's Rabbinic and Cantorial Cabinet Chairs.

Claire Davidson Miller. *The Four Questions: A Ma Nishtana for Our Generation (2020)*.

Rabbi David Teutsch. *Four Children for a Contemporary Passover Seder (2020)*. Rabbi Teutsch is Professor Emeritus at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical School and serves on the Advisory Council of J Street's Rabbinic and Cantorial Cabinet.

Rabbi Jessica Jacobs. *A Quick History Lesson (2020)*. Rabbi Jessica Jacobs was a rabbinical student at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles and was the first Rabbinic Fellow at J Street. Rabbi Jacobs now serves as a Rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom in Miami, Florida.

Rabbi Toba Spitzer. *An Introduction to the 10 Plagues*, originally published in the *Americans for Peace Now Haggadah (2015)*. Rabbi Spitzer is the rabbi at Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton, MA.

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Rabbi Marc Israel. *Pour Out Your Wrath* (2024) Rabbi Israel is a congregational rabbi in the DC area, and serves on J Street's Clergy Executive Committee

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Shaina Wasserman. *Next Year in Jerusalem* (2020).

Jennifer Levine. Mural art, back cover. Jennifer Levine is a Jewish arts educator and founder of a mural arts organization. To get information about bringing her program to your synagogue/Jewish community, see her website: peacegardenproject.com



Mural by Jennifer Levine

