

Haggadah Supplements

Makom B'Yachad teaching - Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields

<https://hias.org/passover-resources-hias/#:~:text=New%20Resource%20for%202026:%20Why,in%20our%20new%20supplemental%20reading.>

SHOES ON THE DOORSTEP

Before you begin the Seder, either walk with your guests to the front door or have one guest rise from the table and walk to the front door. There, place a pair of shoes on the doorstep and read the words below.

Leader: The heart of the Passover Seder tells the story of the Jewish people's exodus from slavery in Egypt. During the retelling of this story, we say the words, "אַרַמִּי אֹדֵד אָבִי" (Arami oved avi)." This phrase is sometimes translated as "My father was a wandering Aramean" and other times as "An Aramean sought to destroy my father." Somewhere between the two translations lies the essence of the Jewish experience: a rootless people who have fled persecution time and time again.

Group: When we recite the words "Arami oved avi," we acknowledge that we have stood in the shoes of the refugee. Today, as we celebrate our freedom, we commit ourselves to continuing to stand with contemporary refugees and asylum seekers. In honor of this commitment, we place a pair of shoes on the doorstep of our home to acknowledge that none of us is free until all of us are free and to pledge to stand in support of welcoming those who do not yet have a place to call home.

hias.org

Reclining and the Embodiment of Freedom

Rabbi Talia Kaplan (Conservative)

On this night, the haggadah invites us to embody freedom, quite literally leaning into the feeling of liberation. The Rambam's explanation of who is required to recline during the seder categorizes different groups of people. It teaches that reclining is, in short, for important people who are not subservient to others. Embedded in the instruction to recline is the understanding that the degree to which we have agency to move our bodies is often political, mediated by larger structures in society. Many forcibly displaced people in the world are often stripped of control over their own bodies, let alone the choice of whether to sit upright or recline. People seeking refuge can be apprehended, shackled and placed in "nonpunitive detention" that is indistinguishable from prison. Their bodies are involuntarily confined – sometimes in conditions quite literally without sufficient space to lie down for sleep. As we recline at our seder tables, we lean into the freedom afforded to us. Allowing our bodies to soften, we affirm the importance of physical agency, especially for those seeking liberation today. We work towards a day when everyone has the freedom to eat as they please, in a place of comfort and security.

<https://www.temple-beth-el.org/passover-resources1.html>

A Prayer for Israel - Rabbi Erica Asch Temple Beth El, Augusta, Maine
President, Central Conference of American Rabbis

Sovereign of All the World— Shield Israel beneath Your protective presence. May all the inhabitants of Israel know physical safety. May they find the comfort of community as they grieve together. May they experience a renewed love for their country and its people. Guide Israel’s leaders as they balance the necessity of safety and security with the suffering of the innocent. May they act wisely, with determination and deliberation. Implant within Israel’s citizens compassion, strength, and resolve. May they be nourished by our love and support. Our prayers are linked with the prayers of countless others as we remember Your ancient promise from the book of Second Samuel, “I will establish a home for my people Israel and will plant them firm so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more ... I will give you safety from your enemies.”¹ At this time of danger and grief, may we have the audacity to pray for peace, just as our ancestors have done each time they were threatened and terrorized. וְיָרַךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִשְׁמְרֵנוּ וְיִשְׁלַח לָנוּ שְׁלֹמֹת וְשָׁלוֹם וְיִשְׁמְרֵנוּ וְיִשְׁלַח לָנוּ שְׁלֹמֹת וְשָׁלוֹם We pray that the people of Israel find wholeness and know tranquility. We pray for shalom in the land we love. 1 II Samuel 7:10–11

<https://bj.org/enriching-your-seder/>

Jewish Home Project 13 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PASSOVER SEDER MORE INCLUSIVE

1. **Let your guests know what to expect in advance of the seder.** All seders are different, so whether this is your guest's first seder or their 50th, it's good to lay the groundwork for what your seder might look like.
2. **Consider conducting the first half of the seder, until the meal, in a more relaxed space** than the dining room table. Perhaps you can gather in a family room or den where people can be seated on comfortable couches, chairs, or even pillows, and where you can have all the necessary items for the parts of the seder before the meal. Such a setting might make for more conversation and discussion, which is the primary aim of the seder. While some follow the tradition of waiting to eat until the meal (other than the karpas), others might serve some light appetizers during this first half of the seder to keep people comfortable and engaged.
3. **Use a haggadah that aligns with your personal values,** or add supplemental materials. Click here for some suggestions, or try building your own haggadah at Haggadot.com.
4. **The haggadah is not a script to be recited; it's more of a lesson plan** to guide you through the highlights of retelling and discussing our story of freedom which the tradition invites you to share in your own voice and in your own way. The mitzvah is to make it your own.
5. **Feel free to stop and discuss some sections, and to move through others more quickly.** There's no need to elaborate upon each page. Be mindful of pacing and keeping people's attention.
6. **Connect the Pesah story to the world today.** Pesah is a Jewish story, but also a universal, human story about breaking out of bondage and bringing freedom to individuals, communities, and the world. It's a story that celebrates not just a past liberation, but an ongoing one; one that demands we pay attention to people today who lack freedom and dignity.
7. **Encourage people from other cultures to participate and share,** not to feel as if they're observers, or that they're being convinced of one version of the story.
8. **Reassure your guests that all contributions are welcome.** There are no silly questions or wrong answers.
9. **Take turns reading and leading** so that everyone is involved as an active participant in the seder.
10. **Be mindful to define words or expressions used in Hebrew.** Some words that seem widely known might not be familiar to all.
11. **Consider making some modern additions to the seder table.**

- **Pineapple:** A colonial-era symbol of welcome and prosperity. Use as a symbol of welcoming others (including refugees and immigrants). Invite people to bring things to set on the table that are symbols of freedom or immigration from their own cultures which they can then share with you and your other guests.

- **Artichoke:** A commonly-used symbol of Jewish diversity with its many leaves. Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael, however, offers the idea that the prickly leaves that protect the heart are symbolic of the Jewish community's prickly relationship with intermarriage. The hope is to turn thistles into petals.

- **Orange:** Originally placed to include women and LGBTQ+, but expanded to include all who feel marginalized in the community. Some people eat the orange at the start of the seder and spit out the seeds as an expression of rejecting outdated or offensive ideas, beliefs, and values.

- **Cup of Ruth:** Wine symbolic of Jews by choice and others who have made their home with the Jewish people, as Ruth did in the Torah. Set it next to Elijah's cup.

12. When you say the Sheheheyanu with kiddush at the beginning, **invite your guests to share what it is for which they're feeling thankful.**

13. **HAVE FUN!** Whip scallions at each other during Dayenu like Persian Jews do, give out chocolate frogs, make matzah pyramid desserts, dress up, or use instruments to accompany your singing.

MENTAL HEALTH INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEDER PLATE

Shank Bone (Zerua): This roasted bone represents both the sacrifice Jews made to be spared from the tenth plague and the “outstretched arm,” which in the story of Passover brings the Jews out of slavery. The shank bone is the helping hand lent to those who need it most. We all struggle; that’s part of being human. We all will have tough times when we need that helping hand. If we can remember to accept help, we can move forward and start to heal. And when we are in a stable place (free from what kept us stuck and oppressed) we can reach out to those still struggling, remembering that, as humans, we will go back and forth between freedom and oppression.

Egg (Beitzah): The egg represents the life cycle. It’s a reminder that there are times of sacrifice but also times of hope! After winter comes spring, and so it goes for mental health. It’s traditional to roast or char the egg, leading to a fun interpretation— an egg, just like us, is resilient! The hotter the flame, the tougher we get. We aren’t weakened by struggle; we overcome it and become stronger.

Vegetable (Karpas): The vegetables represent spring and regrowth, but we also dip them in saltwater to remind us of the tears of slavery. At the same time, we are meant to keep in mind the sorrow of pain and the joy regrowth brings, remembering all the while we can both struggle and love ourselves. At any given time, we are struggling, and we are growing. We may feel broken, but we are worthy. We acknowledge our past, accept ourselves for who we are and then face forward, working on ourselves to help us get to a better place.

Bitter Herbs...Twice! (Maror and Hazeret): :The bitter herbs we eat (sometimes begrudgingly!) remind us of the bitterness of slavery. We aren't meant to forget our struggles; rather, at Passover we bravely look them square in the face and acknowledge they are what have led us to this moment.

Haroset: This reddish or brownish mixture of apples, wine and cinnamon is meant to symbolize the clay used to make the bricks and mortar during slavery. Although it calls to mind hard work, it's sweet, representing the joy of freedom. In the Seder we mix the bitter herbs with haroset, a reminder that freedom, like resilience, is hard work. It's bitter and it's sweet, and, most important, it requires being an active participant in our own lives.

FOUR MENTAL HEALTH QUESTIONS FOR PASSOVER

1 - AM I STILL IN EGYPT TODAY? OR AM I FREE NOW?

Mental health is not linear. Most of us oscillate day by day, or even hour by hour. How are you doing in this moment? Take a breath and check in with yourself.

2 - FROM WHICH STRUGGLES HAVE I FREED MYSELF?

We all struggle; that's how we grow. What have you done this year that you are proud of? How have you grown? What have you done to take care of yourself?

3 - WHO IN MY LIFE CAN BE MY OUTSTRETCHED ARM?

We all struggle. Anxiety, grief and failure affect us all. When you are struggling, who do you turn to for help and how? Choose one person you can trust to help you when you're having a bad day. How would you reach out to him or her? Consider having a conversation with that person about what supporting you might look like.

4 - WHAT'S ON MY MENTAL HEALTH SEDER PLATE? Just as the symbols on the Seder plate keep us engaged with the story of Passover, each of us has self-care tools that keep us engaged with our mental health. The more self-care options we have to improve our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being, the better prepared we are for days where we are most vulnerable. What tools are front and center in your life? What's one you might want to add?

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/supplementary-seder-readings/>

Pour Out Your Love, On Our Allies: The Righteous Gentiles

This unique addition to a medieval Haggadah appears side by side with “Pour out Your Wrath” [which is said upon opening the door for Elijah] in a manuscript from Worms (1521) attributed to the descendants of Rashi. Scholars today debate its authenticity but its sentiment for righteous gentiles is genuine.

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.

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<https://www.keshetonline.org/passover/>

https://www.jtsa.edu/blog-content/tze-ulemad-go-out-and-learn/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_content=email&utm_term=the%205786%20Passover%20Reader&utm_campaign=This%20Passover%20I%27I%20be%20reflecting%20on%20the%20Haggadah.%20&cm_mmc=Act-On%20Software-_-email-_-This%20Passover%20I%27I%20be%20reflecting%20on%20the%20Haggadah.%20-_-the%205786%20Passover%20Reader

<https://ajr.edu/forms/in-every-generation-immigration-as-a-jewish-value-a-passover-haggadah-supplement/>

PESACH – TEXT FOR GROUP STUDY

ABBA EBAN, “THE TRUMPETS OF THE EXODUS,” ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAM, 1955. QUOTED IN SIDNEY GREENBERG, *A MODERN TREASURE OF JEWISH THOUGHTS* (THOMAS YOSELOFF, 1960)

The redemption from Egyptian bondage must be regarded in any serious view of history as one of the authentic points of climax in the progress of mankind ... The flight across the Red Sea and Sinai preserved a revolutionary idea, which could never have evolved in the idolatrous despotism of the Pharaohs. The idea was the sovereignty of God, the Ruler of the universe. Omnipotent, one and indivisible, the embodiment of righteousness and the loving Father of all creation. From this idea there flowed acceptances and rejections which came to dominate life among the children of man. Recognizing this event as the beginning of our true destiny we, the descendents of those fleeing slaves have, in all succeeding generations, commemorated the ancient saga. Our tradition, to this day, exhorts every Jew to recite the story of the Exodus from Egypt at the appointed season as though he personally had experienced this redemption from servitude to freedom.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- In what ways do you see the Passover story as a point of climax in Jewish history? In human history? Do you see this acknowledged in secular aspects of Western society?

- The author claims that the “acceptances and rejections which came to dominate life among the children of man” flowed naturally from the acknowledgement of a single omnipotent Creator. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- In what ways do you see the destiny of the Jewish people unfolding from the events at the Red Sea and Sinai? Do you still see these as the pivotal events shaping Jewish life and thought?
- The author stresses the fact that during the seder the Exodus story is recounted as if from a first-hand perspective. What do we gain or lose by assuming this relationship to our history?

ZIEGLER SCHOOL OF RABBINIC STUDIES (2010)