

Supplement for our Pesach Haggadot

In addition to the three main traditional symbols of Pesach - the Pesach lamb, matzah and Maror - we propose to add new elements to the Seder that will deepen our reflections on the meaning of Passover for our time. Many people today use the festival also to honour (Jewish) people who stood up for human rights, democracy, and free societies. The introduction of these new to our seder can follow the explanation of the three main symbols of Pesach or at any other time you find it appropriate.

Seder Table:

Seder Seat for a Hostage



As we commemorate the festival of freedom, remember those in captivity. This year, the Board of Deputies of British Jews has launched an initiative entitled "Seder Seat for a Hostage campaign." The initiative encourages people to reserve an extra seat at their Seder table for one of the more than 130 men, women and children who are still being held captive by Hamas terrorists. Our Synagogue has adopted **Segev Kalfon** (left). We have already reserved a seat in the synagogue for him at each service we hold, and he is symbolically invited to join us at all our sederim, too.

You can download and print a picture of one of the hostages to place on a place set for them at the table: <https://bod.org.uk/seder-seat-for-a-hostage/>

Inviting the People We Miss to Our Table

Noam Zion

The seder gives us a chance to tell the stories not only of our ancestors, but of those we once knew and loved who are now missing from our tables. They may be beloved parents and grandparents whose chairs are now empty; friends and relatives disconnected from Judaism and our worldwide Jewish family; or family members, friends, and loved ones who could not join us this year for one reason or another. Ritual can help heal the pain caused by these poignant absences.

There are already many traditions around recognizing fellow Jews who are not present at our seders. During WWII, the kibbutzim of Mandate Palestine began pouring a cup of wine "for the missing." Those present at the seder would dedicate their fourth cup to the many kibbutz members who had volunteered to serve in the British Army fighting the Nazis. In the 1970s and 1980s, many left an empty chair at the table or added a fourth matzah for Soviet Jews and/or Syrian Jews who were not free to celebrate Passover or to make aliyah. This year, consider pouring a cup of wine to acknowledge those massacred and kidnapped on October 7, and the Israeli soldiers who have died in defence of their homes and families.

Seder Plate:

Beetroot or sunflower (seeds) for Ukraine

One of Ukraine's most famous national dishes is borscht, which is mainly made from beetroot. To have a beetroot on the Seder plate, can be a sign of support for Ukraine. Even if many of us feel helpless in the face of what is happening, the beetroot on the Seder plate is a strong symbol of solidarity. Others add sunflower seeds to their seder plate or a sunflower to show their solidarity with the people in the Ukraine. The sunflower is the national flower of the Ukraine.

An Orange for Diversity and Equality

Many families and congregations have begun adding an orange to the seder plate as a way of acknowledging the role of people who feel marginalised within the Jewish community. As a community, we are proud of our diversity and non-judgmental approach to give space to everyone around our seder tables. The orange with its bright colour reminds us that our world is not created in black-and white.

Miriam's Cup to Honour Women

This custom celebrates Miriam's role in the deliverance from slavery and her help throughout the wandering in the wilderness. Place an empty cup alongside Elijah's cup and ask each attendee at the seder to pour a bit of water into the cup. With this custom, we recognise that women have always been – and continue to be – integral to the continued survival of the Jewish community.

We see the pouring of each person's water as a symbol of everyone's individual responsibility to respond to issues of social injustice. [Learn more about Miriam's Cup](#), and use the Religious Action Centre of Reform Judaism's [Miriam's Cup reading insert](#) in your seder to honour the women in your life and remember Miriam's contributions to the Exodus.

Prayers and additional texts

V'hi she'amda: In Every Generation

The short paragraph beginning "v'hi she'amda" in the middle of Magid, sometimes sung without much thought, covers generations of Jewish trauma, suffering, and fear in a few brief lines:

[God] has stood for our ancestors and for us; not [only] one [person or nation] has stood [against] us to destroy us, but rather in each generation, they stand [against] us to destroy us, but the Holy Blessed One rescues us from their hand.

- How does reading these lines make you feel this year, in the wake of the war in Israel and Gaza?
- Is that different from how you might have felt in past years?

YACHATZ – Remembering refugees and asylum seekers

Take the middle matzah of the three on your Seder plate. Break it into two pieces. Wrap the larger piece, the afikomen, in a napkin and hide it sometime between now and the end of the meal. As you hold up the remaining smaller piece, read these words together:

We now hold up this broken matzah, which so clearly can never be repaired. We eat the smaller part while the larger half remains out of sight and out of reach for now. We begin by eating this bread of affliction and, then, only after we have relived the journey through slavery and the exodus from Egypt, do we eat the afikomen,

the bread of our liberation. We see that liberation can come from imperfection and fragmentation. Every day, refugees and asylum seekers across the globe experience the consequences of having their lives ruptured, and, yet, they find ways to pick up the pieces and forge a new, if imperfect, path forward.

A Prayer for the Redemption of the Captive Israelis

תְּפִלָּה לְפִדְיוֹן שְׁבוּיִים
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִתִּיר הָאֲסוּרִים, מְשַׁבֵּב לְדָד,
מְשַׁבֵּב לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה (תְּהִלִּים ט) שְׁלַח,
הַצֵּלָה שְׁלֵמָה וּפְדִיּוֹן גָּמוּר לְנִתּוּנֵים בְּשָׂבִי אוֹיֵב.
חֲזִקֵי רוּחַם, הַבִּיאֵי לָהֶם אֶת תְּפִלָּתָנוּ לְשִׁמְרָם מֵרַע.
תְּנֵי בֵינָה בְּלֵב אוֹיֵב לְהַשִּׁיבָם בְּשִׁלְמוֹת גּוֹף וְנַפֶּשׁ.
תְּנֵי תְבוּנָה בְּלוֹחָמֵי צֹה"ל לְחֻלְצָם בְּלֹא אֲבוֹד נַפְשׁוֹת.
תֵּן לְכָל בְּנֵי וּבָנוֹת אֲבֹרָהּם, שְׂרָה וְהַגֵּר אֶת עַז הַרוּחַ וְאִמָּץ
הַלֵּב לְהַתִּיר כְּבִלֵי שָׂבִי וְלַחְיֹת חַיֵּי חֲרוּת.
יְקַרְאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ עִמּוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֲכַבְּדֶהוּ (תְּהִלִּים צא)
וְנֹאמֶר, אָמֵן.

Our God, the One who raised Joseph up from the pit, be “a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:10). Send complete rescue and full redemption to all those held captive by the enemy.

Strengthen their spirit and bring them our prayers that they be protected from all harm. Implant understanding in the heart of the enemy that they may return the captives in wholeness of body and spirit.

Grant wisdom to the Israel Defence Forces that they may secure freedom for the captives without loss of life. Grant strength of spirit and courage of heart to all the sons and daughters of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to release bonds of captivity and allow us all to live in freedom.

“They shall call upon Me, and I will answer them; I will be with them in distress; I will rescue them, and honour them” (after Psalm 91:15).

And we say: Amen.

(Rabbi Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi, Translation by Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi)

Prayer for the Captive Women and Children

Our God, the God of our ancestors
Free all those captured in war.
Free the captive women:
Free our mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts.
Free the babies and children,
senselessly, violently kidnapped.

Fulfil that great mitzvah, that holy duty
Of redeeming the captive.
May they all return, swiftly
To their families and their homes.

May women's bodies be sacred and safe.
Shechinah, nurturing presence, watch over them.
Guard them.
Protect them.
Bring them home.

Baruch atah, Adonai, matir asurot.

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, who frees the captive.

(Rabbi Liz P. G. Hirsch)

My Children Are Drowning: Compassion and Loss at the Passover Seder

Our Sages taught:

At the very hour that the Egyptians were drowning, the angels wanted to sing before the Holy Blessed One. God said to them:

*“My children are drowning in the sea— yet you would sing in My presence!
As the heirs of slaves redeemed from Egypt's violence, we rejoice at the sight of
oppression overcome. Yet our triumph is diminished by the slaughter of the foe.
Therefore, we take ten drops from the wine within our cups: one for each plague
God brought upon Egypt.*

—Mishkan HaSeder: a passover haggadah

The angels watch as the Egyptian soldiers plunge into the sea behind the Israelites. But unlike the Israelites, for whom the waters parted, the waters close in on the Egyptians and they begin to drown. “Come let us sing,” shout the angels, “a song of praise! A song of redemption, a hymn of triumph!” Their hearts full of thanksgiving, they yearn to sing of victory, a song of release from pain and oppression.

The Talmud teaches:

The angels wanted to sing their songs but the Holy One said, the work of my hands, the Egyptians, are drowning at sea and you wish to sing? Therefore, we conclude that God does not rejoice over the death of the wicked (BT M'gillah 10b). God interrupts the angels, reminding them that the Egyptians too are God's children. Asking the angels to feel empathy for their enemies goes against their every impulse. If the angels had difficulty not taking pleasure in the suffering of their enemy, how much harder this is for us humans. To complicate matters, Rabbi Elazar argues that while God does not rejoice in the deaths of the wicked, God does cause us to rejoice. God recognises that we are not divine.

As humans, when we are hurt, there is a natural impulse to desire retribution. And yet God's example to take no pleasure in the suffering of others presents us with a challenge: to hold ourselves to a higher standard.

To be human, created in God's image, is to struggle, against all evidence to the contrary, to recognise the humanity of all God's creatures. If God can see the humanity in all people, how can we not also aspire to do so? If God is pained at the deaths of all God's children, we too must push ourselves to feel the pain of others, some of whom are our enemies, but some of whom are innocents: children, women, the elderly.

The Wimbledon Synagogue

At our seder tables, we rejoice as a people in our ongoing survival, generation after generation, despite those who would seek to destroy us. We focus on the “us-ness” of our story, that which makes us unique as the Jewish people. At the same time, we are invited to be God’s partner in responding to the pain of people who are not us but are still God’s children.

The Haggadah exhorts us to rejoice at oppression overcome, while inviting us to lessen the joy of our full cups of wine in commemoration of the suffering of our foes. And if we are to care about those who are our foes, how much more must we care about those who are not even our foes but are simply not us. That is our challenge as free people—to care for the fates of others. It may be difficult work, but if this is God’s struggle, shouldn’t it also be ours?

(Rabbi Hara E. Person)

Next Year In Jerusalem: Additional texts and visions for the end of your seder

- Let all who find the city holy, live in peace and freedom.
- Let all captives be free—crowned with joy everlasting. Let them attain joy and gladness (Isaiah 51:11).
- Let all who fight for justice, have the persistence of Moses, the voice of Aaron, and the initiative of Miriam.
- Let those envisioning a Jerusalem of peace, feel empowered to see their vision to fruition.
- Let Jerusalem live up to the vision of the prophets that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).
- Let this holy place embody tzelem elohim (dignity of every human being).
- Let our souls not be shrouded in the plague of darkness.
- Let the stone the builders rejected become the cornerstone (Psalm 118:22).
- Let the gates of justice open for all Israelis and Palestinians to experience collective freedom.
- Let those who spread evil be silenced (weekday Amidah prayer).
- Let all those in a place of narrowness, move to a place of expansiveness, from darkness to light, and from oppression to redemption (Acheinu prayer).
- Add your own

(Rabbi Jenna Shaw and Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson)

Other online resources:

Fantastic resource book from the Shalom Hartman institute in Israel for our Pesach celebrations this year: <https://www.hartman.org.il/in-every-generation-a-haggadah-supplement/>

<https://www.haggadot.com/> - Fantastic website to create your own Haggadah and to find additional texts, prayers, and ideas.